

**MORPHOSEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF YORUBA ADJECTIVES**

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**BENIN CITY**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
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THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.) DEGREE IN  
LINGUISTICS**

**FEBRUARY 2025**

## CERTIFICATION

I, **MUSTAPHA AMINAT OLUWATOYOSI (MISS)**, a student of the Department of Linguistics Studies, University of Benin with matriculation number **ART2004752** completed the requirements for the course work and research for the Bachelor of Arts Degree of the University of Benin. The work embodied in this project is original and has not been submitted in part or whole for any other degree or diploma programme of this or any other university or institution.

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**EXTERNAL EXAMINER**

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## **PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATION**

I, **MUSTAPHA AMINAT OLUWATOYOSI (MISS)** with the matriculation number **ART2000556** declare that this work "**MORPHOSEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF YORUBA ADJECTIVES** " has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test (with a score of \_\_\_\_\_ %), and so does not violate any copyright regulations.

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**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to God Almighty for the strength and mercy He showed me throughout the academic journey, May His name be praised forever.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My gratitude goes to almighty God.

I would like to acknowledge my project supervisor Dr. O. O. Evbuomwan for his motivation and encouragement throughout this project work.

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## ABSTRACT

*This study is an attempt to carry out a morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives. The aim of the study is to examine the morphosemantic features of adjectives in Yoruba. The study relied on utterances gathered from primary sources. The data sample comprises forty (40) adjectives which were divided into various categories. The data was collected from four (4) native speakers who live in Lagos State where the language is indigenous. The speakers were 3 women and 1 man. The informants were selected based on the differences in age range, sex, place of early childhood and level of formal education. The collection procedures engaged informants in different forms of interaction such as interviews and storytellings. The theoretical framework employed for the research is the Construction Grammar (C×G) theory framework developed by Filmore, Kay, Michaelis and Sag (1988). The findings revealed three things which are: there are morphemes that make up adjectives in Yoruba, there are meanings attached to the morphemes, and lastly, there are various semantic functions of adjectives within the language. The study concludes that Yoruba adjectives are composed of various morphemes, such as prefixes, root words, and reduplications. These morphemes combine to form adjectives in different patterns. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of Yoruba adjectives underlying how morphemes constitutes the adjectives, the meanings attached to the morphemes and the semantic functions of adjectives within the language. Further research in this area can continue to explore the intricate nature of adjectives and their significance within the broader linguistic landscape of Yoruba and other Nigerian languages.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Adjectives describe or modify nouns and pronouns, providing additional information about their characteristics or qualities (Hofherr, 2010). In languages like English, adjectives often function independently, either highlighting inherent qualities of a noun or comparing one entity to another (Ryan, 2022). However, in languages like Yoruba, the structure and semantics of adjectives can be more complex. This research aims to explore the morphosemantic properties of Yoruba adjectives, examining both their structural formation and the meanings they convey. Specifically, the study will focus on the different morphosemantic patterns observed in Yoruba adjectives, such as prefixal forms, reduplicated or intensified adjectives, adjectives derived from nouns, and compound adjectives. By analyzing these patterns, the research seeks to examine how these morphological structures influence the way meaning is generated in the language.

This study is motivated by a desire to address the relatively under-explored area of Yoruba adjective morphology and semantics, with the hope of contributing to broader linguistic theory and deepening our understanding of Yoruba grammar and its role in meaning-making.

## **1.1 YORUBA LANGUAGE AND ITS SPEAKERS**

The Yoruba language, belonging to the Niger-Congo language family, is primarily spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria, with smaller populations in Benin and Togo (Bamgbose, 2000). As a tonal language, Yoruba uses three tones—high, mid, and low—which are essential for distinguishing word meanings (Déchaine et al., 2011). Its writing system, based on the Latin alphabet, includes diacritics to represent these tonal distinctions (Déchaine et al., 2011). Yoruba grammar follows a subject-verb-object (SVO) structure, with adjectives typically following the nouns they modify (Awoyale, 2007). The language also features gender-neutral pronouns and plays a significant role in preserving Yoruba culture, especially in oral traditions and religious practices (Awoyale, 2007). Additionally, Yoruba's influence extends to African diaspora religions like Santería and Candomblé (Déchaine et al., 2011). Most Yoruba people speak the Yoruba language, which is the Niger-Congo language with the largest number of native or L1 speakers (Bendor-Samuel, 2024).

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Adjectives play a vital role in the structure and meaning of a language by modifying nouns and pronouns. While extensive research has been conducted on Yoruba grammar and syntax, this study assumes that the morphological and semantic aspects of Yoruba adjectives remain underexplored. The researcher assumes that little attention has been given to how the morphemes that constitute Yoruba adjectives contribute to their

meanings and how these adjectives function semantically within the language. Understanding the processes of adjective formation—such as prefixation, reduplication, and compounding—and how these processes interact with meaning-making in Yoruba would provide significant insights into the language's grammatical and semantic systems. This study seeks to fill this gap by conducting a morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives, with the aim of examining the morphemes involved, the meanings they convey, and their semantic functions in the language. Such an exploration will not only enhance the theoretical understanding of Yoruba but also contribute to broader discussions in linguistic theory related to morphology and semantics.

### **1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the study is to examine the morphosemantic features of adjectives in Yoruba. Its objectives are to:

- i. investigate the morphemes that make up adjectives in Yoruba.
- ii. identify the meanings attached to the morphemes.
- iii. analyze the semantic functions of adjectives within Yoruba.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following are the research questions:

- i. What are the morphemes that make up adjectives in Yoruba?

ii. What meanings are attached to these morphemes?

iii. What are the semantic functions of adjectives within the Yoruba?

### **1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study focuses on conducting a detailed morphosemantic analysis of adjectives in the Yoruba language. It aims to investigate the structural components (morphemes) that form Yoruba adjectives, explore the meanings associated with these morphemes, and analyze the semantic functions of adjectives within Yoruba grammar. The research addresses a gap in existing literature by focusing specifically on Yoruba adjectives, aiming to enhance understanding of their linguistic properties and contribute valuable insights to linguistic research within the Yoruba-speaking community.

### **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Below is a numbered list of the beneficiaries of the study:

**1. Linguists and Language Researchers:** This study will provide valuable insights into the structural and semantic properties of Yoruba adjectives, contributing to broader linguistic research.

**2. Educators and Curriculum Developers:** It will inform curriculum development for Yoruba language education, helping to improve teaching materials and methods related to grammar and semantics.

**3. Translators and Language Professionals:** Enhances translation accuracy and understanding of Yoruba texts by providing a deeper grasp of adjective usage and meanings.

**4. Yoruba Language Preservation Efforts:** Contributes to efforts aimed at preserving and promoting Yoruba language and culture by documenting linguistic nuances.

**5. Native Yoruba Speakers and Language Learners:** Helps deepen understanding of Yoruba grammar and usage, benefiting both native speakers and learners striving for proficiency.

**6. Policy Makers and Language Planners:** Informs decisions related to language policy and planning in Nigeria and other regions where Yoruba is spoken, supporting linguistic diversity and cultural heritage.

## **1.7 METHODOLOGY**

This study relies on utterances gathered from primary sources. The data sample comprises forty (40) adjectives which were divided into various categories.

The data was collected from four (4) native speakers who lives in Lagos State where the language is indigenous. The informants were selected based on the differences in age range, sex, place of early childhood and level of formal education. The collection procedures engaged informants in different forms of interaction such as interviews and storytelling.

The discussion did not center on the present study, but were topical enough to make informants use and exploit the language freely. The speakers were recorded with the aid of an audio recorder which serve as evidence.

The data analysis for this research involves identifying and categorizing Yoruba adjectives based on their morphological structure. The morphosemantic relationship was evaluated using linguistic framework such as construction grammar theory (C x G) that considers both structural and meaning related aspects of language.

In the presentation of data, the adjectives were first presented in their full forms while being broken down into their various internal components before they are presented in the actual realized forms that is, in sentences.

## **1.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter introduced the study of morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives, focusing on their structural and semantic properties. Adjectives are words that describe nouns or pronouns, and in Yoruba, they can be formed in various ways, including through prefixes, reduplication, or as compound adjectives. The motivation for the research comes from the desire to explore how Yoruba adjectives contribute to meaning-making in the language, filling a gap in existing linguistic studies. The chapter also provides background on the Yoruba language, which is part of the Niger-Congo family and spoken primarily in southwestern Nigeria. Yoruba uses three tones—high, mid, and

low—to distinguish meanings, and its grammar typically follows a subject-verb-object structure, with adjectives coming after the nouns they modify. The study seeks to explore the morphemes that make up Yoruba adjectives and the meanings they convey, aiming to enhance understanding of Yoruba grammar and semantics.

The research objectives focus on identifying the morphemes in Yoruba adjectives, exploring the meanings attached to them, and analyzing the role of adjectives in the language's grammar. The scope of the study is limited to a detailed examination of these adjectives, and the research is significant for various groups, including linguists, educators, translators, and policymakers. It will provide insights into the structure and meaning of Yoruba adjectives, inform educational materials, and contribute to language preservation efforts. The methodology involves collecting data from forty adjectives provided by native Yoruba speakers from different communities in Lagos State, who were interviewed and recorded in natural conversations. The adjectives will be analyzed based on their morphological structures and semantic properties, using linguistic frameworks to assess how form influences meaning.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review concepts which are related to this study, previous works done on adjectives as they relate to this study, concern of the present study and a summary of the chapter. It will reveal views and the perspectives to which linguists and scholars alike view adjectives.

#### 2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

This section reviews concepts which are related to this study. The purpose of reviewing these concepts is to provide a better understanding of what this research is all about. The concepts to be reviewed are: morphology, semantics, morphosemantics and adjectives.

##### 2.1.1 Morphology

Morphology is commonly defined as the study of the internal structure of words and the rules governing the formation of words in a language (Oz, 2014:83). It is part of human grammatical knowledge of a language, and like linguistic knowledge it is generally an unconscious knowledge.

Generally speaking, the linguistic discipline of morphology - the term is derived from the Greek word *morphos* meaning 'form' - examines the internal makeup and structure of

words as well as the patterns and principles underlying their composition (Schmid, 2015:1).

According to Akbulut (2017:12), "morphology has vital impact on the development and perception of English words." Morphemes, which include roots, stems, prefixes, and suffixes, are the smallest meaningful units of words. Mastering this intermediate level of language is crucial for expanding vocabulary and comprehending English texts. Morphology refers to the use or study of these morphemes, which are essential parts of words that convey meaning. The specific role of morphology varies across languages, depending on the word formation processes unique to each language.

As asserted by Aronoff and Sims (2023:7), "the term morphology was coined by Goethe and soon spread to several nascent sciences, from biology to geology, as a term for the study of form or forms." Morphology in linguistics is the study of words, including the principles by which they are formed, and how they relate to one another within a language. Most approaches to morphology explore how words are structured using morphemes, which are the smallest units in a language with independent meanings. These include roots like "catch" that can stand alone as words, and affixes like "-ing" that only appear attached to other words, as in "catching." Morphology also examines how words function as different parts of speech and how they change to show grammatical features like number, tense, and aspect through inflection. Productivity in morphology concerns how speakers form new words in specific contexts, which evolves over time in a

language. Morphology, the intricate study of word structure and its constituent elements, has undergone a remarkable transformation throughout its historical trajectory (Hasan, 2023:1). Early morphologists set out on a journey to reconstruct the linguistic ancestry of languages, meticulously comparing and contrasting related languages to uncover patterns and highlight the interdependence of languages. In the early 20th century, morphology adopted a synchronic perspective, exploring the intricacies of word structure at a specific moment in time.

### **2.1.2 Semantics**

According to Betti and Igaab (2021:2), "semantics is the study of meaning in language." It can be applied to entire texts or to single words. In linguistics, semantics is the subfield that studies meaning. Semantics can address meaning at the level of words, phrases, sentences, or larger units of discourse. One of the fundamental questions that unites various approaches to linguistic semantics is that of the relationship between form and meaning (Kroeger, 2019: 4; Betti, Igaab & Al-Ghizzi, 2018: 264).

According to Bagha (2011:1411), "semantics is the study of meaning in language." Language serves as a vehicle for conveying ideas that originate in our minds, communicated through speech, writing, gestures, and actions. Phonology examines the sound patterns of language, while morphology and syntax focus on the structure of words and sentences. These elements are organized to facilitate the transmission and comprehension of meaningful messages. The central inquiry of semantics revolves

around understanding how language is structured to convey significance. At this level of linguistic analysis, semantics delves into the abstract realm of meaning, which is inherently tied to human cognition and the ability to comprehend and reason logically. Therefore, studying semantics involves scrutinizing our capacity to create and understand meaning.

It examines meaning at various linguistic levels, encompassing individual words, phrases, sentences, and broader discourse units. Scholars explore the intricate relationship between linguistic form and meaning, a pivotal inquiry that spans diverse semantic approaches (Betti, Igaab & Al-Ghizzi, 2018: 264; Kroeger, 2019: 4). significantly shaping how we comprehend texts and interpret others' speech in everyday interactions. Semantics, often unnoticed, profoundly influences our communication, understanding, and language acquisition (Betti & Mahdi, 2021: 51). According to Acheoah and Williams (2024:12), "semantics is a field of linguistics which studies meaning in language." The study of semantics involves analyzing the structure and meaning of words, signals, and sentence constructions, with a particular focus on how these elements contribute to communication and understanding within a language. This field explores how words and expressions convey specific meanings, encompassing various aspects such as lexical semantics (word meaning), compositional semantics (phrase and sentence meaning), and pragmatic semantics (meaning in context).

### **2.1.3 Morphosemantics**

According to Dorais (2010:137), "morphosemantics may be defined as the semantic analysis of words through their constituent morphemes." In polysynthetic languages, where lexemes generally result from the aggregation of several morphemes, morphosemantics can offer a particularly interesting and, hopefully, useful tool for getting access to the underlying meaning of words, often yielding significations that go beyond the surface meaning of the lexeme.

Morphosemantics is a subfield of linguistics that examines the relationship between morphological structures (the internal structure of words) and their meanings. It investigates how the formation and composition of words influence their semantic interpretation, exploring phenomena such as derivation, inflection, and compounding. This approach helps linguists understand how different morphemes (the smallest units of meaning) interact to convey specific meanings within various contexts. By combining morphological analysis with semantic theory, morphosemantics provides insights into language processing, word formation patterns, and the cognitive mechanisms underlying meaning construction (Zeinali, 2018:2).

#### **2.1.4 Adjectives**

An adjective is a part of speech that can be used to describe or provide more information about a noun or pronoun that acts as the subject in a sentence. In English, adjectives are found after the verb or before the noun it modifies.

According to Mallombasi et al. (2018), adjectives comprises the leading syntactic part of which is to qualify a noun or noun phrase. It gives more information about the object signified. A group of words (adjective clause) with a subject and a verb can also function as an adjective, instead of just one word. Adjectives must be taught entirely; students need to know the types, the form, and the use of the adjective.

According to Ryan (2022), an adjective is a word that modifies or describes a noun or pronoun. It can be used to describe the qualities of someone or something independently or in comparison to something else.

### **2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES**

This section highlights and discusses previous studies related to this research. Adelabu (2014) study contrasted Adjectives in English and Yoruba with a view to identify the areas of similarities and dissimilarities and the problem these differences pose to Yoruba learners of English. The paper sought to find out which aspects of English adjective posed problem to the learners of English as a second language. Four research questions were raised to back up the study. The study involved two hundred (200) students in JSS 2

and SSS 2 classes who were Yoruba speakers and learners of English as a second language. A test of 100 items of various types and uses of adjectives was given to the two hundred (200) students who were from four secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis. The results were used to answer the research questions. The results revealed a high error margin and therefore confirmed that Yoruba learners of English have problems with the use of English adjectives. Based on this result the researcher suggested, amongst others, that the curriculum planners should bear in mind the linguistic differences that exist between the learners' first language (L1) and English when designing curriculum.

Abdullahi (2017) study explored the method of description in the study of adjectives in Fulfulde, putting into consideration their distribution, form and function. The work also looked at different types of adjectives in Fulfulde and their Morpho-semantic structure, types and interpretation. According to him, adjectives in this language display interesting and varied Semantic dimensions through its robust noun classes. The paper demonstrated that adjectives in Fulfulde usually occur in the predicative position, except in focused cases. Again, adjectives in Fulfulde are usually derived from nouns and verbs through suffixation. Fulfulde presents overwhelming morphological and morphophonemic processes in adjectival creation, displaying both covert and overt semantic nuances. Introspection was used to collect data and the analysis has been through morphophonemic process.

Falaju (2022) paper examined the structure, usage, and meanings of English, Russian, and Yoruba adjectives by comparing and contrasting them. It employs contrastive linguistics and transfer theory to highlight the similarities and differences in the forms, functions, and contextual usages of adjectives in the three languages. The data employed were elicited from relevant textbooks. Findings showed the existence of a significant degree of differences in the nature and grammatical status of adjectives in the three languages. The paper concluded that a proper comprehension of the status, existence, and usage of adjectives in the teaching and learning of these languages can increase learners' overall communicative competence.

Ajala & Onyemakonor (2023) asserted that adjectivization is a transformational process of converting a lexical item in a language into an adjectival form. Their paper reviewed previous word formation processes attested for creating new adjectives in Yoruba and examines the syntactic idiosyncrasies of the derived adjectives when used in open syntax. The data employed in this study was gathered from a variety of sources, including several settings and environments in which the native speakers use the Yoruba language freely. Published and unpublished works that were also related to the research were consulted. The framework for the study was based on Dixon's (1997) Basic Linguistic Theory because of its descriptive adequacy and flexibility rather than trying to force the language into a model based on European languages. The research, amongst others, reveals that the derived adjectives with the inherent [+be] do not need the Yoruba copula verb '*ni*' which

most derived adjectives require to make sense. The work also reveals that the adjective so derived are not only lexical structures but also post lexical structures.

### **2.3 PRESENT STUDY**

After reviewing the work of Adelabu (2014), Faloju (2022) and Ajala & Onyemakonor (2023), we can see a clear demarcation between the focus of the previous studies and the current study. Where previous studies extensively look into adjectives in Yoruba by soughting to find out which aspects of English adjective posed problem to the learners of English as a second language, comparing and contrasting of the structure, usage, and meanings of English, Russian, and Yoruba adjectives, and lastly, previous word formation processes attested for creating new adjectives in Yoruba and examines the syntactic idiosyncrasies of the derived adjectives when used in open syntax, this current study seeks to extend its research by looking at the morphemes that make up adjectives in Yoruba language and the meanings attached to these morphemes.

Also, there is little or no research on the morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives, this study assumes to be the first looking at adjectives in Yoruba with a specific focus on morphosemantics.

### **2.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter reviewed concepts related to the study of adjectives, including morphology, semantics, morphosemantics, and the nature of adjectives themselves. It explains

morphology as the analysis of word structure and formation, emphasizing the role of morphemes. Semantics is described as the study of meaning in language and how it influences communication. Morphosemantics links morphological structures to their meanings, showing how word formation affects interpretation. The chapter defines adjectives as words that modify nouns and details their forms and types, including their various functions in sentences.

Previous studies on adjectives in different languages highlight differences in structure and usage, particularly between English and Yoruba. The current research aims to explore the morphemes that make up Yoruba adjectives and their associated meanings, distinguishing it from earlier studies that focused on comparative aspects or different languages.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework for the research on morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives. The theoretical framework to be employed for this research is the "Construction Grammar".

#### **3.1 CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR**

Construction Grammar (CxG) was primarily developed by Fillmore, Kay, Michaelis and Sag (1988), with significant contributions from other linguists such as Goldberg (1995) and Tomasello (2003). They proposed CxG as a theoretical framework for understanding the structure and organization of language, emphasizing the role of constructions in shaping linguistic expressions and their meanings.

Construction Grammar (CxG) provides a comprehensive approach for analyzing how linguistic forms, including adjectives, are structured morphologically and how their meanings are derived within specific constructions. It emphasizes the interplay between form and meaning, which aligns well with this research focus on morphosemantics.

Additionally, CxG's flexibility allows for the incorporation of language-specific features and phenomena, making it adaptable to the study of adjectives in the Yoruba language.

### **3.2 RELEVANCE/JUSTIFICATION OF THE THEORY**

The relevance and justification of using Construction Grammar (CxG) for this research work lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive and refined understanding of how adjectives are structured and interpreted in the language.

By employing CxG, one can systematically analyze the morphological forms of adjectives in Yoruba and their corresponding meanings within specific constructions. This approach allows one to uncover the complex relationship between form and meaning, shedding light on how adjectives convey semantic distinctions in the language.

Furthermore, CxG's integration of morphology and semantics enables one to explore how morphological features contribute to the overall meaning of adjectives in Yoruba. This is particularly relevant for this research, as it allows one to examine how specific morphosemantic patterns shape the interpretation of adjectives in the language.

Additionally, CxG's flexibility and adaptability make it well-suited for studying language-specific phenomena, such as Yoruba adjectives. One can tailor one's analysis to account for the unique characteristics of adjectives in the language, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the linguistic reality of Yoruba.

In general, CxG offers a robust theoretical framework for investigating the morphosemantic features of adjectives in Yoruba, providing a systematic approach to analyzing their form, meaning, and usage in the language.

### 3.2 APPLICATION OF THE THEORY

CxG is well-suited for analyzing how Yoruba adjectives are structured and how their meanings are derived within specific constructions. It allows for a detailed examination of the relationship between the morphological forms of adjectives and their semantic implications.

CxG's adaptability makes it ideal for studying language-specific phenomena, such as Yoruba adjectives, and accounting for unique characteristics of the language.

#### Examples of Its Working Strengths

**Holistic Analysis:** Provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how form and meaning interact, which is crucial for analyzing adjectives in different contexts.

**Flexibility:** Can be tailored to accommodate the specific features of different languages, making it suitable for Yoruba.

Making sentences with the Yoruba adjectives

1a. *Okúnrin árewá ní*

man handsome is

"He is a handsome man"

b. *Wọ̀n jẹ́ éniyán aláyọ̀*

they are people happy

"They are happy people"

c. *Énìyán gígá ní ọ̀bà*

person tall is king

"The king is a tall man"

d. *Ó dára fún àwọn éniyán rẹ*

s/he good to them person

"S/he is good to her people"

e. *Áwọn ẹ̀ránkó nlà ló wá*

they animals big there

"There are big animals"

## **EXTRACTING THE ADJECTIVES**

All the adjectives in the sentences above will be analyzed here.

2a. *árewá* "handsome"

b. *áláyọ* "happy"

c. *gígá* "tall"

d. *dárá* "good"

e. *nlà* "big"

A morphosemantic analysis of each of these Yoruba adjectives:

3a. *árẹwá* ("handsome")

Morphological Structure: The adjective is composed of the root "*ẹwá*" with the prefix "*ár*" serving as an intensifier or emphatic marker.

Semantic Properties: It describes an attribute related to physical appearance, specifically appealing or attractive qualities. The term often conveys a positive aesthetic judgment about someone's looks.

b. *áláyọ* ("happy")

Morphological Structure: The adjective consists of the prefix "*ál-*" and the root "*áyọ*" where "*áyọ*" means joy or pleasure.

Semantic Properties: It refers to a state of emotional well-being or contentment. The term characterizes a positive emotional state or feeling of joy.

c. *gígá* ("tall")

Morphological Structure: The adjective consists of the prefix "*gí-*" and the root "*gá*" where "*gá*" means tall.

Semantic Properties: It describes physical height or stature. The term conveys the extent or degree of being tall.

d. *dára* ("good")

Morphological Structure: This adjective is a simple root without additional affixes. The root "*dára*" itself conveys the meaning of goodness.

Semantic Properties: It signifies a positive quality or value, referring to something being beneficial, pleasing, or morally right. It is a general term for assessing the positive attributes of a person or thing.

e. *nlà* ("big")

Morphological Structure: The adjective "*nlà*" is a root that denotes size. It does not involve affixation or reduplication.

Semantic Properties: It describes a large size or magnitude. The term is used to express the physical extent or volume of an object or entity.

Each Yoruba adjectives as seen above combine specific morphemes to convey distinct semantic attributes.

## **How is the Construction Grammar Theory suitable for this present data?**

Construction Grammar Theory is particularly suitable for analyzing adjectives in languages. For the study of Morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives, CxG serves as the most suitable framework due to its focus on how specific constructions (form-meaning pairings) convey meaning.

Below is how the theory applies to each adjective:

4a. *árẹwá* ("handsome")

Construction Grammar Application: This pairing is a construction where the prefix and root together create a specific meaning related to attractiveness. The analysis focuses on how "*ár-*" as a constructional element alters the meaning of "*ẹwá*" to express a more intense judgment of physical appearance.

b. *áláyọ* ("happy")

Construction Grammar Application: This construction pairs the prefix with the root to denote a particular emotional state. The analysis involves understanding how "*ál-*" contributes to the overall meaning of "*áyọ*" by specifying the condition or state of happiness.

c. *gígá* ("tall")

Construction Grammar Application: This construction illustrates how reduplication or prefixation in Yoruba modifies the base meaning. "*gígá*" is a construction that conveys an intensified degree of height, and the analysis explores how "*gí-*" functions as part of this construction to emphasize the quality.

d. *dára* ("good")

Construction Grammar Application: This construction consists solely of the root, showing how a single morpheme can function as a complete construction to express a general quality. The theory helps understand how the root "*dára*" encapsulates the meaning of goodness in its simplest form.

e. *nlà* ("big")

Construction Grammar Application: The construction here is straightforward, involving only the root to express magnitude. The analysis considers how this root functions as a complete unit of meaning, reflecting the simplicity and directness of the size descriptor.

In each case, Construction Grammar Theory helps analyze how the combination of form and meaning in Yoruba adjectives reflects their semantic properties. The theory's focus on constructions as fundamental units for conveying meaning is well-suited to understanding how Yoruba adjectives are structured and interpreted.

## **Strengths of Construction Grammar Theory (C×G)**

The following are strengths of Construction Grammar Theory (C×G)

**1. Holistic Approach to Grammar:** One of the key strengths of C×G is its emphasis on grammar as a system of constructions, where constructions are understood as form-meaning pairings that range from very simple (e.g., a word) to very complex (e.g., entire sentence patterns). This allows for a more integrated view of grammar, where syntax, semantics, and morphology are closely interconnected.

**2. Inclusivity of Usage-Based Data:** C×G embraces the idea that grammatical knowledge is built up from language use. It posits that linguistic patterns emerge from the frequent use of constructions in communicative contexts, supporting a usage-based theory of language acquisition and development.

**3. Flexibility and Adaptability:** Unlike traditional generative grammar, which relies heavily on rules and abstract syntactic structures, C×G is more flexible in its approach. It allows for the representation of both regular and irregular linguistic patterns, including idiomatic expressions and non-canonical sentence structures. This makes it well-suited to handle linguistic diversity.

**4. Focus on Meaning:** C×G emphasizes that syntax cannot be fully separated from meaning. This contrasts with more formal approaches that prioritize syntax over meaning. It shows how constructions carry both form and meaning, making

it easier to understand how different sentence structures can convey different types of information.

**5. No Need for Universal Grammar:** C×G challenges the concept of a universal grammar as a set of innate, abstract rules, focusing instead on how constructions are learned and used within specific linguistic communities. This aligns with more cognitive and functional approaches to language, which argue that language is shaped by general cognitive processes rather than a pre-specified biological mechanism.

### **3.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter outlined the theoretical framework for a study on the morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives, focusing on Construction Grammar (CxG) as the primary approach. Developed by linguists like Fillmore, Kay, and Lakoff, CxG emphasizes the integral role of constructions—specific form-meaning pairings—in shaping linguistic expressions. This framework is particularly relevant for analyzing Yoruba adjectives because it allows for a detailed examination of their morphological structures and semantic implications, revealing the intricate relationship between form and meaning.

CxG's flexibility makes it suitable for accommodating the unique features of the Yoruba language, enabling a thorough exploration of how specific morphosemantic patterns influence the interpretation of adjectives. By applying CxG, the research can

systematically investigate how adjectives are constructed and understood in various contexts, highlighting the interplay between morphology and semantics.

The chapter provides examples of Yoruba adjectives such as "*árewá*" (handsome), "*áláyọ*" (happy), "*gígá*" (tall), "*dára*" (good), and "*nlà*" (big). Each example includes a morphosemantic analysis, detailing the morphological structures and semantic properties of the adjectives. For instance, "*árewá*" combines a root with an intensifying prefix to convey a strong aesthetic judgment, while "*dára*" represents a simple root that encapsulates the notion of goodness.

Lastly, CxG serves as a robust theoretical framework for this research, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of how Yoruba adjectives are formed and how their meanings are constructed and interpreted within the language.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

This section is divided into three; first, the presentation of the data, then the analysis of the data which will reflect the answers of the specific aim and objectives of this research, and lastly, the discussion of findings of the analysis.

#### 4.1 DATA PRESENTATION

In this part of the work, a total of 40 sentences containing adjectives are presented in their lexical translation form and free gloss.

5i. *Ọmọbirin náa ẹwà*

Girl is beautiful

"The girl is beautiful"

ii. *Saléwá jẹ onígberága*

Salewa is proud

"Salewa is proud"

iii. *Omi náa tùtù bí yinyin*

water too cold like ice

"The water is cold as ice"

iv. *Tolú gáá*

Tolu tall

"Tolu is tall"

v. *Bàbá mí jẹ olówó*

Father my is rich

"My father is a rich man"

vi. *Omí naa jì*

Water too deep

"The water is deep"

vii. *Aláwọ pupa ni ọkọ bàbá mí*

Something fair is car father my

"My Father's car is red"

viii. *Ilé náa tóbi*

House too big

"The house is big"

ix. *Olùkò mi dàra púpọ*

Teacher my good very

"My Teacher is very good"

x. *Aláánú ni mí*

Merciful is me

"I am merciful"

xi. *Owó náa kéré*

Money too small

"The money is small"

xii. *Tọlá jé ọlẹ*

Tola is lazy

"Tola is lazy"

xiii. *Ajá náa burú*

Dog too wicked

"The dog is wicked"

xiv. *Igi náa gùn*

Stick too long

"The stick is long"

xv. *Ọmọ yìì búrẹ̀wà*

Child this ugly

"This child is ugly"

xvi. *Ọbẹ naa táá púpọ*

Soup too peppery very

"The soup is peppery"

xvii. *Óunjẹ náa dùn*

Food too sweet

"The food is delicious"

xviii. *Olúwa tóbi púpọ*

God big very

"God is great"

xix. *Ọba wa jẹ **alagbára** enìyàn*

King our is powerful person

"Our King is a powerful being"

xx. *Inú ọjà jẹ **aláriwo***

Inside market is noise

"The market is noisy"

xxi. *Adé jẹ enìyàn **kúkúrú***

Ade is person short

"Ade is a short man"

xxii. *Ọlá jẹ **ọlogbọn** ọmọ*

Ola is wise child

"Ola is a wise child"

xxiii. *Ọmọbirin náa jẹ **ẹlẹjọwẹwẹ***

Girl/lady too is talkative

"She is a talkative"

xxiv. *Inú ọmọ̀bìrìn náa d̀ùn*

Inside girl too happy

"The girl is happy"

xxv. *Ara mí gboná gan*

Body my hot very

"My body is so hot"

xxvi. *Aláyọ ni mí*

Joyful is me

"I am joyful"

xxvii. *Ọmọ̀bìrìn náa jáafáafá*

Girl/lady too diligent

"She is a diligent girl"

xxviii. *Wọ̀n jẹ́ Onígbọ̀ràn ọmọ*

They are obedient children

"They are obedient children"

xxix. *Tòsìn jẹ ọmọ tín tíjù*

Tosin Is child that shy

"Tosin is a shy child"

xxx. *Maria dúdú bi èdúdú*

Mary black like charcoal

"Mary is dark as charcoal"

xxxi. *Ìròyìn ikú rẹ jẹ ibàninújẹ*

News death him is sad

"The news of his death is sorrowful"

xxxii. *Mo ní iwé mètì*

Me have book two

"I have two books"

xxxiii. *Isẹ náa le*

Work too difficult

"The work is difficult"

xxxiv. *Ọmọ̀birin náa jẹ awakọ toń yára*

Girl/lady too is driver that fast

"She is a fast driver"

xxxv. *Vikitọ jẹ ọ̀tò̀ṣì*

Victor is poor

"Victor is poor"

xxxvi. *Bùkọ̀lá jẹ akikanjú*

Bukola is brave

"Bukola is brave"

xxxvii. *Aşọ náa mọ*

Cloth too clean

"The cloth is clean"

xxxviii. *Esteri t̀t̀t̀ bí àdàbà*

Esther cold like dove

"Esther is calm as dove"

xxxix. *Tóyìn jẹ ẹni ẹgbin*

Toyin is someone dirty

"Toyin is dirty"

xl. *Títí jẹ onírẹlẹ*

Titi is humble

"Titi is humble"

#### 4.1.1 Isolating the Adjectives

All the presented adjectives in the sentences above are analyzed here.

6i. *rẹwà* "beautiful"

ii. *onígbèrága* "proud"

iii. *tùtù* "cold"

iv. *gáá* "tall"

v. *olówó* "rich"

vi. *jù* "deep"

vii. *pupa* "red"

viii. *tóbi* "big"

ix. *dàra* "good"

x. *Aláánú* "merciful"

xi. *kéré* "small"

xii. *ọlẹ* "lazy"

xiii. *burú* "wicked"

xiv. *gùn* "long"

xv. *bùréwà* "ugly"

xvi. *táa* "peppery"

xvii. *dùn* "delicious"

xviii. *tóbi* "great"

xix. *alagbára* "powerful"

xx. *aláriwo* "noisy"

xxi. *kúkurú* "short"

xxii. *ọ̀lọ̀gbọ̀n* "wise"

xxiii. *ẹ̀lẹ̀jọ̀wẹ̀wẹ̀* "talkative"

xxiv. *dùn* "happy"

xxv. *gboná* "hot"

xxvi. *Aláyọ* "joyful"

xxvii. *jáafáfú* "diligent"

xxviii. *Onígbọ̀ràn* "obedient"

xxix. *tijú* "shy"

xxx. *dúdú* "dark"

xxxi. *ibàninúje* "sorrowful"

xxxii. *mèjì* "two"

xxxiii. *le* "difficult"

xxxiv. *yára* "fast"

xxxv. *òtòsì* "poor"

xxxvi. *akíkanjú* "brave"

xxxvii. *mọ* "clean"

xxxviii. *tùtù* "calm"

xxxix. *ẹgbìn* "dirty"

xl. *onírẹlẹ* "humble"

#### 4.1.2 Prefixal Adjectives

These adjectives are formed by adding a prefix to a root word. As seen from the isolated data in (4.1.1) above, some of the adjectives are formed through prefixation. The adjectives formed through prefixation are listed.

7)

a. *oní* + *gbèrága* = *onígbèrága* "proud"

b. *oní* + *ówó* = *olówó* "rich"

c. *oní* + *ánú* = *áláánú* "merciful"

d. *oní* + *ágbará* = *alágbará* "powerful"

e. *oní* + *áriwo* = *aláriwo* "noisy"

f. *oní* + *Irẹlẹ* = *onírẹlẹ* "humble"

### 4.1.3 Reduplicated or Intensified Adjectives

These adjectives involve the repetition of a root or a part of it for emphasis or intensification.

8)

a. *jàafáafá* "diligent"

b. *kúkurú* "short"

### 4.1.4 Adjectives Formed from Nouns

These adjectives are derived from nouns or verbs.

9)

a. *onígbèrága* "proud"

b. *bùréwà* "ugly"

### 4.1.5 Compound Adjectives

These adjectives are formed by combining two or more words.

10)

a. *Aláánú* "merciful"

b. *Aláyọ* "joyful"

c. *ẹlẹjọwẹwẹ* "talkative"

d. *onígbọ̀ràn* "obedient"

## 4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

This part of the work analyzes the presented adjectives. The adjectives will be analyzed based on the different morphosemantic patterns such as prefixal adjectives, reduplicated or intensified adjectives, adjectives formed from nouns and compound adjectives observed in the data.

### 4.2.1 Organizing the Adjectives into Different Morphosemantic Patterns

Below is the categorization of the Yoruba adjectives based on morpho-semantic patterns:

#### 4.2.2.1 Prefixal Adjectives

These adjectives are formed by adding a prefix to a root word.

11)

a. *onígbèrága* "proud"

This adjective is formed from the prefix *oní* which translates to "one who has" + *gbèrága* which translates to "pride". When these two words are joined together, we derive an adjective *onígbèrága* which translates to "proud". *Gbèrága* which was originally a noun meaning "pride" was transformed to an adjective after the prefix *oní* was attached to it.

b. *olówó* "rich"

This adjective is formed from the prefix *oní* which translates to "owner of" + *ówó* which translates to "money". When put together, *oní* + *ówó* becomes *olówó*. In Yoruba, when the prefix "*oní*" precedes a word starting with a vowel, it changes to either "*ol*", "*al*" or "*el*". As seen from this analysis the noun *ówó* which literally means "money", changed to an adjective *olówó* which means "rich" due to the prefix "ol-".

c. *áláánú* "merciful"

This adjective is formed from the prefix *oní* (to have) + *ánú* (mercy). As explained in (11b) above, there are various ways prefixes are formed in Yoruba. In this case, the prefix "*al*" was originally formed from "*oní*". Instead of saying "*oniáánú*", "*Oni*" is substituted for "*al*", thereby changing the word from "*oniáánú*" to "*áláánú*" meaning "merciful" or someone who shows mercy. The word *ánú* is literally a noun which means "mercy", but when the prefix "ál-" attaches to it, the word class changes to an adjective.

d. *alágbará* "powerful"

This adjective is formed from the prefix *oní* (to have) + *ágbará* (power). In this case, just as in the previous examples, the noun *ágbará* which literally means power is changed to an adjective when the prefix "ál-" precedes it.

e. *aláriwo* "noisy"

This adjective is formed from the prefix *oní* (to have) + *áriwó* (noise). *Áriwó* is a Yoruba word meaning noise. When the prefix "ál-" is added to it, the word class changes from a noun to an adjective.

f. *oníreḷe* "humble"

This adjective is formed from the prefix *oní* (one who has) + *ireḷe* (gentleness). In this case, the first vowel before the word boundary is elided in place of the first vowel after the word boundary instead of saying "*oníireḷe*", we rather say "*oníreḷe*". The word *ireḷe* in Yoruba literally means gentleness, but when it is joined to the prefix "oní", the word class changes from a noun which means "gentleness" to an adjective "humble".

#### 4.2.2.2 Reduplicated or Intensified Adjectives

These adjectives involve the repetition of a root or a part of it for emphasis or intensification.

12)

a. *jàafáafá* "diligent"

The adjective is formed through the reduplication *fáafa* "smart". *fáa* means "to drag" but when partially reduplicated gives "smart". *Jàa* when in isolation makes no sense. So, the adjective is formed from the reduplication *fáafa* which means "smart" to give "diligent".

b. *kúkurú* "short"

The adjective is formed through the reduplication *kírú* which means "short". Instead of saying *kírúkurú* "short short", the adjective is partially reduplicated *kúkúrú* to give "short".

#### 4.2.2.3 Adjectives Formed from Nouns

These adjectives are derived from nouns

13)

a. *onígbèrága* "proud"

"oní-" is a prefix, when attached to "*gbèrága*" (pride) which is a noun becomes an adjective "*onígbèrága*". The word class changes from a noun to an adjective.

b. *bùréwà* "ugly"

"bù-" is a prefix which means "dirty", when added to the noun "*ẹwà*" which means "beauty", it forms the adjective "*bùréwà*", meaning "ugly" to give the direct opposite.

#### 4.2.2.4. Compound Adjectives

These adjectives are formed by combining two or more words.

14)

a. *Aláánú* "merciful"

The adjective is formed from *alá* which is originally coined from *oni* (to have) + *àánú* (mercy). It is a compound adjective because both *oni* (to have) and *àánú* (mercy) are words that can stand in isolation to give meaning.

b. *Aláyọ* "joyful"

The adjective is formed from *alá* which is originally coined from *oni* (to have) + *áyọ* (joy). Just as in (14a) above, the adjective is formed through the combination of independent words that can stand on their own to give meaning. Both *oni* (to have) and *áyọ* (joy) can stand as a word or phrase.

c. *ẹlẹjọwẹwẹ* "talkative"

The adjective is formed from *ẹlẹjọ* (one who talks) + *wẹwẹ* (softly). In this case, the adjective is formed through the combination of independent words *ẹlẹjọ* (which is a noun) and *wẹwẹ* (which is an adverb) to give *ẹlẹjọwẹwẹ* which is an adjective meaning "talkative"

d. *onígboràn* "obedient"

The adjective is formed from *oní* (one who has) + *gboràn* (to listen). In this case, the adjective is realized through the combination of the compound word "oní" which can serve as a noun and *gboràn* which is a verb.

### 4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of the findings reveals that Yoruba adjectives are composed of various morphemes, such as prefixes, root words, and reduplications. The first research objective is answered by identifying the morphemes like prefixes (e.g., *oní* "one who has"), roots (e.g., *gbèrága* "pride"), and reduplications (e.g., *jàafáafá* "diligent"). These morphemes combine to form adjectives in different patterns. The second research objective addresses the meanings of these morphemes, showing that prefixes denote ownership or a characteristic (e.g., *onígbèrága* "proud" meaning "one who has pride"), while reduplications intensify the meaning (e.g., *kùkurú* "short"). Lastly, the semantic functions of Yoruba adjectives are primarily descriptive, indicating qualities like size, or behavior, such as in *tòbi* "big" or *aláánú* "merciful". The construction grammar theory framework fits into this analysis by explaining how these morphemes and their combinations form grammatical constructions with specific meanings in the Yoruba language, emphasizing the connection between form and meaning in linguistic expressions. It was also evident as seen from the analysis that most adjectives in Yoruba are not just fixed, they can be formed through the combination of other morphemes and word classes e.g noun, verbs, and adverbs.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter attempts to summarize the previous chapters of the study on morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives as well present the findings, draw some conclusions

#### **5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

This research study was designed to look into the morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives. Chapter one of the study focused on the background of the study. It was noted that adjectives play a vital role in language as they describe or modify nouns and pronouns, providing additional information about their characteristics or qualities.

Furthermore, the chapter stated the aim and objectives of the study as well introduce the topic and the language of the research, the statement of the research problem and the significance of the study. The study relied on utterances gathered from primary sources, with the data sample comprising forty (40) adjectives which were divided into various categories. The data was collected from four (4) native speakers who live in Lagos State where the language is indigenous. The informants were selected based on the differences in age range, sex, place of early childhood and level of formal education. The collection

procedures engaged informants in different forms of interaction such as interviews and storytellings.

Chapter two of the research reviewed some relevant literature on morphology, semantics, morphosemantics and adjectives. The chapter was divided into four main sub-sections, they are: conceptual review, previous study, the concern of present study and lastly, a summary of the chapter.

Chapter three looked into the theoretical framework employed for the research which was the construction grammar theory framework developed by Filmore, Kay and Lakoff (1988). The chapter discussed what the theory framework was all about including its working principles, relevance/justification of the theory to the research, and lastly, how the theory can be applied to the analysis of the present study looking at the strengths of the theory with some selected sample data used for the analysis.

Chapter four has as its main concern the data presentation and analysis. The chapter concerned itself with the presentation of the data, analysis of the data, and lastly, the discussion of findings.

## **5.2 FINDINGS**

The findings in response to the objectives are:

1. There are morphemes that make up adjectives in Yoruba. Yoruba adjectives are primarily composed of the following morphemes: Prefixes, which are attached to root

words to form adjectives. For instance, the prefix *oní* ("one who has") is used in adjectives like *onígberága* ("proud"), *olówó* ("rich"), and *onírele* ("humble"). Root words, whose base words convey the core meaning of the adjective. Examples include *gbèrága* ("pride"), *àánú* ("mercy"), *ewà* ("beauty"), and *áyọ* ("joy"). Reduplication, as seen in *jàafáafá* ("diligent") and *kíkúrú* ("short"). Lastly, compound adjectives, such as *ẹlejọwẹwẹ* ("talkative") and *onígboràn* ("obedient").

2. There are meanings attached to these morphemes. The meanings attached to the morphemes in Yoruba adjectives can be categorized as prefixes, root words, and reduplication which are used to convey various attributes and intensities. Prefixes typically express possession or a characteristic quality, as seen in *oní* ("one who has"). Root words carry the core meaning of the adjective, such as *gbèrága* ("pride") which forms the basis of descriptive terms. Reduplication, on the other hand, often serves to intensify the meaning of the adjective, as exemplified by *jàafáafá* ("diligent"), which emphasizes the quality. These morphemes combine to form adjectives that express a wide range of descriptive meanings.

3. There are semantic functions of adjectives within Yoruba. The primary semantic functions of Yoruba adjectives are descriptive, providing information about qualities or characteristics of people, objects, or situations. These functions include describing physical attributes, describing behavioral or personality traits. Lastly, indicating states or conditions.

These findings demonstrate that Yoruba adjectives are rich in morphemic structure, with each component contributing to the overall meaning and function of the adjective. The use of prefixes, reduplication, and compounds illustrates the flexibility and creativity of the Yoruba language in forming adjectives that are both descriptive and expressive. Lastly, it was evident as seen from the analysis that most adjectives in Yoruba are not just fixed or static, they can be formed through the combination of other morphemes and word classes e.g noun, verbs, and adverbs.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

This study provides a comprehensive investigation of morphosemantic analysis of Yoruba adjectives, using the construction grammar theory framework for its analysis. The data presented encompasses various morphosemantic patterns found in Yoruba adjectives such as prefixal adjectives, reduplicated or intensified adjectives, adjectives formed from nouns and compound adjectives.

Through this analysis, it was evident that Yoruba adjectives are composed of various morphemes, such as prefixes, root words, and reduplications. These morphemes combine to form adjectives in different patterns. The construction grammar theory framework explained how these morphemes and their combinations form grammatical constructions with specific meanings in the Yoruba language, emphasizing the connection between form and meaning in linguistic expressions.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of Yoruba adjectives underlying how morphemes constitutes the adjectives, the meanings attached to the morphemes and the semantic functions of adjectives within the language. Further research in this area can continue to explore the intricate nature of adjectives and their significance within the broader linguistic landscape of Yoruba and other Nigerian languages.

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