ON "THE SUBJECT CONCORD PREFIX" IN YORUBA

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1. Introduction

Except in a few easily specifiable contexts to be discussed later, a v-type high-tone syllable having the same quality as the last vowel of the immediately preceding item always occurs between the subject NP and the remainder of a Yoruba sentence. Determining the precise form and function of the syllable (henceforth HTS) has long been a problem in Yoruba grammar. Various proposals for solving the problem have been put forward over the years both by indigenous and by foreign scholars of the language, namely, Rowlands [1954], Awobuluyi [1964], Bamgbose [1966], Fresco [1970], Oyelaran [1970], and Stahlke [1974]. The present paper critically examines those proposals, and shows that Awobuluyi [1964], which interprets the HTS as a tense marker, is the closest yet to the so far elusive ideal solution to the problem.

The occurrence of the HTS can be exemplified by simple sentences such as the following:

(1) Qla á Iq
Qla HTS go
'Qla went'

(2) Baba á Iq
father HTS go
'Father went.'

(3) Wọn ón Iq
they HTS go
'They went.'

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1 The writer is grateful to Dr. O. Oyelaran of the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, and the editors of SAL for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

2 Examples are cited in traditional Yoruba orthography, which is almost completely phonemic, and in which the letters p, ọ, q, q, represent /kp, ọ, e, a/, and ' represent high tone and low tone respectively (mid tone
(4) ḡrọ ọ wà  
word HTS exist  
'We have/had some matters to discuss.'

(5) ḡgèdè é wón  
banana/plantain HTS be-expensive  
'Bananas/plantains are/were expensive.'

(6) Alùpùpù ú wón  
motorcycle HTS be-expensive  
'Motorcycles are/were expensive.'

(7) Ayọ ọ lọ  
Ayọ HTS go  
'Ayọ went.'

(8) Dayọ ọ lọ  
Dayọ HTS go  
'Dayọ went.'

(9) Bàyọ ọ lọ  
Bayọ HTS go  
'Bayọ went.'

The final syllable of the subject NP in all these examples except the last three is replaceable by the HTS. The rule effecting that replacement can be formulated informally as in

(10) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\ldots \ T \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{CV}_1 \\
\text{NP}
\end{array}
\quad - \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{NP} \\
\text{CV}_1 \\
\text{NP}
\end{array}
\quad \rightarrow \quad \begin{array}{c}
\ldots \ T \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{CV}_1 \\
\text{NP}
\end{array}
\]

where T is any tone (i.e., high, mid, or low), and

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{NP} \\
\text{CV}_1 \\
\text{NP}
\end{array}
\quad \rightarrow \quad \begin{array}{c}
\ldots \ T \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{CV}_1 \\
\text{NP}
\end{array}
\]

This rule applies obligatorily in the case of subject NP final syllables with high tone, \(^3\) and optionally in all other cases. The rule thus explains why the following sentence

being unmarked), and vowel nasality after non-nasal consonants is indicated by writing the letter n after the vowel involved.

\(^3\)On this, see Bamgboye [1966:33].
(11) Déle ọ
    Dele HTS go
    'Dele went."

is normally heard only in the form given here, while (1 - 6) for their part can also be heard as

(12) Qla ọ
    'Qla went.'

(13) Babá ọ
    'Father went.'

(14) Wọn ọ
    'They went.'

(15) Qró wà
    'We have/had things to talk about.'

(16) Qgèdè wọn
    'Bananas/plantains are/were expensive.'

(17) Alùpùpú wọn
    'Motorcycles are/were expensive.'

2. The HTS as the Pronoun ọ

The first attempted solution to the HTS problem, namely, Rowlands [1954:385-6], suggests that the element is in fact the same thing as the third person singular subject "pronoun" ọ. But if this were actually the case, it should be possible to have

(18) *Qla ọ ọ
    Qla HTS go
    'Qla went.'

(19) *Baba ọ ọ
    father HTS go
    'Father went.'

alongside (1 - 2). However, to the best of the writer's present knowledge, (18 - 19) are definitely deviant and unacceptable. Hence, the solution

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Cf. Oyelaran [1970:129]. Ajolare [1973] says that expressions like (18 - 19) occur in child language, which of course is far from claiming
makes an incorrect prediction about the language.

The solution also leads one to expect that the HTS would behave morphophonemically like the vowel /o/, as it in fact does not do. Thus, there are only two rules of vowel assimilation across a word boundary in the language, namely

\[(20) \quad -V_1 \# V_2 \rightarrow -V_1 \# V_1\]
when \(V_2\) is /l/, and \# is a word boundary

\[(21) \quad -V_1 \# V_2 \rightarrow -V_2 \# V_2\]
when \(V_2\) is any one of /a, e, ə, o, e/, and \# is a word boundary.\(^5\)

that it occurs in standard adult Yoruba speech.

Rowlands' view might seem at first sight to be borne out by pairs of utterances like the following:

\[a(i) \quad Kфи Dàda ó iq\]
 compl. Dada pronom. go
'That Dada should go.'

\[a(ii) \quad Kфи Dàda á iq\]
 compl. Dada HTS go
'That Dada should go.'

\[b(i) \quad Orin àddóje ó lé mààrún\]
song 130 pronom. be-excess five
'Hymn 135.'

\[b(ii) \quad Orin àddóje é lé mààrún\]
song 130 HTS be-excess five
'Hymn 135.'

In fact, they offer no support for the view. For one thing, the members of each pair are not variants: those marked (i) are more emphatic than those marked (ii). In addition, (ai), but not (a(ii), also occurs with the same meaning as

\[c(i) \quad Kфи Dàda kfi ó iq\]
which would seem to have come by pronominalization from

\[c(ii) \quad Kфи Dàda kfi Dàda á iq\]
 compl. Dada compl. Dada HTS go

The same utterance (ai) also occurs, again with the same meaning, as

\[c(iii) \quad Kфи Dado ó iq\]
by rule (21).

It is clear that the vowels involved in (c(iii)) and (a(ii)) cannot be the same, as there is otherwise no case of the same vowel assimilating both progressively and regressively in precisely the same environment in the language.

Apart from being more emphatic than (b(ii)), as already indicated, (b(i)) is further differentiated from (b(ii)) by the fact that a brief pause is possible immediately before the pronominalization in it, but not before the HTS in (b(ii)).

\(^5\)For these two rules, see Awobuluyi [1964:71-2], and cf. Bamgboye [1966:160].
With its phonemic shape as /ó/, the HTS would definitely not be able to undergo either of these two rules, because the condition for the application of the first is not satisfied and, given /ó/ as an input, the second would only produce phonetically deviant outputs like (22):

(22) *Babo ó ló

Under these circumstances, it is clear that there is no principled way to account for the morphophonemic behavior of the HTS under the assumption that the element itself is the same thing as the third person singular subject pronoun, which is phonemically /ó/. 6

Finally, the solution is incomplete, as it says nothing about the function that the HTS performs in Yoruba sentence structure.

3. The HTS as Subject-Predicate Junction Marker

Bamgboye [1966:33-4], like Rowlands, attempts only a partial solution of the HTS problem. For while he has some things to say about the element's function, he is silent on what its precise form is. He indicates that the HTS is a subject-predicator junction marker. However, since it is far from self-evident that this is indeed the case, it would have been helpful for readers to be told why it is necessary for the subject-predicator junction to be marked.

This consideration apart, even by Bamgboye's own account, the subject-predicator junction marker does not occur in every subject-predicator structure in the language. This being the case, it is difficult to see how the element could really be a subject-predicator junction marker when it can actually be absent from precisely where it must occur by definition.

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6 Rule (20) has no exceptions at all. This is also true for rule (21), because all those expressions which appear to violate it actually represent cases in which its operation was suspended for semantic reasons. Thus, to cite just one example, the pattern of assimilation observable in

a. a òò ló → a àà ló 'We shall go.'
b. q òò ló → q àà ló 'You (pl.) will go.'

needs to take precisely that form to prevent the following otherwise unavoidable mergers from occurring:

c. o òò ló → o oò ló 'You (sing.) will go.'
d. a òò ló \neq o oò ló 'We shall go.'
e. q òò ló \neq o oò ló 'You (pl.) will go.'
mo 'I', o 'you' and ó 'he, she, it', all containing the vowel /o/, to be a morphological puzzle which can only be solved if the HTS is assumed to be phonemically /ó/. But, by assigning the HTS the phonemic shape of /ó/, he inadvertently guarantees that his proposal will run into precisely the same morphophonemic problem with noun subject NP's as Rowlands' proposal does. Moreover, the proposal also runs into serious trouble with "pronoun" subject NP's, the only type of subject NP's that Fresco actually considers.

Thus, his phrase structure and transformational rules (p. 65) combined would, for example, produce

(25) Ñemì ó tì lò
    'I HTS already go'

Two alternative terminal outputs are possible from this intermediate string, viz.

(26) Ñemì i tì lò
    'I HTS already go
    'I have already gone.'

(27) Ñemì tì lò
    'I-HTS already go
    'I have already gone.'

Fresco unfortunately gives no indication as to how these two possible terminal outputs would actually be derived from (25). But, left to the only applicable independently motivated rule of vowel assimilation across a word boundary in the language, namely, rule (21), the intermediate string (25) would actually yield the phonetically deviant sentence

(28) *Ñemò ó tì lò

rather than the intended well-formed (26). Similarly, by rule (10), the only applicable independently motivated contraction rule in the language involving the HTS and the final syllable of a subject NP ending on a mid tone (whether the former is a noun or a "pronoun" as in (3)), the string in (25) would yield the phonetically ill-formed

(29) *Ñemó tì lò
Bambose adds (p. 34) that the subject-predicate junction marker is essential for contrasting different structures in those cases where "formal item exponents" are otherwise identical. E.g.

(23) Nominal group
   Ṣọ tuntun
   cloth new
   'A new cloth'

Clause
   Ṣọ tuntun ( < Ṣọ ṣ tuntun)
   cloth new
   HTS
   'The cloth is new.'

But he himself cites (ibid) the example of

(24) Nominal group
   ìlé tuntun
   house new
   'A new house'

Clause
   ìlé tuntun ( < ìlé é tuntun)
   house new
   HTS
   'The house is new.'

where the subject-predicate junction marker, although present, affords no way at all of formally differentiating the formal item exponents involved. As it turns out, the items in (24) are actually differentiated by their functions. The same can be said for the items in (23) and all others like them. Thus, all such structures are invariably differentiated by their functions, but not by the subject-predicate junction marker. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this is that the latter is not the element that actually contrasts those structures.

Contrasts like those in (23 - 24) are, in the writer's opinion, completely spurious: the elements involved never occur in identical overall environments and even if they occasionally did, by Bambose's own admission, it would be totally incongruous for an item of such a high frequency of occurrence as the HTS to be of structural relevance only on such rare occasions.

4. The HTS as "Subject Marker"

Oyelaran [1970:135] and Fresco [1970:65] consider the HTS to be a meaningless "subject marker," and therefore propose to introduce it into underlying structures by a transformation. Oyelaran represents it as ỳ, and Fresco as /ọ/. Fresco considers the fact that the three singular personal "pronouns"
rather than the intended output (27).

Now to consider an actual derivation, Fresco proposes to derive the surface structure sentence

(30) Mo ɪə
'I went.'

from

(31) Mí ə ɪə
'I HTS go

by means of two P-rules. The first such rule (p. 66) would assimilate the vowel of the subject NP mí to that of the HTS, and (31) becomes

(32) Mo ə ɪə

The second rule (p. 67) would then delete the HTS from (32) to yield (30).

Fresco's first P-rule is actually the same as rule (21) above. His second rule, however, does not exist in the Yoruba language and ought therefore to be disallowed. The rule claims that the HTS can be dropped under contraction with a preceding subject NP, whereas the data in (1 – 9, 11 – 17) above clearly show that the HTS is never dropped. The rule claims furthermore that when mid tone and high tone are involved in contraction, it is the former that is retained. In fact, it is the latter that is invariably retained in Yoruba. 7


Bamgbose [1966:161] records examples like the following

(i) ọ rí i → ọ rí
he see it 'He found it.'

in which mid tone rather than high tone is retained under contraction. This aberrant behavior, as it turns out, is semantically motivated. For had high tone been retained in (i), as expected, the resultant contracted form, viz ọ rí would have been formally indistinguishable from the output of

(ii) ọ rí NP → ọ rí 'He found (unspecified NP).'
He see NP

Under these circumstances, examples like (i) do not constitute real exceptions to the rule governing the behavior of high tone and mid tone
Sequential application of rules (21) and (10), the relevant Yoruba rules of vowel assimilation across a word boundary and of subject NP - HTS contraction, would definitely produce from (31) the phonetically ill-formed

(33) *Mo 1q

rather than (30).

As indicated earlier, both Oyelaran and Fresco propose to introduce the HTS by transformation. The element, however, normally does not occur overtly in sentences like (30) containing the subject NP's Mo 'I', a 'we', o 'you (sing.)', q 'you (pl.)'. Thus, if it is introduced transformationally (whether as /ó/, according to Fresco, or as ɪ, according to Oyelaran) into the structure underlying sentences like (30), viz (31) or (34),

(34) Mo ɪ 1q

it would subsequently have to be removed from there by transformation. But as already pointed out about (31), there is no principled way in the language to delete the HTS from such underlying strings without producing phonetically deviant outputs like (33). As a general rule in Yoruba, specific or prescribed tonal adjustments must be carried out simultaneously with the deletion of any one of two contiguous vowel segments belonging to two different words. The prescribed adjustment in the present case calls for the replacement of mid tone by high tone, with the predictable result that (34) would be turned into (33) following the deletion of ɪ.

This would seem to suggest, therefore, that it is at the very least analytically inexpedient to introduce the HTS by transformation. As a matter of fact, such a procedure is not merely inexpedient but unjustifiable; for as will be shown below, the HTS possesses real semantic content and must therefore be introduced lexically like all other similar elements.

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under contraction.

Incidently, Oyalaran [1970:165-6] questions the authenticity of examples like (i), but this writer is inclined to agree with Bamgbosé that they occur in the speech of some speakers of Standard Yoruba.
5. The HTS as "Subject Concord Prefix"

Stahlke [1974], motivated by much the same morphological considerations as Fresco, feels that the HTS is a "subject concord (SC) prefix" with the shape \( v \) between noun subject NP's and verbs, and the shapes \( \text{mo} \), \( o \) and \( \text{o} \) when the first, second, and third person singular "pronoun" subject NP's, respectively, are involved. He provides the following sample derivations (p. 177):

\[
(35) \begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{Emi} \quad i \varphi \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{Qm} \quad i \varphi
\end{align*}
\]

In his own words, "if the subject NP is a personal pronoun, as in (35a), the appropriate SC is attached to the verb and the subject NP is deleted. If, as in (35b), the subject NP is a noun, the SC is simply the high tone whose distribution was illustrated earlier. In this case, the subject NP is not deleted" (p. 177).

Notice first of all, however, that according to Stahlke, the deep structure string

\[
(35) \begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{Emi} \quad i \varphi \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{Qm} \quad i \varphi
\end{align*}
\]

will only yield the surface structure sentence

\[
(36) \begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{I went} \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{I went}
\end{align*}
\]

But (37) in fact also occurs in the language, and there is no principled
way to generate it alongside (36) within the framework of his analysis.

(37) a. Òmí ́lọ̀ cf. (26), above
    I HTS go
    'I went.'

b. Òmí ́lọ̀ cf. (27), above
    I-HTS go
    'I went.'

Secondly, the analysis claims, as can be seen from (35a), that the SC which occurs with the NP òmí 'I' takes the form of Mo. But as (37) clearly shows, this is not the case. The SC that actually occurs with the NP òmí is ́; in which case, (36) in fact could not have come from (35a).

Thirdly, the transformational rule for deleting the NP òmí from the intermediate tree diagram in (35a) has no real parallel in the Yoruba language. This being the case, there would seem to be no compelling reason to suppose that it actually exists in Yoruba grammar. This is all the more so as its sole raison d'être, namely the idea that (36) derives from (35a), is mistaken, as already shown.

Fourthly, if the SC were a prefix on verbs, as suggested, actual prefixation of some of its forms, which consist simply of a vowel with a high tone. However, a well-known Yoruba rule excludes all such words as phonologically deviant,⁸ and it is not clear at all how the status of the SC as a prefix can be reconciled with that rule.⁹

Fifthly, Fresco [1970:66] cites data from the Ọba and Ọwọ dialects of Yoruba, in which the elements Stahlke calls SC occur with their own SC, as follows:

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⁸On this, see Awobuluyi [1964:29], Bamgbose [1966:9], Rowlands [1969: 39], and Oyelaran [1970:76-7].

⁹Stahlke feels that the SC must be a prefix because its vowel harmonizes with that of verbs in some dialects (though not in Standard Yoruba). Such harmonizing combinations of SC and verbs, however, can have several words inserted between them, and they, therefore, cannot constitute words, as Stahlke's formulation implies.
A similar phenomenon occurs in some Igbonina dialects, viz

Even in the standard form of the language, a similar thing occurs, as exemplified in the case of won 'they', in (40):

\[(40) \text{won qn lq}\]
\[\text{they SC go}\]
\[\text{'They went.'}\]

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10 Personal observation and Adeoye [1971:59].

11 Existing publications on the language give the impression that (38) does not occur, as none of them either cites it or otherwise gives any indication at all that it is possible.

However, it actually occurs in this writer's idiolect as well as in some others that he has heard before. Furthermore, as Stahlke [1974:175] rightly notes, the form won alternates with won, as in

\[a(i) \text{won lq}\]
\[a(ii) \text{won kò lq}\]
\[a(iii) \text{won ôò lq}\]
\[\text{'They went.' 'They did not go.' 'They will go.'}\]

This alternation of won and won is not an isolated phenomenon, as Stahlke also rightly points out. Scores of other words participate in it; for example,

\[b(i) \text{qà lq}\]
\[b(ii) \text{qà kò lq}\]
\[b(iii) \text{qà ôò lq}\]
\[\text{'Qà went.' 'Qà did not go.' 'Qà will go.'}\]

\[c(i) \text{babà lq}\]
\[c(ii) \text{babà kò lq}\]
\[c(iii) \text{babà ôò lq}\]
\[\text{'Father went.' 'Father did not go.' 'Father will go.'}\]

Under these circumstances, it is clear that, as Stahlke unfortunately does not point out, the difference between won and won has to be explained in exactly the same way as the one between qà and qà, and between babà and Baba. The difference between the latter two pairs, as may be recalled, was created by rule (10). This being the case, the difference between won and won must similarly be considered as the effect of that same rule. Therefore, (38) exists in Yoruba, for some speakers only as an
Given such data, it is necessary to ask how an element that is said to be a concord prefix could have its own concord prefix. In other words, how are won 'they', mo 'I' and wo 'you (sing.)' different from nouns like baba 'father', Òla 'personal name' when, like the latter, they have their own concord prefixes?

Finally, Stahlke's analysis, like others before it, assumes that the HTS has no meaning. But, in fact, this is not the case, as will be shown presently.

6. The Ideal Solution

The various questions and problems raised in the foregoing paragraphs show, among other things, that any solution to the HTS problem which is to be considered accurate must meet most, if not all, of the following specifications. First, it must account fully for the distribution of the HTS. Second, it must account for the element's morphophonemic behavior without having recourse to rules that lack independent existence in the language. Third, since the HTS forms part of the existing linguistic inventory of the Yoruba language, any would-be solution must necessarily be able to assign it a linguistic function of demonstrable current relevance in that language. Finally, such a solution must be compatible with underlying string, and for others both as an underlying string and as a surface structure utterance.

The impression one gets from Fresco [1970] and Stahlke [1974] is that they analyze the HTS as a subject marker or subject concord prefix in effect for diachronic or comparative linguistic reasons only. Thus, although Stahlke [1974:175, note 6] argues convincingly at great length that the HTS cannot be viewed as a grammatical agreement morpheme in present day Yoruba, he nevertheless analyzes it as a "Subject Concord Prefix" because, as he puts it (p. 176), "several linguists...have claimed that Yoruba, like many other Niger-Congo languages, has a Subject-Verb agreement or concord rule."

Oyelaran [1970:127, 135] calls the HTS a subject marker, as it would seem, for the following two reasons: first, because Case Grammar claims that "the subject of the sentence, when followed immediately in the chain by the verb, is always marked" (p. 127), and second, because the HTS actually "occurs whenever a noun phrase is immediately followed by any element that is a verb" (p. 135). As (62-65) show below, however, Oyelaran's second reason for calling the HTS a subject marker is incorrect, and he is therefore left with only the first reason, whose validity is yet to be demonstrated for Yoruba.
(45) ो ิ I
   he HTS go
(46) Délé ि I
   Dele HTS go

rule (20) would operate, giving as its output the strings

(47) ो ो ि
   he HTS go
(48) Délé é ि
   Dele HTS go

Rule (10) would operate obligatorily on the latter to yield

(49) ो 13 ि
   'He went.'
(50) Délé ि
   'Dele went.'

The HTS would be present as /φ/ in deep structures containing any one of the following items in Standard Yoruba:\(^{14}\)

(51) mo 'I'
    o 'You (sing.)'
    a 'We'

\(^{13}\)Thus except when a future tense marker is present, this form ो is always a portmanteau morph, simultaneously representing the third person singular subject "pronoun" and the HTS. Incidentally, notice that the HTS is not the only pre-verbal adverb that fuses with subject NP's in the language. The adverb ่, for signifying unaccomplished actions, regularly fuses with "pronoun" subject NP's as in

*Mo | bá | ि + ะ bá | ि 'I would have gone.'
*O | bá | ि + ะ bá | ि 'You (sing.) would have gone.'
*a | bá | ि + ะ bá | ि 'We would have gone.'
*ŋ | bá | ि + ะ bá | ि 'You (pl.) would have gone.'

cf. Qła | bá | ि + Qła à bá | ि 'Qla would have gone.'

\(^{14}\)It is assumed that the entry for the HTS in the lexicon would contain information that would permit the correct allomorph, /φ/, to be selected for such deep structures.
relevant established facts, and, if possible, also shed light on related problems in the language.

7. The HTS as Non-Future Tense Marker

Many of these specifications, as it turns out, are easily met if one assumes, much as in Awobuluyi [1964:78], that the HTS is (1) a pre-verbal adverb which indicates the non-future tense, and (2) morphologically /í/ in most contexts, and /∅/ in a few contexts where it is semantically present but physically absent.

On this assumption, the HTS would be present as /í/ in the following deep structure strings:

(41) Qla ʃ i ʃq
    Qla HTS go

(42) Baba ʃ i ʃq
    Father HTS go

(43) Wọn ʃ i ʃq
    They HTS go

Rule (20) would convert these into

(41') Qla á ʃq
    'Qla went.'

(42') Baba á ʃq
    'Father went.'

(43') Wọn ọn ʃq
    'They went.'

and application of rule (10) would turn the latter into (12 - 14).

In the case of the deep structure string

(44) Èmi ʃ ti ʃq
    I HTS already go

rule (20) would operate vacuously to yield (26). Rule (10) would then turn (26) into (27).

Similarly, in the case of
'You (plural)'
'not'
habitual action (in the past/present)
unaccomplished action
'dà' 'where is?'
'nkó' 'where is?'

For example,

(52) Mo φ lọ
    I HTS go
(53) Qla φ kò lọ
    Qla HTS not go
(54) Déle φ ̀ bá lọ
    Dele HTS would-have happen go
    'Dele would have gone.'

A convention existing independently in the language\textsuperscript{15} would delete the zero symbol from these underlying strings late in their derivation to yield

(55) Mo lọ (cf. 36)
    'I went.'

\textsuperscript{15}The convention is needed for

(i) ̀́ bá lọ
    would-have happen go
    'He, she, it would have gone.'

As its gloss shows, (i) contained a token of the 3rd person singular "pronoun" in deep structure. If the pronoun were represented as /ọ/, as in

(ii) ọ ̀́ bá lọ

this underlying string would incorrectly be turned into

(iii) *́ bá lọ

by a Yoruba rule which requires high tone to be always retained when it is involved in contraction with low tone. (On the rule, see Awobuluyi [1964: 68], Bamgbose [1966:9], and Oyelaran [1970:81-2]). But if the pronoun were instead represented as φ, as in

(iv) φ ̀́ bá lọ

the desired output (i) would easily be produced by a convention deleting the symbol φ from (iv).
8. Discussion

The solution just illustrated is suggested by a number of considerations in the language. First and foremost among them is that of the position in which the HTS actually occurs in Yoruba sentence structure. That position, as it turns out, is the very one in which pre-verbal adverbs occur in the language. This being the case, it has to be assumed that the HTS is itself also a pre-verbal adverb, unless and until there is proof to the contrary.

With only one exception to be discussed later, the time reference in any sentence in which the HTS occurs is invariably non-future, i.e. either present or past. For example,

(58) Òlá á lọ
Òlá HTS go
'Òlá went.'

(59) Òrọ̀ ọ̀ wà
Word HTS exist
'We have/had some matters to discuss.'

Similarly, the time reference in any sentence displaying any one of the pre-verbal adverbs yọ̀ọ̀, òọ̀, and á is always future. For example,

(60) Òlá yọ̀ọ̀ lọ
Òlá future go
'Òlá will go.'

(61) Òyọ̀ á lọ
Óyọ̀ future go
'Óyọ̀ will go.'

Bamgboye [1966:68] calls these same elements verbs, though he agrees with this writer in [1972:40] that their sole function is that of adverbs.
From these two sets of examples it can be seen that there is as much correlation between the HTS and non-future time reference as there is between the adverbs yóó, òò, and á and future time reference. Hence, if the latter adverbs are analyzed on the basis of such a correlation as the markers of the future tense, then the HTS must similarly be analyzed as the marker of the non-future tense.

There appears to be only three tenses in Yoruba, namely, Future, non-Future, and Neutral—a tense without specific time reference. Thus, if the claim that the HTS is the marker of non-Future is correct, any sentence in the language in which neither the HTS nor any Future tense marker occurs should have a Neutral tense meaning, that is, it should have no specific time reference. In this connection, consider the following:

(62) ṃwọn jā m bi ó wù ú
      chain break in place which—it please it
      'The chain breaks wherever it pleases.'

(63) Èìyàn gbé òkèèère ní ọjú
      person reside afar possess dignity
      'When you don't interact with someone at close quarters, he always seems to have no faults.'

(64) Èjì dín ní ogún (> èjì dín lógún)
      two be-missing in twenty
      'Eighteen'

(65) Òjì lè igba (> Òjì lúgba)
      forty be-on-top two-hundred
      'Two hundred and forty'

Examples (62-63) contain no tense markers. They occur in ordinary usage as proverbs. Now, since proverbs are normally never time-bound in their import, it might seem to be only natural that (62-63) should lack

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18 The term "Tense" as used here refers, as in Hockett [1958:237], only to the location of events in time.
specific time reference. That is, in other words, it might be thought that the lack of a specific time reference in (62-63) could be explained solely by the fact that those sentences are proverbs and not also by the fact that they contain no tense markers. That this is not so is shown, however, by proverbs like (66), which are in the clear majority in the language:

(66) Ẹsìn kú ó fi ́rù sí ayé (< Ẹsìn in kú ó fi ́rù sí aye)\(^{19}\)

horse-HTS die it put tail to earth\(^{19}\)

'The horse died, leaving its tail behind on earth.'

Proverbs like (66) are always morphologically marked for tense. For this reason, they always possess time-bound literal meanings as well as temporally unspecified figurative interpretations. Thus, the actual or figurative meaning of (66) is, according to Delanq [1970:69], "A man may himself be absent but he has an effective deputy--be it son, relative or friend--to look after his interests." Proverbs like (62-63), by contrast, are never marked for tense, and in consequence possess both literal and figurative meanings with no specific time reference.

Furthermore, because proverbs like (66) are marked for tense, they are easily mistaken for non-proverbs when out of context and given time-bound, literal meanings. This never happens in the case of proverbs like (62-63), however, and it can therefore be seen that the absence of tense markers from such utterances serves fully to guarantee or ensure that they can never be given time-bound interpretations. In other words, (62-63) lack specific time references not only because they are proverbs but also because no tense marker occurs in them.

Examples (64-65) are sentences used for naming numerals. They contain no tense markers, and lack specific time reference. The latter has nothing to do, however, with the fact that those sentences are used for naming, since other sentences exist in the language which are similarly

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\(^{19}\)Until fairly recently, the horse was a status symbol in Yorubaland. And even today, as Delanq [1970:69] rightly explains, when it dies, its tail is not buried with it. Rather, it is kept for use "as an ornament and sign of authority by Yoruba kings."
used for naming, but which nevertheless always contain specific time reference. For example, we find the personal name

(67) ṣọọtun dé ( < ṣọọ ón tun dé)
    child-HTS again arrive
    'Our child is back again.'

Sentences like (64-65) contain no tense markers and consequently lack a specific time reference, so that they, like (62-63), may never be misinterpreted as describing specific events or occurrences.\(^{20}\)

If the semantic interpretation attributed to (62-63) is correct, then such sentences confirm the prediction implicit in the view that the HTS is the marker of the non-Future tense. That being the case, they further strengthen the correlation already noted between the HTS and non-Future tense.

That the HTS is indeed the marker of the non-Future tense can be seen still more clearly from a consideration of the traditional description of that tense in Yoruba grammar. The unanimous view of this tense is that it is morphologically zero in all contexts,\(^{21}\) while the Future tense is marked by the presence of any one of the adverbs yóò, óò, á, or máa. If this traditional view were correct, any declarative sentence in which no Future marker is present would have a non-Future time reference. But, examples (62-65), as already seen, contain no Future markers and yet lack non-Future time reference.\(^{22}\) Such examples therefore show that the

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\(^{20}\) The names of some numerals contain the HTS, as in

†oogogojọ dín méjì (more usually: méjì dín lọgogojọ)
160 HTS be-less two

'two be-less in-160

'One hundred and fifty-eight.'

But all such numerals, unlike those that never contain the HTS, can be mistaken for ordinary descriptions of temporally specified events.

\(^{21}\) On this, see, e.g. Ward [1956:78-79], Bamgboye [1966:91], and Awobuluyi [1967:260].

\(^{22}\) Commands do not normally contain the HTS (because they contain future tense markers in deep structure, with which the HTS is mutually exclusive). For this reason, the possibility has to be considered that (62-65) may be commands. That possibility has been ruled out here,
The traditional view of the morphology of the non-Future tense is erroneous: the tense is not morphologically zero in all contexts. Quite the contrary, it is overtly represented, at least in some contexts, by some element which is missing from (62-65).

Now, apart from the Future tense marker, the only other element that should alternatively appear in those sentences but which is actually not there is the HTS. This being the case, the conclusion is completely inescapable that this latter element is indeed the marker of the non-Future tense. That this conclusion is right is shown by the fact that the introduction of the HTS into those sentences predictably gives them a non-Future time reference, as in

(68) ेज़ फ्रॉ डिन न गून
two HTS be-missing in twenty
'Two is/was missing from twenty.'

(69) ेवृण ख़ा म ख़ ख़ बू उ
catch HTS break in place which-it please it
'The chain broke exactly where it pleased.'

9. Residual Problems

This proposed solution to the HTS problem is not completely free of problems, however. In particular, it is unable to account for everything about the distribution of the HTS.

As two opposing concepts, the Future tense and the non-Future tense should never cooccur either semantically or morphologically within the same sentence in the language. From the semantic standpoint, this is indeed the case throughout the language: no Yoruba sentence contains Future tense and non-Future tense, and simultaneously refers to future time and non-future time. From the morphological standpoint, by contrast, the above expectation is only partially realized. For although the HTS indeed

however, because, for one thing, the utterances do not possess imperative meanings, and for another, because they lack the characteristic structure of commands: they possess non-vocative subject NP's, and consequently could not be direct commands. Moreover, they do not contain (जे) क्षी 'allow) that', and are, therefore, not indirect commands either.
is mutually exclusive with the Future tense markers yòọ, ọọ, and ạ, as expected, it surprisingly can and does regularly cooccur with the Future tense marker máa, as in

(70) Ayọ ọ máa ọ

Ayọ HTS Future go
'Ayọ will go.'

The element also occurs, contrary to expectation, in two types of embedded sentences exemplified by

(71) a. Mo fọ kí Dàda ọ ọ

I want compl. Dada HTS go
'I want Dada to go.'

cf. b. Mo fọ kí Dàda ọ

I want compl. Dada go
'I want Dada to go.'

(72) Bí Dàda ọ bá wá, a ọọ rí ọ

If Dada HTS happen comes, we Future see him
'If Dada comes, we shall see him.'

Since the action denoted by the verb ọ 'to go' in the embedded sentence in (71a) must in the nature of things occur subsequently to the one denoted by fọ 'to want' in the matrix sentence, it can be said that the embedded sentence has a future time reference. In which case, the HTS should not appear there at all, as in (71b).

The protasis sentence in (72) has future time reference, as required, because the apodosis sentence has future time reference also. For this reason, the occurrence of the HTS in that protasis sentence is somewhat contrary to expectation.

Notice that the above three kinds of examples actually illustrate the same phenomenon, namely, the occurrence of the HTS in contexts marked as Future, and in which its meaning is invariably completely suppressed in favor of that of the future tense. The solution to the HTS problem presented in this paper cannot explain why the element can occur as in (70–72) nor why its suggested meaning is invariably suppressed in the presence
of future time reference rather than vice versa. To this extent, the solution definitely falls short of the ideal.\textsuperscript{23}

10. Conclusion

An advantage of this solution is that it provides, as no other one has done before, a natural semantic explanation for why the HTS is mutually exclusive of specifically the Future tense markers (except m\textsuperscript{á}a) and with them alone. Secondly, it draws attention to, and is in addition fully compatible with, the hitherto overlooked structural and semantic implications of the position in which the HTS actually occurs in sentence structure. Thirdly, it provides what would seem to be the only means of accounting for both the meaning and the structure of utterances like (62-65). Fourthly, it represents what would again seem to be the only viable alternative to the traditional but completely erroneous view that the non-Future tense is morphologically zero everywhere in the language. Finally, it is totally cost-free, since, unlike its predecessors, it accounts for the behavior of the HTS under assimilation and contraction without employing any new rule at all. Given all these, it would appear that, on balance, the solution is one on which further work on the HTS problem can profitably be based.

This paper did not set out specifically to disprove the claim that there is a subject concord marker in Yoruba. Nevertheless, it is clear that, by showing that what all the proponents of that view identify as a subject marker is in fact a tense marker, this paper has actually called that view into serious question. The HTS had seemed to the proponents of the view as the most likely, indeed the only, candidate for the

\textsuperscript{23}Notice, however, that the problem involved here is apparently not specific to the Yoruba language. In English, the present tense and progressive aspect markers lose their meanings, exactly as the HTS does, in the context of future time reference, as in

\begin{quote}
He arrives at 2 p.m. tomorrow.
He is coming to dinner tonight.
\end{quote}

Thus, it is clear that the problem is one which must be seen and studied from a much broader perspective than that afforded by the HTS.
suggested post of subject concord marker. But given the various considerations raised above, a new search must now be undertaken for the real candidate for that post. And if current knowledge of the language is anything to go by, such a search is likely to be completely fruitless.

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