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## **Construction morphology in Yoruba names: Schemas and processes**

### **Abstract**

This article is an attempt to explore how the framework of construction morphology may apply to the analysis of Yoruba names. Following this approach, we show that each Yoruba name is a unique construction involving semantic, syntactic and phonological properties. Hence, this discussion highlights that names constitute a form-meaning pair. Yoruba names may be grouped into categories as distinct constructions with unique SEM, SYN and PHON properties. More specifically, it is observed that PHON properties may include word initial vowel elision, syllable elision, vowel and consonant elongation while SYN features include processes of lexicalization of sentential forms. Furthermore, the article reveals that Yoruba names may show constructional patterns that are deviant from regular processes, observed by previous studies to occur in similar linguistic environments. These patterns, therefore, are part of the unique constructional property of Yoruba personal names in contradistinction to other word formation contexts.

**Keywords:** construction morphology, schemas, processes, personal names, Yoruba

### **1. Introduction**

As discussed by Ehineni (2021), Construction Morphology (CM) specifically provides application of the insights of Construction Grammar to morphological analysis. The framework of CM was extensively developed through a series of works particularly by Booij (2005, 2007, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2013). This devel-

opment is informed by previous views by Michaelis and Lambrecht (1996: 216), who claim that “[i]n Construction Grammar, the grammar represents an inventory of form-meaning-function complexes, in which words are distinguished from grammatical constructions only with regard to their internal complexity”; and also by Croft (2001: 17), who observes: “[...]the internal structure of words are also constructions[...]. The only difference between morphological constructions and syntactic ones is that the former are entirely made up of bound morphemes while the latter are largely made up of free morphemes”. In the development of the CM framework, Booij emphasizes a continuum view of the relationship between the lexicon and grammar, and suggests the use of morphological schemas to express generalizations about form-meaning pairings.

According to Booij (2016), language users can assign internal structure to a word if there is a systematic correlation between its form and meaning. Using the following sets of words such as (a) *dancer, fighter, singer, walker* and (b) *dance, fight, sing, walk*, Booij explains that the verbal base (*dance, fight, sing, walk*) is followed by the suffix *-er*, and a corresponding systematic meaning pattern ‘one who Vs’, where V stands for the meaning of the verb. Also, the systematic form difference between the words in (a) and those in (b) correlates with a systematic meaning difference – the words in (a) have the additional form component *-er*, and the additional meaning component ‘agent of’ (Booij 2016: 424). However, as Booij notes, while the nouns (1a) are considered as deverbal agent nouns and may be assigned an internal structure – [V-er]N –there is no reason to assign internal structure to nouns like *brother* and *father* that end in the same sequence /ər/, because these nouns do not correspond to verbs like *\*to broth* or *\*to fath*. Hence, according to Booij, assignment of word structure is based on systematic paradigmatic relationships between sets of words. These relationships may be expressed through the use of morphological schemas. For instance, the form-meaning correlations observed in the English deverbal (agentive) construction can be represented as a constructional schema:  $\langle [x]_{vi} \text{er} \rangle_{Nj} \leftrightarrow [\text{Agent of SEM}]_j \rangle$  (Booij 2015: 425).

On the structure of the schema, Booij explains that the double arrow indicates the correlation between form and meaning, and by means of co-indexation, the systematic relationship between form and meaning is specified. The index *i* in the schema serves to indicate that the meaning of the base word (SEM) recurs in that of the corresponding complex word. The index *j* indicates that the meaning of the construction as a whole correlates with the form as a whole. The angled brackets demarcate a constructional schema. He further clarifies that the variable *x* in the schema represents the phonological content of the base word, and there-

fore indicates an empty slot. Hence, when a concrete word occupies this variable  $x$  position, it results in a complex word.

Basically, the main tenets of Booij's CM are a theory of word grammar and the notion of CONSTRUCTION. The theory of word grammar/structure in CM is based on the assumption that the word is the minimal linguistic sign, a form-meaning pair. The structure of a word comprises two dimensions – its phonological form and its morpho-syntactic properties. This means that each word links three types of information – PHON(ological), SYN(tactic) and SEM(antic) – and morphology or the grammar of words (Booij 2007a) must deal with the systematic relation between all three components (Booij 2010b: 429). Hence, constructions are pairings of form and meaning.

The notion of CONSTRUCTION in CM is motivated by the observation that construction in morphological analysis may include properties that do not derive from their constituents but from the entire construction itself. Booij supports this view by noting that the suffix *-er* in words like *dancer*, *fighter*, *singer*, *walker* does not carry a meaning of its own in isolation and it is the constructional schema as a whole; that is, it is *-er* in combination with a verb that evokes the agent meaning. In other words, the meaning of the suffix is associated and bound to the construction. CM therefore claims that the properties that pertain to form, meaning, and usage are better captured holistically belonging to the construction itself. A very significant aspect of CM is the use of schemas and subschemas to formalize morphological constructions.

## 2. Schemas in construction morphology

A schema is characterized as a cognitive representation comprising a generalization over perceived similarities among instances of usage, which emerges from repeated activation of a set of co-occurring properties (Barlow & Kemmer 2000: xxiii). As Booij explains, complex words can be seen as instantiations of abstract morphological schemas. The relation of instantiation is expressed by vertical links between the schema and the individual instantiations as shown in the Fig. 1 from Booij (2016: 431):

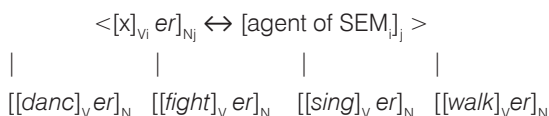


Fig. 1. Vertical links between the schema and the individual instantiations

As Booij elucidates, the individual words, that is: *dancer, fighter, singer, walker* are form-meaning relations that reflect the information specified in the schema, thus making parts of the information contained in the lexical entries for these words redundant. This is indicated through the vertical link. Also, the verbal bases of these nouns are co-indexed to the corresponding lexical entries for these verbs, and this motivates part of the meanings of these agent nouns (Booij 2016: 431). Thus, schemas are used to represent patterns of word formation and this makes it possible to express generalizations about subsets of the complex words involved, especially through the use of subschemas, which are in between the most general schemas and the individual words. That is, subschemas within schemas help to capture subcategories in the morphology of complex words. In other words, sub schemas actually specify idiosyncratic properties of subtypes of words that instantiate the larger schema in question. In a more general sense, schemas can be seen as templates that specify generalizations that capture general predictable properties of existing complex words.

Notably, construction schemas in CM capture a cluster of properties collectively as a form-meaning-usage complex, which constitutes “tripartite parallel architecture” that is built upon “a pairing of three types of information [...] labeled as PHON, SYN, and SEM” where SEM “may have both strictly semantic and pragmatic components” (Booij 2010: 429). Schemas and the constructions they instantiate coexist in a hierarchically organized lexicon, where two kinds of relations obtain an explication which exists between a schema and a construction formed by that schema, and “part of”, which obtains between a construction and its constituents.

Significantly, the construction morphology approach offers a conceptual framework for analyzing the complex nature of Yoruba names where names are seen as form-meaning-usage complexes having specific properties of PHON, SYN and SEM. This approach is different from a specific morphological approach exploring only how morphemes combine to form lexical units or a phonological approach focusing only on sound patterns, or a semantic approach aiming at interpreting meaning. Based on my observation, Yoruba names are characterized by different structural features. Hence, these names may be grouped into different construction categories that are typified by certain unique properties. Hence, we adopt the framework of construction morphology, which provides an avenue to see names as unique categories with specific properties. In this view, each name is a construction with unique form and meaning properties. We provide a CM analysis of Yoruba names in the next section.

### 3. Construction morphology analysis of Yoruba names

In this section, we provide a detailed account of constructions in the formation of different categories of personal names including royal names, deity-informed names, death-prevention names, circumstantial names, and reincarnate names. In our discussion of each phenomenon, we illustrate that linguistic properties pertaining to its form and meaning go hand-in-hand. Although some of their behavior follows from general and specific linguistic principles, they also exhibit an intriguing set of characteristics that cannot be attributed to anything but the schemas in which they appear.

Hence, due to the unique patterns that Yoruba names exhibit, the construction morphology framework provides a relevant approach to exploring their linguistic complexity and peculiarity. In our analysis, we focus on each name category and the relevant construction schema. Also, various linguistic processes involved in the construction of each name category are discussed. We aim to show, following the CM framework, that each Yoruba personal name is a specific construction that indexes three properties of information from the lexicon – PHON, SYN, SEM – and that these properties are unique to the name construction. In other words, Yoruba personal names can be identified and classified based on their distinctive properties. The following subsections will identify specific categories of Yoruba personal names and discuss the nature of their constructions. It should be noted that Yoruba names show both sentential structures and compound structures, which are discussed in subsections 3.1 and 3.2, respectively.

#### 3.1. Sentential name construction

A sentential name construction is a name construction that has an underlying sentence structure. A sentential Yoruba name has a NP + VP structure, where there is an entity (NP) that is identified as well as action/activity (VP) that is specified. Sentential names may capture a doer of an action, the action that is done by an entity as well as the quality that such entity possesses. This type of construction occurs in kingship names, deity-informed names and death-prevention names. A general schema utilized in sentential names is illustrated below:

$$< [NP + [VP]] \leftrightarrow [\text{sentential name}] >$$

Fig. 2. The sentential construction schema in Yoruba names

Here, the NP captures an entity, while the VP specifies the actions or describes the quality of the entity identified in the NP. It is important to note that while these names are seen as sentences underlyingly, they are realized as desentential-

ized or lexicalized sentences. Lexicalized sentences are formed by reducing a sentence to a unique lexical or conceptual element. The sentential construction schema identified in (2) is utilized in the following categories of Yoruba names – kingship names, deity-informed names, and death-prevention names. These categories of names are discussed in the following subsections.

### 3.1.1. Kingship names

Kingship names are names that signify royalty in Yoruba. These are names used to indicate that someone comes from a family of kings. These names reflect a sentential-type construction, as shown in (1-7) below:

- (1) *Adéyemí*  
crown-deserve-3sg  
'The crown is entitled to me.'
- (2) *Adéfúnké*  
crown-give-1sg-pamper  
'The crown gives me to adore.'
- (3) *Adébáyò*  
crown-meet-joy  
'The crown meets joy.'
- (4) *Adégberíga*  
crown-lift-1sg-up  
'The crown elevates me.'
- (5) *Adékúnle*  
crown-fill-house  
'The crown fills the house.'
- (6) *Adéwálé*  
crown-come-house  
'The crown comes home.'
- (7) *Adéṣọlá*  
crown-make-wealth  
'The crown makes wealth.'

These names have a declarative structure which describes what the crown – which symbolizes the king – does. In other words, the CROWN<sup>1</sup> (OR KING) is the

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<sup>1</sup> In Yoruba, *adé* literally means crown, which symbolizes the personhood occupying the royal authority over a community. Usually, this is a king (a male person) or a regent (a female sometimes when there's no eligible candidate).

subject of the action in the names. These names index royalty or kingship and they reflect a sentential name construction schema. This sentential construction type schema that is utilized is presented in below.

$$\begin{aligned}
 < [ad\acute{e} + [VP]] \leftrightarrow [\text{nominalized royal name}] > \\
 & [[ad\acute{e}]_{N_{Pi}} [b\acute{a} \text{ } \acute{o}l\acute{a}]_{VP}]_{Ni} \text{ 'Crown meets wealth.'}
 \end{aligned}$$

Fig. 3. Sentential construction schema in kingship names

First, it should be noted that the above schema is the application of the sentential construction schema identified in Fig. 2 in the area of kingship names. The name illustrated in the schema, given in Fig. 3, is a nominalized kingship name, and has the element *adé* which designates these forms as royal names and also functions as the head of the construction. Furthermore, as nominalized sentential names, these sentence type royal names behave syntactically like a noun. For instance, in sentences like *Adéyemí fẹ̀ràn agbára* 'Adeyemi loves power' and *Aàfin gba Adébáyò* 'The palace receives Adebayo', the nominalized sentential names *Adéyemí* and *Adébáyò* function as subject and object.

TABLE 1. SYN features in kingship names

derived name form	underlying structure
<i>Adéyemí</i>	<i>adé</i> + <i>ye</i> + <i>èní</i> crown      deserve      me
<i>Adébáyò</i>	<i>adé</i> + <i>bá</i> + <i>ayò</i> crown      meet      joy
<i>Adégbeńga</i>	<i>adé</i> + <i>gbé</i> + <i>n [mí]</i> + <i>ga</i> crown      lift      me      up
<i>Adékúnlé</i>	<i>adé</i> + <i>kún</i> + <i>ilé</i> crown      fill      house
<i>Adéwálé</i>	<i>adé</i> + <i>wá</i> + <i>ilé</i> crown      fill      house
<i>Adésọlá</i>	<i>adé</i> + <i>ṣe</i> + <i>ọlá</i> crown      make      wealth

Desententialization is a major SYN feature in sentential kingship names and it is a process where constructions that are originally sentences are reduced to a single lexical unit. This process may lead to morphemic and phonemic changes.

In other words, there is loss of phonological segments especially vowels shown in the realized name form area in Table 1.

What is also important to note is that while names are formed based on patterns in the lexicon of the language, they may also reflect unique PHON features. A major PHON feature in these royalty names is word initial vowel deletion.

### 3.1.1.1. PHON features: word initial vowel elision

Word initial vowel elision is a form of vowel elision that occurs when a vowel preceding a consonant is deleted. Thus, it is common in kingship names for the initial vowel to be deleted as shown in (8-13) below:

(8) <i>Débáyò</i>	←	<i>Adébáyò</i>
(9) <i>Déwálé</i>	←	<i>Adéọlá</i>
(10) <i>Dékúnlé</i>	←	<i>Adéọlú</i>
(11) <i>Déyẹmí</i>	←	<i>Adéyẹmí</i>
(12) <i>Défúnké</i>	←	<i>Adéfúnké</i>
(13) <i>Désọlá</i>	←	<i>Adésọlá</i>

In the examples in (8-13), the low initial vowel /a/ is deleted. It is also important to note that the word initial vowel elision does not occur across morpheme boundaries. That is, in the name *Désọlá* (= *adé-ṣe-ọlá*), the initial low vowel [a] deletes before the voiced stop [d]. Additionally, the front vowel [e] deletes before the back vowel [o]. While the latter case (prevocalic vowel deletion) occurs in an environment where vowels co-occur across a morpheme boundary, the former does not occur in this environment – there is no co-occurrence of a vowel in the initial position of the word. This shows that vowel deletion may also occur in a preconsonantal position. Also, this word initial vowel elision may not be conditioned necessarily by the nature of following consonants since the vowels delete before other consonants (not only [d]) in initial position – see the discussion on deity-informed names in subsection 5.5.2.

Significantly, this kind of elision creates a name-form that is non-vowel initial – which is not necessarily similar to the regular prevocalic vowel elision that may be a “hiatus resolution strategy”. Elision of vowels is often disallowed in initial position of Yoruba constructions as may be seen in the examples given by Orié and Pulleyblank (2002: 102), i.a. *owó.kí.owó* ‘any kind of money’ > *owókówó* (\**wókówó*) and *ọmọ.kí.ọmọ* ‘any kind of child’ > *ọmọkọmọ* (\**mọkọmọ*). This



form of elision is, however, possible in names, as shown in (8-13), where initial vowels of names are deleted. In fact, in a much similar context identified by Orié and Pulleyblank (*\*mókómó*), where deletion has been seen as impossible, deletion may also occur in Yoruba names. This context is illustrated in names such as *ómóbólají* 'child comes with wealth' or *ómóbólánlè* 'child meets wealth at home', which are often productively realized as *Móbólají* and *Móbólánlè*, respectively. More importantly, these names show that vowels may also be deleted preconsonantly in a different phonological environment. Consequently, initial deletion as in (9-13) can be seen as property of the construction. What is also important to note is that this initial vowel deletion in names functions as means of showing intimacy or familiarity by users.

### 3.1.2. Deity-centered names

Deity-centered names are names that are informed by deities among the Yoruba people. These are names used to indicate people's belief in these deities. These names are presented in the examples below in (13-16):

(14) *Òrìṣàdélé*  
 idol-come-PST-house  
 'The god came home.'

(15) *Òrìṣàbùnmi*  
 idol-dash-PST-1SG  
 'The god gifted me.'

(16) *Òrìṣàbíyí*  
 idol-birth-PST-this  
 'The god birthed this one.'

(17) *Òrìṣàgbèní*  
 idol-benefit-PST-1SG  
 'The god benefits me.'

In terms of their semantic properties (SEM), these deity-informed names are very different from kingship names. They are names that valorize specific deities among the Yoruba people. Historically, among the Yorubas deities or idols are worshipped by clans and families. When a child is born, a name is given to reflect the deity worshipped by a particular family. These deities are believed to have supernatural abilities and are worshipped by people who desire these qualities. Thus, it is possible for a Yoruba child to have both a kingship name and a deity-informed name.

In terms of structure (SYN), just like kingship names, deity-informed names assume the sentential construction schema and may also be seen as sentential nominals.

$$\begin{aligned} < [\text{deity-name} + [\text{VP}]] \leftrightarrow [\text{deity-informed name}]_m > \\ & [[\text{\textcircled{òrìṣà}}]_{\text{NP}_i} [\text{gbè mí}]_{\text{VP}_j}]_{\text{Ni}} \text{ 'Deity saves me.'} \end{aligned}$$

Fig. 4. Sentential construction schema in deity-informed names

Again, the above schema is the application of the sentential construction schema identified in Fig. 2. According to the schema shown in Fig. 4, *deity-name* captures a general terminology referring to deities among the Yorubas, which is followed by a VP that information about the deity actions or its beneficiary. The realized form by combining a [deity name] + [VP] is a [deity-informed name]. In other words, a deity-informed name construction structurally has a subject which designates a specific deity and a VP that specifies the actions of the deity. A deity-informed name may also be given to convey what a deity has done for a family. They may therefore be seen as sentences underlyingly. In other words, deity-informed names originate in the lexicalization of sentences.

TABLE 2. SYN features in deity-informed names

derived name form	underlying structure
<i>Òrìṣàdélé</i>	[òrìṣà [V – NP]] òrìṣà dé ilé deity arrive home
<i>Òrìṣàbùnmi</i>	[òrìṣà [V – NP]] òrìṣà bùn mí deity gift me
<i>Òrìṣàbíyí</i>	[òrìṣà [V – NP]] òrìṣà bí èyí deity born this-one
<i>Òrìṣàgbèmi</i>	[òrìṣà [V – NP]] òrìṣà gbè mí deity save me

It should be noted that deity-informed names, like kingship names, also reflect morphophonological processes in the language. First, is the fact these *òrìṣà* names do not show word initial vowel elision as reflected in kingship names.

Second, they demonstrate the PHON feature of syllable elision and compensatory vowel lengthening. These PHON features are explained below.

### 3.1.2.1. PHON features: r- elision triggering vowel lengthening

#### **Syllable elision**<sup>2</sup>

Syllable elision is a phonological process where a syllable is “dropped”, which could be an attempt to simplify the pronunciation of names. This may be seen in the following names:

- (18) *Òòṣàgbè mí* [= *òrìṣà gbè mí*] ‘The deity saved me.’  
 (19) *Òòṣàfún mí* [= *òrìṣà fún mí*] ‘The deity gave me.’  
 (20) *Òòṣàdélé* [= *òrìṣà dé ilé*] ‘The deity came home.’

In the examples above, the second syllable *rì* is deleted while the first syllable or initial vowel is lengthened in the process. The same sequence (*rì*) is deleted in all these names, which typifies these names as a different instance of syllable elision. For instance, in incarnate names, discussed in subsection 3.1.3, syllable elision involves a different segment. As also observed, the elision of the second syllable triggers the lengthening of the initial vowel. The issue of vowel lengthening is further discussed below.

#### **Vowel lengthening**

Vowel lengthening is a phonological process where a vowel is lengthened or prolonged. This may also be seen in the names previously presented in (17-19) and repeated in (20-22) for further explication:

- (21) *Òòṣàgbè mí*  
*òrìṣà* → *òòṣà*  
 (22) *Òòṣàfún mí*  
*òrìṣà* → *òòṣà*  
 (23) *Òòṣàdélé*  
*òrìṣà* → *òòṣà*

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<sup>2</sup> As noted by a reviewer, this has also been described in the literature as the process of intervocalic [r] deletion triggered when one of the following conditions is met: 1. The two vowels flanking [r] are identical or 2. one of the vowels is high (Akinlabi 1993).

In the above examples, the initial vowel of each name is lengthened. However, the process of vowel lengthening occurs after elision. This manifestation has a number of implications. First, vowel lengthening in (21-22) may be seen as a process of compensatory lengthening, where the initial syllable lengthens to cover for the “gap” left over by the deletion of the second syllable. In other words, *Oriṣà* has three syllables (or moras) – ò.ri.ṣà, and by deleting the second syllable *ri*, it becomes reduced to two syllables. But, by lengthening the initial syllable, *oriṣà* preserves the initial moraic structure of three moras – ò.ò.ṣà. Thus, vowel lengthening is a phonological strategy of preserving the moraic structure in elision contexts, where a syllable may be elongated to fill in a prosodic gap caused by a deleted syllable.

Second, while Davis and Ueda (2006) discussed the idea of vowel lengthening resulting from mora augmentation – where a syllable is increased in length by one mora, usually for prosodic or morphological reasons; these examples in (21-23), however, suggest that vowel lengthening may also result from mora preservation, a case where a syllable is increased in length by one mora to preserve the moraic structure of the word. However, these examples (20-22) also reflect Davis and Ueda’s view that vowel lengthening may be prosodically induced, since in the examples, it actually occurs to preserve the prosodic structure of the personal names.

It is also important to note, according to Ikoṭun (2010: 180), that Yoruba personal names may also be lengthened finally as in *Fémii*, *Adéé* but usually for sociolinguistic reasons such as to express caution or surprise. However, the names provided in (20-22) show that lengthening can occur word initially in Yoruba personal names. Hence, lengthening in Yoruba names may not be restricted to final syllables for sociolinguistic functions, it may occur in initial positions of names for phonological reasons. Furthermore, we observe that compensatory lengthening discussed in (20-22) seems to occur only in deity-informed names. However, as pointed out by a reviewer, this may also occur in other Yoruba nominal forms, e.g. *eèpè* < *erùpè* ‘sand’, *ooki* < *oki* ‘praise name’.

### 3.1.3. Reincarnate names

Reincarnate names relate to the idea of reincarnation in the Yoruba community. These are names that are used to indicate that the birth of a child is the ‘coming back’ of one of the ancestors. These names are presented in the examples (23-25) below:

(24) *Yé<sup>3</sup>túndé*

mother-aux-come-PERF

'The mother has come again.'

(25) *Yéwándé*

mother-seek-PST-1SG-come-PERF

'The mother has sought me.'

(26) *Yéjídé*

mother-wake-PST-come-PERF

'The mother has woken.'

In terms of their semantic properties (SEM), these reincarnate personal names are very different from previous names. They are names given to a child born immediately after the death of a grandfather or grandmother in a family. To the Yorubas, it is the spirit of the deceased grandfather or grandmother that has returned. This idea of reincarnation is significant to the Yorubas, as Awolalu and Dopamu (2005) also explain that the Yorubas strongly believe that the souls of the departed good ancestors were reincarnated and reborn as grandchildren in the family for them to continue their existence in the family. The ancestors do this as a result of the love they have for their family members or for the world. For more discussion of this aspect of Yoruba names, see Ehineni (2019).

In terms of structure (SYN), these reincarnate names are constructed by combining the word for the reincarnated individual (i.e. father, mother, hunter) with other words. Like kingship and deity-informed names, reincarnate names may be seen as nominals, and therefore assume the following sentential construction schema:

$$\begin{aligned} < [\text{reincarnated subject} + [\text{VP}]] \leftrightarrow [\text{reincarnate name}]_m > \\ & \text{yé} ]_{\text{NPI}} [\text{tún dé} ]_{\text{VP}} ]_{\text{Ni}} \text{ 'Mother has come again.'} \end{aligned}$$

Fig. 5. Sentence type construction schema in reincarnate names

Note that the above schema shows an application of the sentential construction schema identified in Fig. 2. According to the Fig. 5, "reincarnated subject" captures a particular person considered to be the subject of reincarnation, which is followed by a VP that provides information about the person. The realized form

<sup>3</sup> *Yeye* and *iyá* are both used to mean 'mother' in Yoruba. However, in constructions involving *yeye*, the initial syllable [ye] in *yeye* may be deleted.

by combining a [reincarnated subject] + [VP] is a reincarnate name. Just like previously discussed names, reincarnate names are desententialized names. They can be seen as lexicalized words, which are formed by reducing a sentence to a single noun as shown in the examples below.

**TABLE 3.** SYN features in reincarnate names

derived name form	underlying structure
<i>Yétúndé</i>	yèyé [V – NP] yèyé tún dé
<i>Yéwándé</i>	yèyé [V – NP] yèyé wán dé
<i>Yéjídé</i>	yèyé [V – NP] yèyé jí dé

It should be noted that reincarnate names, like previous names discussed, also reflect significant morphophonological processes in the language. These names show that syllable elision in Yoruba names is not restricted to the *rí* segment – as shown in deity-informed names – since in reincarnate names, another segment is deleted. This is further explained in examples (26) and (27) below.

### 3.1.3.1. PHON features: syllable elision not triggering vowel lengthening

(27) *Yétúndé* [= yèyé tún dé] ‘Mother has come again.’  
mother again come

(28) *Yéwáńdédé*<sup>4</sup> [= yèyé wá mi dé] ‘Mother has sought me.’  
mother see me come

Here, the first syllable in *yèyé* is deleted to realize only *yé*. Note that there is no vowel elongation or mora augmentation in these examples. Hence syllable elision may not necessarily trigger vowel elongation or mora augmentation. So far we have examined sentential structures in our discussion of how names are formed, the next subsection 3.2 will focus on compound structures in the names.

<sup>4</sup> Yorubas may sometimes render the names *Yetúndé* and *Yéwándé* as *lyétúndédé* and *lyéwándédé* when calling the name bearers. The insertion of the initial [i] is often accompanied with the lengthening of the final [e] as a pragmatic marker in the context of name calling. This is done when parents call their children loudly to ensure they hear them.

### 3.2. Compound name construction

A compound name construction is a name that involves the combination of two free morphemes or words to derive a nominal form. In other words, a compound name is formed by adding two words to form a name. This type of name construction uses the schema provided below:

$$\langle [[a]_{xi} [b]_{yj}]_{Ni} \leftrightarrow [[SEM]i \text{ with a relation } R \text{ to } [SEM]j]k \rangle$$

Fig. 6. Compound name construction schema

Following Booij (2010b, 2016), the upper-case variables *X* and *Y* stand for the major lexical categories ( $X = N \ \& \ V \mid Y = N, V \ \& \ A$ ). The lower-case variables *a* and *b* stand for arbitrary strings of phonological segments, while *i*, *j* and *k* are indexes for the matching properties of the constituents of the compound. Also, note that the schema is left-headed, which indicates that the left nominal constituent is the head of the N-N compound. This type of name construction is what occurs in compound kingship names discussed in subsection 3.2.1.

#### 3.2.1. Compound kingship names

Kingship names are names that signify royalty in Yoruba. These are names used to indicate that someone comes from a family of kings. These names are presented in (28-34) below.

- (29) *Adéoyè*  
 crown-title  
 'he crown of nobility'
- (30) *Adéplá*  
 crown-wealth  
 'the crown of prosperity'
- (31) *Adéékó*  
 crown-lesson  
 'the crown of instruction'
- (32) *Adéiyè*  
 crown-life  
 'the crown of salvation'
- (33) *Adéifé*  
 crown-love  
 'the crown of love'

(34) *Adéògo*  
 crown-glory  
 'the crown of glory'

(35) *Adéiyá*  
 crown-mother  
 'the crown of motherhood'

Based on the CM approach – where words reflect a combination of form-meaning-usage properties indicating the three different types of information labeled as PHON, SYN, and SEM – these names have different structural properties, which include phonological, syntactic and semantic information. Semantically, these names have kingship or royal meaning. They are names that Yoruba kings give to their newborn children. Also, a kingship ancestry may also have a kingship surname which is passed down from generation to generation. That is, persons born to a lineage of kings, even when immediate parents are not kings, may still be given a kingship name.

Structurally, these compound royal names are constructed by combining the lexeme *adé* 'crown' with another word. The occurrence of *adé* in all these forms typify them as royalty-based. These names are compound nominals, and utilize the compound name construction schema in Fig. 7. below:

$$\begin{aligned} <[[a]_{Xi} [b]_{Yj}]_{Nk} \leftrightarrow [[SEM]j \text{ with a relation R to } [SEM]i]k > \\ &[[N]i [N]j]_{Nk} \leftrightarrow [[SEM]i \text{ with property } [SEM]j]k \\ &[[adé]_{Ni} [Y]_{Nj}]_{Nk} \leftrightarrow [\text{crown of SEM}]j \end{aligned}$$

Fig. 7. Compound name construction schema

The schema  $[[adé]_{Ni} [Y]_{Nj}]_{Nk} \leftrightarrow [\text{crown of SEM}]j$  represents the specific construction that is applied in forming kingship names. In this schema, *adé* occupies the leftmost position as a lexically fixed element, while the other [right] slot is left open to be occupied by variables matching [Y]. Hence, *adé* is the head of the compound nominal construction. The application of this schema to generate compound kingship names is presented below:

$$\begin{aligned} &[[adé]_{Ni} [Y]_{Nj}]_{Nk} \leftrightarrow [\text{crown of SEM}]j \\ &[[adé]_{Ni} [oyè]_{Nj}]_{Nk} \text{ 'crown of nobility'} \\ &[adé]_N \text{ 'crown'} [oyè]_N \text{ 'nobility'} \end{aligned}$$

Fig. 8. The application of the schema to generate compound kingship names



The schema  $[[ad\acute{e}]_N [oy\grave{e}]_N]_N$  'crown of nobility' contains subschemas for *ad\acute{e}* and *oy\grave{e}*. These subschemas reveal the compositional meaning of the schema. The necessity of subschemas relates to the fact that constituents of compounds may have a specific meaning that is bound to the compound construction, and yet can be used productively (Booij 2005). Thus, the meaning of *ad\acute{e}oy\grave{e}* derives from both parts of the construction as 'crown of nobility'. It is a name that not only signifies that a child is of royal birth (for instance born to a king), but may also indicate that both parents have royal ancestry. It should be noted that all the names in (28-34) have the constituent *ad\acute{e}*, which occurs initially in the names. The schema reflects a leftheaded structure which means that the head of compound construction relates to the left nominal constituent *ad\acute{e}*-. The occurrence of *ad\acute{e}* as a kingship morphological marker in compound names is further presented in another schema:

$$\begin{array}{l}
 [[ad\acute{e}]_{Ni} [Y]_{Ni,Nk}] \leftrightarrow [\text{crown of SEM}] \\
 [[ad\acute{e}]_{Ni} [ol\acute{a}]_{Ni,Nk}] \text{ 'crown of wealth'} \\
 [ad\acute{e}]_N \text{ 'crown'} \quad [ol\acute{a}]_N \text{ 'wealth'}
 \end{array}$$

Fig. 9. Kingship morphological marker in compound names

In the above example, the meaning of *ad\acute{e}ol\acute{a}* derives from both parts of the construction  $[ad\acute{e} + ol\acute{a}]$  as 'crown of wealth'. It is a name that not only signifies that a child is of royal birth (for instance born to a king), but may also indicate that both parents are very rich. It is important to note while these kingship names reflect compound name construction forms. It is also important to note that compound type construction in names may exhibit unique PHON features as discussed below.

### 3.2.1.1. PHON features: non application of vowel elision

Vowel elision has been observed to occur in Yoruba in intervocalic contexts (see Akinlabi & Oyebade 1987, Pulleyblank 1988, Ori\acute{e} & Pulleyblank 2002). In these previous studies, a vowel is expected to delete when two vowels co-occur over a morpheme boundary (or one vowel assimilates to the other to resolve vowel hiatus – Ori\acute{e} and Pulleyblank (2002)). However, in kingship names, this rule is violated, as vowels may co-occur without deletion (or even assimilation). This may be seen in the kingship names presented below with their underlying morphemic structures:

- (36) *Adéagbo* [N[Nadé [Nagbo]]] ‘crown of union’  
 (37) *Adeòtí* [N[Nadé[Nòtí]]] ‘crown of indestructibility’  
 (38) *Adéèkọ́* [N[Nadé[Nèkọ́]]] ‘crown of instruction/morality’  
 (39) *Adéáyò* [N[Nadé[Nayò]]] ‘crown of joy’  
 (40) *Adeòşó* [N[Nadé[Nòşó]]] ‘crown of adornment’

The names in (36-40) do not follow the vowel deletion rule over a morpheme boundary since the names preserve the vowels over the morpheme boundary. Also, this manifestation would be contrary to the vowel hiatus resolution strategies in Yoruba (Orié & Pulleyblank 2002) where, if vowel deletion does not occur, vowel assimilation is expected to occur to prevent vowel co-occurrence over a morpheme boundary. In these kingship names, there is no vowel assimilation. Note that the vowels in (38) *adéèkọ́* [*adé* ‘crown’ + *èkọ́* ‘instruction’] are different segments (see (36-40) for other examples). One reason that could militate against vowel deletion is the issue of meaning. For instance, if vowel deletion occurs in *adéòtí*, what would be realized would be *adétí*, which would mean a crown that destroys. This would generate a negative connotation in the name.

Consequently, names have unique linguistic features which may deviate from regular processes in the language. This observation, therefore, motivates the necessity to explore names as a “tripartite parallel architecture” (Booij 2010) where there is significant interaction between the PHON, SYN, and SEM features. In other words, a name may have unique PHON, SYN and SEM features which identify such names as a distinct construction. In essence, each name category has unique linguistic properties – which is the crucial idea in CM.

## 5. Conclusion

Following the CM framework, the article shows that Yoruba personal names exhibit various construction patterns, Yoruba names are categorized into kingship names, deity-informed names, reincarnate names and death-prevention names. These construction patterns include both similar and different SEM, SYN and PHON properties. First, we show that Yoruba personal names may reflect either sentential name construction and compound name construction in terms of their SYN properties. Second, each name category (kingship, deity-informed and reincarnate) has have different SEM features such as royalty, beliefs in idols and reincarnation. These names also has unique PHON properties. While word initial vowel deletion occurs in kingship names, deity-informed names

reflect deletion motivated lengthening while reincarnate names exhibit syllable deletion without lengthening.

Finally, by employing a constructionist approach in our analysis, it is advanced that the framework of construction morphology may be applied to the study of Yoruba personal names. Through this framework, we show that each Yoruba name is a unique construction involving semantic, syntactic and phonological properties. Hence, this discussion highlights that names constitute a form-meaning pair. Yoruba names may be grouped into categories as distinct constructions with unique SEM, SYN and PHON properties. Through analysis of names in the CM framework, it is suggested that construction morphology framework may provide a relevant approach to exploring the complex aspects of Yoruba word formation.

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