

The HTS (High Tone Syllable) in Arigidi¹: An Introduction

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines The High Tone Syllable (HTS) in Arigidi. The HTS, an element which occurs between the subject NP and the VP in declarative sentences has only been found in Yorùbá and some of its dialects. In Arigidi, the HTS usually occurs between the subject and the verb phrase in declarative sentences too. This paper revealed that the HTS in Arigidi regularly replaces the last syllable of the preceding NP whenever the NP shows up in that position. This paper also affirms that the HTS is a tense and aspectual marker which indicates past/present and completed actions in Arigidi.

Keywords: *HTS, Yorùbá, Arigidi, tense and aspectual marker.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The HTS, an element which occurs between the subject NP and the verb in standard Yorùbá and some of its dialects has attracted a lot of attention and research from Yorùbá scholars who have analyzed it in different ways in terms of its specific form and function. Bámgbóşé (1967: 33–34) and Courtenay (1968: 70–74) call it a concord marker, Fresco (1970: 65) believes it is a subject marker, Stahlke (1974: 170) analyses it as a subject concord prefix, (Awóbùlúyì (1975, 1978, 1992, and 2001), Olúmúyìwá (2009: 129–137) and Adéşuyan (2006: 1–9) call it a preverbal element which marks past/present, Déchaine (1993: 84) says it is an agreement marker while Adéwólé (1998: 95–96) believes it is a clitic. Based on the polarized opinion on the actual form and function of the HTS, Awóbùlúyì (1978) opined that a perfect solution may never be found

¹ Arigidi is usually referred to as a speech form, a non Yoruba dialect spoken within the Yoruba region. It is classified under Benue-Congo language family, but there is no consensus yet among writers as regards the name of the subgroup which include; Oyín, Erúşú, Eşé, Ígáşí. Urò and Ójò spoken in Àjowá: and the following speech forms spoken in Òkèàgbè; Áfá, Ògè, Ìdò and Àjè. The first attempt was by Greenberg 1963 who grouped them under Niger-Congo, Bennet and Sterk (1977) referred to them as Yoruboid. Capo (1989) suggested the name Amgbé, while Ethnologue (2009) proposed the name Arigidi Cluster. Awobuluyi (personal communication) said they are dialects of a language yet to be determined. According to Oshodi (2005, and 2010a and b), Arigidi is seriously endangered.

to the problem of the HTS in Yorùbá. The same element is noticed in Arigidi, a speech form spoken in Arigidi town in the North-western part of Àkókó region which is located in Ondó in the South-western part of Nigeria. There is no known work on the HTS or any part of Arigidi grammar. This work aims to fill this wide gap by identifying the form, occurrence and function of the HTS in Arigidi with the purpose of contributing to the existing literature on this controversial element, and to also gain an insight into the grammatical structure of the speech form.

2. THE FORM OF THE HTS IN ARIGIDI

In Arigidi, the HTS occurs between the subject NP and the verb phrase. Witness its occurrence below.

1. *Òjọ́ á ve oso* → *Òjá ve oso* ‘Òjọ́ went home/Òjọ́ has gone home’
2. *Títí á vè* → *Títá vè* ‘Títí ate/Títí has eaten’
3. *Olú á pọ* → *Olá pọ* ‘Olú arrived/Olú has arrived’
4. *Dèjọ́ á go* → *Dèjá go* ‘Dèjọ́ is tall’
5. *Òjọ́ wònrin Títí á vè* → *Òjọ́ wònrin Títá vè*
 ‘Òjọ́ and Títí went/Òjọ́ and Títí have gone’
6. *Á vè* → NA ‘He/she went/He/she has gone’
7. *Wé’ á vè* → *Wá vè* ‘They went/They have gone’

The above examples make it clear that the HTS in Arigidi has the form **á**. This form usually merges with the preceding NP, and in the course of this fusion, the last vowel of the subject NP is usually deleted and replaced with the HTS. In example (6) where the HTS is the first overt element in the subject position, the deletion process is not applicable (NA), there is the tendency for it to be regarded as the 3psg subject pronoun, however, its occurrence and syntactic behaviour elsewhere in the language clearly falsifies this claim as revealed in subsequent data from this language.

3. THE HTS AND PRONOUNS IN ARIGIDI

Given the form of the HTS as **á** in Arigidi, we can now examine its occurrence with pronouns in the language. Below are the forms of pronouns in Arigidi:

	Pronouns in subject position		Pronouns in object position	
	singular	plural	singular	plural
First person	<i>man</i>	<i>ò</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>ò</i>
Second person	<i>rán</i>	<i>mán</i>	<i>rin</i>	<i>mén</i>
Third person	<i>Ø</i>	<i>wá</i>	<i>Ø</i>	<i>wá</i>

Consider them in sentences:

8. *Man* *vè* 'I went/I have gone'
I go
9. *Rán* *vè* 'You(sg) went/You(sg) have gone'
You (sg) go
10. [*Ø*]*á* *vè* 'He/she went/He/she has gone'
HTS go
11. *Òá* *vè* 'We went/We have gone'
We go
12. *Mán* *vè* 'You (pl) went/You (pl) have gone'
You (pl) go
13. *Wá* *vè* 'They went/They have gone'
They go

The underlying forms of the subject pronouns in Arigidi are; *min*, *rin*, *ò*, *mén* and *wé*, it is these forms that merge with the HTS to produce the surface forms in (8–13) while their vowels get deleted in the process. To buttress this point, consider the following sentences involving the underlying forms of the subject pronouns as well as the object pronouns:

- | Subject Pronouns | Object Pronouns |
|---|--|
| 14. (a) <i>Min</i> <i>si oso</i>
I be house
'I am at home' | (b) <i>Òjó á rí min</i>
<i>Òjó</i> HTS see me
'Òjó saw me' |
| 15. (a) <i>Rin</i> <i>si oso</i>
You (sg) be house
'You (sg) are at home' | (b) <i>Òjó á so rin</i>
<i>Òjó</i> HTS call you (sg)
'Òjó called you (sg)'/
'Òjó has called you (sg)' |

16. (a) *Í si oso*
 he/she be house
 ‘He/she is at home’
- (b) *Títí á kpo [NP⁰]*
 Títí HTS kill
 ‘Títí kill him/her/it’/
 ‘Títí has kill him/her/it’
17. (a) *Ò si oso*
 we be house
 ‘We are at home’
- (b) *Ijẹn á pún ò*
 king HTS abuse us
 ‘The king abused us’/
 ‘The king has abused us’
18. (a) *Mén si oso*
 you (pl) be house
 ‘You (pl) are at home’
- (b) *Òjó á fẹròn mén*
 Òjó HTS like you (pl)
 ‘Òjó loves you (pl)’
19. (a) *Wẹ si oso*
 they be house
 ‘They are at home’
- (b) *Títí á bọọ wá*
 Títí HTS beg them
 ‘Títí begged them/Títí has begged them’

In (8), *man* (first person singular subject pronoun) retained its original mid tone, this is done to avoid homonymy with the second person subject plural form *mán* which would have given us the same output for both the first person singular subject and second person plural subject. Also, in (10), the third person singular subject position is assumed to be filled by a zero morpheme and the first overt element there is the HTS *á*.

In (14a–19a), the underlying forms of the subject pronouns are used while the object pronouns occur in (14b–19b). They occur with the verb *sí* which is used to show the state of being of a subject NP in the language. Notice that in (16a), it is *í* that shows up in the position of the 3psg pronoun subject while in (16b), nothing shows up in the position of the 3psg object where the last item there is the verb *kpo* ‘kill’ and the NP object position is vacant.

Another evidence which corroborates the fact that the element *á* is not the third person singular subject pronoun comes from the following interrogative sentences which involve the subject pronouns to which (8–13) above are direct answers:

20. *Min yáa vè?* ‘Did I go/Have I gone?’
 I QM go
21. *Rin yáa vè?* ‘Did you (sg) go/Have you (sg) gone?’
 You (sg) QM go
22. *Í yáa vè?* ‘Did he/she go/Has he/she gone?’
 3psg QM vè
23. *Ò yáa vè?* ‘Did we go/Have we gone?’
 We QM go

24. *Mén yáa vè?* ‘Did you (pl) go/Have you (pl) gone?’
 You (pl) QM go
25. *Wẹ yáa vè?* ‘Did they go/Have they gone?’
 They QM go

The above sentences also confirm the fact that the underlying forms of the subject pronouns in Arigidi are: *min*, *rin*, *ò*, *mén* and *wẹ*. For the 3psg, (see example 22) it is vowel *i* that shows up in the position again which further confirms that *á* cannot be its basic form and *i* is likely to be the form for the 3psg subject pronoun in Arigidi. The process of deletion of the vowels of the pronouns and merging by the HTS to derive the surface form is shown below:

- min* + *á* → *man*
 I HTS ‘I’
- rin* + *á* → *rán*
 You HTS ‘You (sg)’
- Ò* + *á* → *òá*
 We HTS ‘We’
- Ø* + *á* → *á*
 Null HTS HTS
- mén* + *á* → *mán*
 You (pl) HTS ‘You (pl)’
- wẹ* + *á* → *wá*
 They HTS ‘They’

To further buttress this point, consider the following sentences involving the plural object pronouns:

Underlying Form	Basic Form
26. <i>Àkùkù ò á sọn</i> All us HTS good ‘We are all good’	* <i>Àkùkù á sọn</i> All HTS good
27. <i>Àkùkù mén á sọn</i> All you (pl) HTS good	<i>Àkùkù mán sọn</i> All you (pl) good ‘You (pl) are all good’
28. <i>Àkùkù wẹ á sọn</i> all them HTS good	<i>Àkùkù wá sọn</i> all them good ‘They are all good’
29. <i>Àkùkù ùú á sọn</i> all it HTS good	<i>Àkùká sọn</i> all good ‘Everything is good’

In (26–29), the plural object pronouns occur with the modifier *àkùkù* together with the HTS while the HTS replace the vowels of the pronouns as usual. In (26), the HTS cannot replace the pronoun ‘ò’ because the original form has no consonant like the others, thus the deletion of ò and its subsequent replacement with á would give us the ungrammatical form which is marked with *. For the singular object pronouns (see 29), it is only the third person that can take this modifier whenever the referent is neuter and this gives us the correct form of what should have appeared in (26). In (29), the pronoun *ùú* was deleted and the HTS replaces the last vowel of the modifier to give us the correct form.

4. THE HTS IN NEGATIVE EXPRESSIONS

The negation marker in Arigidi is (k)à. In this language, there is regular occurrence of the HTS before this negator:

Underlying Form	Insertion	Basic Form
30. <i>Òjó</i> <i>á</i> <i>kà</i> <i>vè</i> <i>Òjó</i> HTS NEG go	<i>Ojá</i> <i>kà</i> <i>vè</i> <i>Òjó</i> NEG go	<i>Ojá</i> <i>à</i> <i>vè</i> <i>Òjó</i> NEG go ‘ <i>Òjó</i> did not go’
31. <i>Títí</i> <i>á</i> <i>kà</i> <i>go</i> <i>Títí</i> HTS NEG tall	<i>Títá</i> <i>kà</i> <i>go</i> <i>Títá</i> NEG tall	<i>Títá</i> <i>à</i> <i>go</i> <i>Títí</i> NEG tall ‘ <i>Títí</i> is not tall’
32. <i>Dèjọ</i> <i>á</i> <i>kà</i> <i>go</i> <i>Dèjọ</i> HTS NEG tall	<i>Dèjá</i> <i>kà</i> <i>go</i> <i>Dèjọ</i> NEG tall	<i>Dèjá</i> <i>à</i> <i>go</i> <i>Dèjọ</i> NEG tall ‘ <i>Dèjọ</i> is not tall’
33. [NP ⁰] <i>á</i> <i>kà</i> <i>vè</i> HTS NEG go	NA	[NP ⁰] <i>á</i> <i>à</i> <i>vè</i> HTS NEG go ‘He/she did not eat’
34. <i>Wé</i> <i>á</i> <i>kà</i> <i>vè</i> they HTS NEG go	<i>wá</i> <i>kà</i> <i>vè</i> they NEG go	<i>wá</i> <i>à</i> <i>vè</i> they NEG go ‘They did not go’

In negative expressions as shown in (30–34), the language obligatorily deletes the consonant of the negator, the HTS merges with the NPs and the vowels of the NPs get deleted.

The full form of the negator *kà* is realised in this language only when a focused item is negated. Witness this in (35 and 36);

Basic Sentence	Focused Construction
35. <i>Òjó wón vè</i> Òjó FOC go 'It was Òjó who went'	<i>Òjó wón kà vè</i> Òjó FOC NEG go 'It was Òjó who did not go'
36. <i>Úwón wón vè</i> He/she/it FOC go 'It was he/she/it that went'	<i>Úwón wón kà vè</i> He/she/it FOC NEG go 'It was he/she/it that did not go'

5. THE HTS IN FOCUS CONSTRUCTION

Focusing in Arigidi is signalled by the focus marker *wón* which is usually inserted immediately after the focused item. Consider the examples below:

Basic Sentence	Insertion	Focus Construction
37. <i>Òjó á vè</i> Òjó HTS go 'Òjó went'/ 'Òjó has gone'	<i>Òjó wón á vè</i> Òjó FOC HTS go	<i>Òjó wón vè</i> Òjó FOC go 'It was Òjó who went'
38. <i>Títí á jeèho</i> Títí HTS eat 'Títí ate'/ 'Titi has eaten'	<i>Títí wón á jeèho</i> Títí FOC HTS eat	<i>Títí wón jeèho</i> Títí FOC eat 'It was Títí who ate'
39. <i>Dàda á go</i> Dàda HTS tall 'Dàda is tall'	<i>Dàda wón á go</i> Dàda FOC HTS tall	<i>Dàda wón go</i> Dàda FOC tall 'It is Dàda who is tall'

In the process of focusing in Arigidi, the focus marker *wón* is inserted immediately after the focused item and the HTS gets deleted (see the derivation in 37b–39b). Notice that all the actions expressed in (37b–39b) where the Focus Marker occurs depict past action only unlike those in (37a–39a), the basic sentences where the HTS occurs which can express present and past/completed actions in such sentences. This shows that the HTS cannot co-occur with the focus marker in this language, they are thus in complementary distribution. However, when pronouns are focused (it is only the emphatic pronouns that can be focused in Arigidi), some interesting things are noticed. Below are the forms of the emphatic pronouns:

Singular		Plural	
<i>amẹ̀n</i>	'I'	<i>aò</i>	'We'
<i>áron</i>	You (sg)	<i>ámẹ̀n</i>	'You (pl)'
<i>úwón</i>	'He/she'	<i>áwá</i>	'They'

Consider them in sentences:

40. *Amẹ̀n gọ̀n-ọ̀n² á vè*
 I EMPH HTS go
 'I in particular went'
41. *Áron gọ̀n-ọ̀n á vè*
 you (sg) EMPH HTS go
 'You in particular went'
42. *úwón gọ̀n-ọ̀n á vè*
 he/she EMPH HTS go
 'He/she in particular went'
43. *Aò gọ̀n-ọ̀n á vè*
 we EMPH HTS go
 'We in particular went'
44. *Ámẹ̀n gọ̀n-ọ̀n á vè*
 you (pl) EMPH HTS go
 'You (pl) went'
45. *Áwá gọ̀n-ọ̀n á vè*
 they EMPH HTS go
 'They in particular went'

Examples (40–45) revealed that the HTS can co-occur with emphatic pronouns in Arigidi; notice however that this is the only context in which the co-occurrence is possible and this is because of the qualifier *gọ̀n-ọ̀n*. The exclusion of the qualifier will render (40–45) ungrammatical. Consider (46) where the qualifier is removed as shown in (46) below:

46. **Áwá á vè*
 They HTS go

² This is a qualifier which expresses emphasis in Arigidi (note that only nouns take qualifiers in this language, this is why Oshodi (2011b) analyzes the emphatic pronouns as a subclass of nouns in Arigidi).

Consider the emphatic pronouns in Focus Construction:

Basic sentence	Insertion	Focused Construction
47. <i>Mi á vè</i> I HTS go 'I went'	<i>amèn wòn á vè</i> I FOC HTS go	<i>amèn wòn vè</i> I FOC go 'It was I who went'
48. <i>Rin á vè</i> You (sg) HTS go 'You (sg) went'	<i>áron wòn á vè</i> you (sg) FOC HTS go	<i>áron wòn vè</i> you (sg) FOC go 'It was you (sg) who went'
49. <i>Á vè</i> HTS go 'He/she went'	<i>úwòn wòn á vè</i> 3psg FOC HTS go	<i>úwòn wòn vè</i> 3psg FOC go 'It was he/she who went'
50. <i>Ò á vè</i> we HTS go 'We went'	<i>aò wòn á vè</i> we FOC HTS go	<i>aò wòn vè</i> we FOC go 'It was we who went'
51. <i>Mèn á vè</i> You (pl) HTS go 'You (pl) went'	<i>ámèn wòn á vè</i> you (pl) FOC HTS go	<i>ámèn wòn vè</i> you (pl) FOC go 'It was you (pl) who went'
52. <i>Wẹ́ á vè</i> they HTS go 'They went'	<i>áwá wòn á vè</i> they FOC HTS go	<i>áwá wòn vè</i> they FOC go 'It was they who went'

In (47–52), the HTS gets deleted due to the insertion of *wòn* (Focus Marker) because they are in complementary distribution. However, we notice that apart from (47 and 50) the other pronouns all have a high tone on their initial vowel an unusual phonological feature found only on emphatic pronouns in Arigidi. This feature might be taken to be due to the effect of the HTS, but the co-occurrence of the emphatic pronouns and the HTS as shown in (47–52) falsifies this claim. In (57), the mid tones on both the first and last vowels of the emphatic pronoun are retained to give us *amèn* this is to avoid homonymy with *ámèn* in (51). The same thing happened in (50) where *á* and *ò* swapped positions (metathesis), this happens to avoid homonymy with *òá* in (11). In (49), it is an entirely new form *úwòn* (vowel *u* with high tone and a reduplicated form of the Focus Marker *wòn*) that showed up. This is not surprising since the third person pronoun has always shown various forms and characteristics in different contexts of occurrence.

Notice that the non inclusion of either the HTS or the Focus Marker will render sentences (53–55) ungrammatical:

53. *Òjò vè
Òjò go
54. *Òjò wònrin Títí jeèho
Òjò and Títí eat
55. *áwá vè
We eat

That the HTS is deleted in focusing in Arigidi further supports the claim that the element is not a pronoun since no overt pronoun can be deleted anywhere it occurs in the language.

6. THE FUNCTION OF THE HTS IN ARIGIDI

Given the occurrence and behaviour of the HTS in Arigidi, it becomes imperative to establish its syntactic function in the language. To have a good knowledge of its syntactic function, let us first examine the occurrence and behaviour of these elements in Arigidi; they are *sì* and *éè*:

56. Òjò *sì* vè
Òjò FUT go
'Òjò will go'
57. Òjò *éè* jeèho
Òjò CONT eat
'Òjò is eating'
58. Òjò wònrin Títí *sì* vè
Òjò and Títí FUT go
'Òjò and Títí will go'
59. *Éè* vè
CONT go
'He/she/it is going'

A look at (56–59) revealed that *sì* indicates future action while *éè* depicts continuous action. They occur between the subject and the verb and they always precede the verb, the same position where á (the HTS) occurs in Arigidi. Thus, they are tense and aspectual markers in Arigidi. In (59), *éè* the continuous marker is the first overt element there and the NP is covert, the same condition that applies to the HTS whenever it occurs in this context (see 33). The above fact clearly shows that they are in the same syntactic class. Consider (60–65) where the HTS occurs:

60. *Òjò á vè*
Òjò HTS *go*
 ‘Òjò went/Òjò has gone’
61. *Òjò wònrin Títí á vè*
Òjò and *Títí* HTS *go*
 ‘Òjò and Títí went/Òjò and Títí have gone’
62. [NP⁰] *Á vè*
 HTS *go*
 ‘He/she went/He/she has gone’
63. *Títí á go*
Títí HTS *tall*
 ‘Títí is tall’
64. *Òjò wònrin Títí á kọn okùba*
Òjò and *Títí* HTS *possess money*
 ‘Òjò and Títí are rich’
65. *Girin ehaàjo á tun*
 This food HTS *cold*
 ‘This food is cold’

A look at the behaviour of the HTS in the above sentences revealed the fact about its syntactic function. For example, (60–62) could express past/completed actions, since all the sentences indicate actions that were concluded in the past while (63–65) express present actions based on the way and context in which the HTS occurs with the verbs in the sentences. In (62), we may want to take the HTS which is the first overt element there to be the third person singular pronoun in the subject position, but a look at the occurrence as well as the behaviour of the element in other contexts in the language as already shown in this study will convince us otherwise. The null sign in (62) indicates that the 3psg subject pronoun is covert in Arigidi in this type of construction. Also, the HTS may be taken to be an agreement marker in Arigidi based on its position of occurrence, however, the HTS does not always agree with the subjects in Arigidi sentences otherwise (62) above should have been realised as (66) below:

66. **Òjò wònrin Títí wá vè*
Òjò and *Títí* *they* *go*

The fact that (66) is ungrammatical in Arigidi supports the claim that the element *á* is the HTS and not an agreement marker in this language. Thus, the conclusion is that the HTS in Arigidi just like *sì* and *éè* is indeed a tense and aspectual marker which indicates present/past and completed actions.

7. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have identified and also established the form, occurrence, as well as the function of the HTS in Arigidi. It should be noted that the occurrence of this element has only been previously reported in standard Yorùbá and some of its dialects, that a similar element is noticed in Arigidi a supposedly non Yorùbá dialect which is spoken within the confinement of Yorùbá region with similarities in place of occurrence and function has a lot of implications in terms of its relationship with standard Yorùbá. The occurrence of the HTS in Arigidi has established a stronger link between them than assumed in earlier literature. Considering the fact that Arigidi is yet to get a true status in terms of classification, we believe this study has shed some light on an important aspect of Arigidi grammar, and that it will eventually help in solving the lingering problem of correct classification as well as establishing its true status and relationship with Yorùbá an issue which linguists are still battling to resolve.

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