

# A GPSG Structure of Aspect in Yorùbá Àkókó

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## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the syntactic distributions of aspect in the grammar of Yorùbá Àkókó. It considers the various Yorùbá Àkókó aspectual contrasts relative to the inception, duration or completion of an event. This is called Aspectual Structure. The paper describes the Yorùbá Àkókó aspectual structure in terms of Gazdar et al's (1985) framework which is called the Generalised Phrase Structure Grammar (GPSG). The Yorùbá Àkókó aspectual structure distinguishes between the perfective and the imperfective; the imperfective is further subdivided. All the verbal elements and the occurrences of auxiliary which mark the perfective, imperfective (habitual, progressive) as well as the tonal alternations that occur in some elements in Yorùbá Àkókó, are completely different from that of the Standard Yorùbá. This paper does not regard the perfective as an “unmarked category” of the aspectual subcategories. This is so because in Yorùbá Àkókó the perfective does not become neutralized whenever it occurs with other aspect categories. Using the GPSG framework, the paper also accounts for some co-occurrence restrictions and the right orders of aspectual auxiliary verbs in Yorùbá Àkókó. The paper, in addition, describes the Yorùbá Àkókó negative markers and asserts that they are sometimes tied with aspect markings. This paper conclusively draws attention to issues on Yorùbá dialectology which would need further research.

**Keywords:** *aspect, structure, GPSG, dialect, Yorùbá Àkókó.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Aspect is a formal property of the Yorùbá Àkókó dialect. A formalized description of aspect within the context of GPSG, using Yorùbá-Àkókó data, is presented in this paper. The grammatical aspect of a verb always defines the temporal flow in the described event or state. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 117) succinctly state that “the term aspect applies to a system where the basic meaning have to do with the internal temporal constituency of the situation.” It has been a subject of argument among scholars that a clear-cut demarcation between tense and aspect is difficult because of the similarity in the manner they express temporal situations. This is also due to the fact that speakers tend to conflate the concept of aspect with the concept of tense. Lyons (1977: 705) however asserts that aspect is “far more commonly to be found throughout the languages of the world than tense is: there are many languages that do not have tense, but very few, if any, that do not have aspect.” In Yorùbá, the category tense is still a subject of controversy; some scholars like Awóyalé (1986: 3) believe that it does not exist in the language. According to him, the

language “does not have any systematic mechanism exclusively reserved for varying the structure of the sentence with reference to the time of speaking.” Oyelaran (1982: 36) has previously concluded that tense is not a grammatical category in Yorùbá. He holds that Aspect [+ASP] is grammatical in the Language and is a sub-category of AUX. However, Fábùnmì (1998: 35–38; 2006: 92–105), quoting Omamor (1982: 17), argues that “the idea that all languages with no morphological indication of the opposition present-past are tenseless appears to be rather difficult to accept.” Bámgbóṣé (1990: 67) believes that tense and aspect are inseparable in Yorùbá. Odunuga (1982: 276), on the other hand, says “the absence of a general experience of aspect has affected many researchers in the establishment of tense-aspect nuance in the forms of the Yorùbá verb...whenever we speak of tense we tend to omit aspect.” In spite of these diverse opinions, we believe that aspect has to do with a kind of perspectivising of the internal, temporal structure of the situation described by the verb relative to the point of initiation of speech. Bull (1963) uses terms like the beginning, the middle and the end of an event to describe such internal, temporal structure. He calls it aspect of any event.

Our purpose in this paper is to examine and present a formalized aspectual structure of Yorùbá-Àkókó within the context of Gazdar (1985)’s theoretical framework called Generalised Phrase Structure Grammar (GPSG). According to Omamor (1982: 105), aspect reflects the temporal relationship between either

- (i) the point of initiation of speech and the internal, temporal structure of the event described by the verb; or
- (ii) the internal, temporal structure of a specific background situation described by one verb and the totality of the situation referred to by another verb.

The event configuration as shown in (i) and (ii) above is what we refer to as Aspectual Structure.

## 2. THE DATA

With the aid of the Ìbàdàn Four Hundred Basic Word-list, the data for this study were collected from Òkè-àgbè the headquarters of the Àkókó North-West Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria. According to Oyètádé (1996: 21), Òkè-Àgbè speech form is a representative of the cluster called *Akokoid Group*. The Akokoid Group is different clans in Òkè-Àgbè, each claiming that its lect is different; nevertheless our data were collected mostly from Udò and Ańgbé speech clans. They are a group of mutually intelligible clusters of Yorùbá-Àkókó dialect.

Scholars of the Yorùbá language have been calling on researchers to start studying the dialects of Yorùbá for what new things the dialect may teach us about the Yorùbá language. Awóbùlúyì (1992: 71) says such efforts “have the

potential of helping to clarify issues or points that are likely otherwise to remain obscure in the standard variety of the language.” Meanwhile, Francis (1983: 4) asserts that “Syntax has been very little studied by dialectologists.” He says this is one of the challenging areas of dialectology today. Earlier scholars like Koelle (1854), Délànò (1958), Adétúgbò (1967) and Akínkúgbé (1976) that have worked on the classification of the Yorùbá dialects did not even mention Àkókó dialect. For instance, Adétúgbò (1973: 183–185) divides the Yorùbá speaking areas of the old western Nigeria into three major dialect areas: (i) Northwest Yorùbá (NWY) comprising Òyó, Ìbàdàn and Òṣun; (ii) Southeast Yorùbá (SEY) comprising Rémò, Ondo, Ìkálè, Òwò and Ìkàré; and (iii) Central Yorùbá (CY) which has Ifè, Ìjèṣà and Èkitì. Oyèláràn (1976: 264–272) on his part, notices the dialectal variations existing among Yorùbá speakers and divides the Yorùbá speaking areas into four: (i) West Yorùbá (WY): Òyó, Ìbàdàn, Ègbá, Òhòrí-Ìfòhìn; Upper Ògùn – Ṣakí, Ijio, Kétu, Sábèè; Benin and Togo – Ifè (Togo), Idàisà, Mánìgrì; (ii) Southeast Yorùbá (SEY) comprising Ondo, Òwò, Ìjèbú, Ìkálè and Ìlàjè; (iii) Central Yorùbá (CY) comprising Ilé-Ifè, Ìjèṣà and Èkitì; and (iv) Northwestern Yorùbá (NEY) which has Ìgbómìnà, Kákáñdá, Ìgbòlò, Jumu, Búnú, Òwòrò, Owé and Ègbè dialects. Oyèláràn’s classification seems comprehensive if compared with others before him.

The most recent and detailed Yorùbá dialectal classification is that of Awóbùlúyì (1998: 2–9). He has five different dialectal subgroups: (i) Northwest Yorùbá (NWY) – Èkó, Àwòrì, Ègbádò, Òyó, Òṣun, Òñkò, Ìbòlò, Ìgbómìnà; (ii) North-East Yorùbá (NEY) – Ìyàgbà, Ìjùmú, Òwòrò, Owé; (iii) Central Yorùbá (CY) – Ifè, Ìjèṣà, Èkitì and Mòbà; (iv) South West Yorùbá (SWY) – Sábèè-Kétu (Anago) and Ifè (Togo); and (v) South East Yorùbá (SEY) – Ègbá, Ìjèbú, Ìlàjè, Ìkálè Ondo, Òwò, Òbà-Ìkàré. It should be noted that none of these dialectal subgroups included Àkókó dialect. In addition, following Fábùnmi (2006), one of the Yorùbá dialects that should be classified among the Southwest Yorùbá (SWY) is Mòfòlì. Mòfòlì is a dialect of Yorùbá commonly spoken by the Yorùbá people residing in the Plateau State of the Republic of Bénin.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The most obvious feature of the Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar (GPSG henceforth), as propounded by Gazdar et al in 1985, is that it is a monostratal framework. This negates the multistratal framework of Government and Binding Theory (GB) of Chomsky. For GPSG, all rules and principles are strictly local i.e. a rule affects a local tree consisting of a category and its daughters. In other words, the syntactic structure of a sentence is a single tree. It assigns just one level of syntactic representation to sentences, a level roughly analogous to the S-structure. GPSG does not deal with transformation. It is a deliberate reaction against Chomsky’s transformation paradigm of generative grammar. GPSG places great emphasis on mathematical precision and formal rigour, it uses

numbers to differentiate lexical items. GPSG makes use of **Features** more than other grammar. A syntactic category is conceived as a complex of Features; a set of specification each of which consists of a **Feature Name** and a **Feature Value** for that name. For instance, a NP that is third person singular and inflected in the genitive could be represented as in (1).

1.           BAR, 2  
              N, +  
              V, -  
              PER, 3  
              PLU, -  
              CASE, Gen

From (1), we infer that double-bar categories are maximal projections; nouns are nominal but not verbal, etc. Node labels are taken as sets of features where some features, but not all, have binary values [ $\pm$ ]. The feature value can be represented by numbers {1, 2, 3}. According to Gazdar et al (1985: 22), Feature Name and Feature Value could be sub-divided into two in GPSG as shown in (2).

2.           (i) Atom-valued Feature  
              (ii) Category-valued Feature.

The value of such features in (2i) are atomic i.e. they are not susceptible to further analysis. The value of those in (2ii) is also not atomic but they are, in fact, categories. Some of these GPSG Features will be relevant in our analysis. Consider (3) below.

3.	<u>Feature Name</u>	<u>Feature Value</u>	<u>Descriptions</u>
Boolean	N	{ +, - }	Nominal
	V	{ +, - }	Verbal
	AUX	{ +, - }	Auxiliary
	PERF	{ +, - }	Perfective
	ASSOC	{ +, - }	Associative
	NULL	{ +, - }	“Traces”
Others	PERS	{ 1, 2, 3 }	Person
	VFORM	{ BSE, INF, SER, SPL }	Base, Infinitive
		By, to, for...	Serial, Splitting
	PFORM	{ sí, ti, ní }	Case Marking
			Prepositions eg PP[ni]
	COMP	{ bá, kí, ìbáà, bí }	Complementizer type e.g. COMP [kí]
	CASE	{ Acc, Nom, Gen }	Accusative, Nominative, Genitive

Syntactic categories play central role in GPSG; it accepts the universality of these four categories:

4. (a) {<N, +>, <V, ->} = Noun
- (b) {<N, ->, <V, +>} = Verb
- (c) {<N, +>, <V, +>} = Adjective
- (d) {<N, ->, <V, ->} = Preposition

The categories in (4) are treated as “decomposable by means of a feature system that postulate a feature specification [+N] which only N and A have, and a feature specification [+V] which only V and A have.” (cf Gazdar et al 1985: 37–39). From (4) above, schematized in (5) below, nouns are nominal but not verbal; adjectives are nominal and verbal; verbs are verbal but not nominal and prepositions are neither verbal nor nominal.

5.

	[+N]	[-N]
[+V]	A	V
[-V]	N	P

The feature specification in (4b) above is very relevant to our analysis here; it will form the basis of our discussion in the following sections.

GPSG specifies auxiliary verbs (AUX) as binary (Boolean) features. The category aspect is AUX; it is part of the AUX features shown in (6a). Some Yorùbá auxiliary verbs and its dialectal forms in Àkókó have variants; the feature in (6b) is used to distinguish these variants.

6. (a) (i) VP [+AUX] → H [n] VP {-AUX [-INF] +BSE}
- (ii) [SUBCAT] < [-SUBCAT]
- (b) [+ALT, n]
- n ∈ {1, 2, 3}

The rules in (6a) introduce the AUX. AUX is regarded as part of the VP in GPSG. If AUX is preceding any sentence, it must be specified (this is referred to as Specification by Default) as in (6a) where AUX cannot follow the VP again; then the following elements should be a base verb not an infinitive. (6aii) is subcategorisation; it says that SUBCAT is a lexical item that must precede a phrase. (We shall make use of the specification in (6b) for our analysis of the aspectual structure of Yorùbá-Àkókó in the following sections). SUBCAT ensures that lexical head has the right complements. It has variants.

GPSG does not accommodate Phrase Structure Rule (PS-Rule); it therefore develops the rules in (7) and others. We have to identify the rules in (7) for meaning because they will be very useful in our analysis of Yorùbá-Àkókó aspectual structure.

7. (a) Immediate Dominance Rule
- (b) Linear Precedence Rule
- (c) Meta Rule

The relevant rules that specify the basic subcategorisation facts about the lexical heads in GPSP are called Immediate Dominance Rule (ID-Rule) and Linear Precedence Rule (LP-Rule). The basic subcategorisation facts are expressed by ID-rules; the set of possible permutations of categories mentioned in a given ID-rule is determined by the LP-rules. ID-rule defines possible co-occurrence restriction in trees; LP-rule is about left to right ordering of words within a phrase. The third rule is called the Meta Rule. It captures regularities between generality; in other words it maps an ID-rule to another ID-rule. According to Gazdar et al (1985: 65), Metarules are “the rules in the grammar which are based on the properties of other rules; they enlarge the set of rules of a grammar in a regular way.” The application of metarules does not change the subcategorisation feature on lexical categories. The general feature of metarule in GPSG is shown in (8a).

8. (a)  $X \rightarrow W \quad Y$   
 $\quad \quad \quad \updownarrow$   
 $\quad \quad \quad X' \rightarrow W \quad Z$

(8a) states that given a rule of the form:

$$X \rightarrow W \quad Y$$

then the grammar can contain a rule in the form of

$$X' \rightarrow W \quad Z$$

where Y or Z, but not both, may be null. W is a multi-set of category, X' is an extension of X, and either Y or Z or W contains the lexical head of X'. In other words, we can even generate (8b).

- (b)  $VP \rightarrow V \quad PP$   
 $\quad \quad \quad \updownarrow$   
 $VP \rightarrow V \quad NP$   
 $VP \rightarrow V$

GPSG will therefore affirm that for a given sentence that has a subject, there is another given sentence which always has an unrealized subject.

The basic LP-rules in Yorùbá-Àkókó dialect are stated in (9) below.



Lexical categories are important in GPSG.

GPSG ensures the well-formedness of syntactic categories. One of the principles which governs what ‘features can occur where’ is the Feature Co-occurrence Restriction (FCR). It requires that categories must conform to certain well-formedness conditions. Examples of FCRs which we will need in our analysis of Yorùbá-Àkókó aspectual structure are presented in (13).

13. (a) FCR 1: [+NEG]    ⊃ [+AUX]
- (b) FCR 2: [+ASP]    ⊃ [+AUX]
- (c) FCR 3: [+M]      ⊃ [+AUX]
- (d) FCR 4: [+HAB]    ⊃ [+ASP]
- (e) FCR 5: [+PERF]   ⊃ [+ASP]
- (f) FCR 6: [+PROG]   ⊃ [+ASP]
- (g) FCR 7: [+OBL]    ⊃ [+M]
- (h) FCR 8: [+POT]    ⊃ [+M]

Some FCRs may be universal and some may be possible syntactic categories in a language. The FCRs in (13) imply that the categories on the left of the string are members of the right.

GPSG places priority on standard of precision and explicitness. It has to do with research priorities. It differs from other theories, especially GB, in many ways. Sells’ (1985: 17–18) assertion is a summary of GPSG. He says “Generalised Phrase Structure Grammar is in a sense a very homogenous theory, in that it posits only one level of syntactic representation, surface structure, and in its pure conception, only one kind of syntactic object, the phrase structure. In its outlook on the architecture of the grammar, GPSG has inherited a tradition from formal language theory and within the realm of generative grammar, from Montague Grammar.”

#### 4. ASPECTUAL STRUCTURE OF YORÙBÁ-ÀKÓKÓ

Aspectual structure is a formalization of Comrie’s (1967) hypothesis which says that the perfective denotes a complete situation within a beginning, middle and the end. The aspect of an action i.e. its completion or non-completion is perhaps more important than the actual time. We shall examine the Yorùbá-Àkókó verb forms from this point of view. If the grammatical categories are discussed from relational viewpoint, the ordering of aspectual relationship will indicate both the perfective [PERF] and the imperfective [IMPERF] forms.



## 4.1 THE YORÙBÁ ÀKÓKÓ IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT

Imperfective aspect has to do with viewing a situation from within. It could be realized as a single category of aspect, and it could be divided into subcategories. The Yorùbá Àkókó imperfective aspect can be sub-divided into other subcategories of aspect: the Progressive Aspect and the Habitual Aspect.

### 4.1.1 Habitual Aspect in Yorùbá Àkókó

The notion of an extended period of time characterizes the habitual aspect. What marks the habitual aspect in Yorùbá Àkókó is *mà í* [+IMPERF, +HAB]. It is a polymorphemic word which refers to an indefinite occurrence of an action. Examples are:

14.

(a) *Ògúnbò mà í ju àran.*

Ògúnbò mà í ju àran  
Ògúnbò HAB eat meat  
“Ògúnbò usually eats meat.”

(b) *Adé mà í ve ùwà.*

Adé mà í ve ùwà  
Adé HAB go farm  
“Adé usually goes to the farm.”

(c) *Sọlá mà í gúnran.*

Sọlá mà í gúnran  
Sọlá HAB tell-lies  
“Sọlá always tells lies.”

(d) *Éme vaà mà í bọyi.*

Éme vaà mà í bọyi  
You (pl) NEG HAB drink-water  
“You don’t usually drink water.”

The polymorphemic item *mà í* as used in the Yorùbá Àkókó sentences above affirms Òké’s (1969: 440–448) view that there should be a distinct habitual subcategory of aspect in standard Yorùbá. This is so because some scholars of the language believe that habitual aspect does not exist except the progressive aspect. The item that marks the habitual aspect in the standard Yorùbá is *máa ní*; that of the Yorùbá Àkókó is *mà í*. We note that the two items are polymorphemic; they also have the same distributions. For instance, following Òké’s submission, the verbs *wá* “to come” and *wà* “to be” freely occur with *mà í* as shown in (15).

15.

(a) *Ú mà í wá. (Ó máa n wá)*

Ú mà í wá  
He HAB come

“He usually comes.”

(b) *Ú mà í wà. (Ó máa n wà)*

Ú mà í wà  
He HAB to be (in the office)

“He usually there.”

There are other similar instances where the habitual and the progressive markers have different distributions. The LP and ID-rules that introduce AUX like *mà í* [+HAB, +ALT] have been stated in (9) and (10) above. From those rules, we realize that *mà í* [+HAB, +ALT] cannot immediately precede itself or its alternant in the right order as in (16). Consequently, (16) is ungrammatical.

16.

(a) \**Adé mà í mà ve ùwà.*

Adé mà í mà ve ùwà  
Adé HAB ALT1 go farm

(b) \**Adé mà í í ve ùwà.*

Adé mà í í ve ùwà  
Adé HAB ALT2 go farm

From the finite rule schema in (10) above, we can have a rule instantiation<sup>1</sup> like (17) which will introduce the habitual *mà í* [+HAB, +ALT].

17.

N	X	y	H[n]	Gloss
1	+ASP	+POT	Mà í	HAB

The rule instantiation in (17) stipulates that the value of n is 1, that of x is [+ASP] and y is [+POT]. It asserts that if *mà í* [+HAB, +ALT] occurs first in the VP, then the potential modal *wè* “can/may” is the only AUX<sup>2</sup> that can follow it. The perfective *á* [+PERF] and associative *gà* [+ASS] cannot follow it in the right order. So, from (17) we deduce that (18a) is grammatical while (18b & c) are ungrammatical.

18.

(a) *Adé mà í wè vë ùwà.*

Adé mà í wè vë ùwà  
Adé HAB POT go farm

“Adé was often able to go to the farm.”

(b) \**Adé mà í á vĕ ùwà.*

Adé mà í Á vĕ ùwà  
 Adé HAB PERF go farm

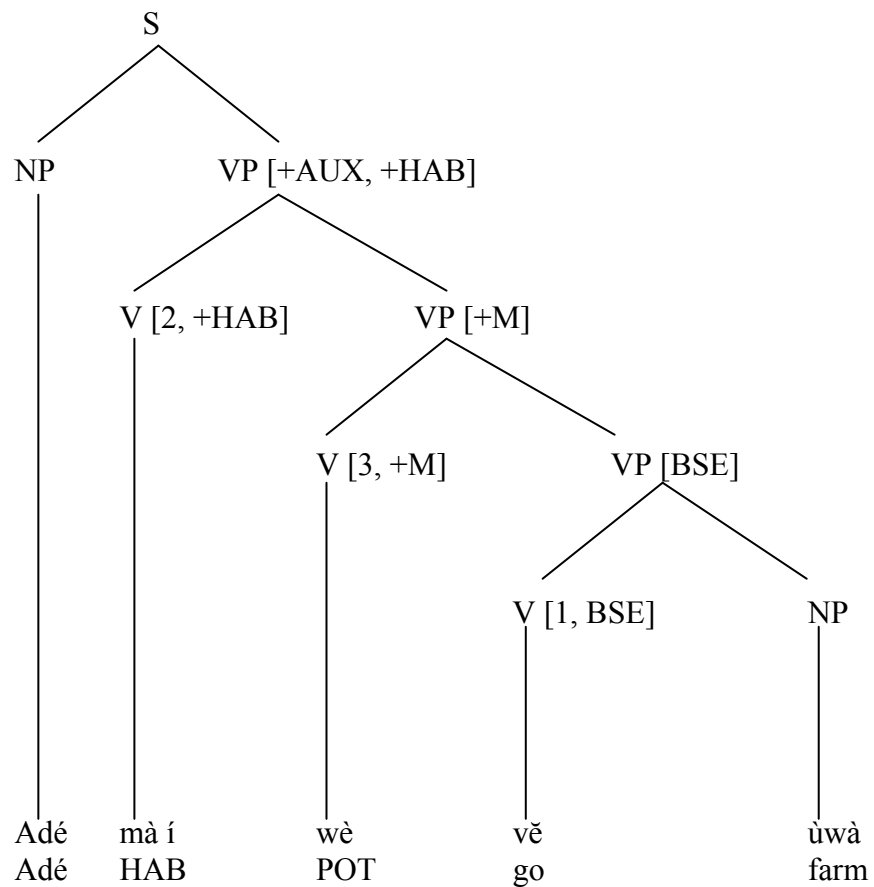
“Adé was often able to go to the farm.”

(c) \**Adé mà í gà vĕ farm*

Adé mà í gà vĕ farm  
 Adé HAB ASS go farm

The example in (18a) can generate the structure in (19).

19.



#### 4.1.2 Progressive Aspect in Yorùbá Àkókó

The progressive aspect [+PROG] is a subcategory of imperfective which views activity as on-going. It occurs with punctual temporal reference but “ongoingness” is the most important property central to the use of PROG. *í* [+AUX, + PROG] is the grammatical item that indicates the progressive aspect in Yorùbá Àkókó. It has a suppletive or variant: *gà* [+PROG, +ALT] as shown in the following sentences:

20. (i)

(a) *Ògúnḃọ́ í yu àran.*

Ògúnḃọ́ í yu àran  
N PROG eat meat  
“Ògúnḃọ́ is eating meat.”

(b) *Mú í vẹ́ ùwà.*

Mú Í vẹ́ ùwà  
1sg PROG go farm  
“I am going to the farm.”

(c) *Sáde í kọ́ ọ̀yì.*

Sáde Í kọ́ ọ̀yì  
N PROG fetch water  
“Sáde is fetching water.”

(ii)

(a) *Gà vẹ́.*

Gà vẹ́  
PROG go  
“Start to go (now).”

(b) *Gà kọ́ ọ̀yì.*

Gà kọ́ ọ̀yì  
PROG fetch water  
“Start to fetch water (now).”

(c) *Gà ú vẹ́ ùwà.*

Gà ú vẹ́ ùwà  
PROG 2sg go farm  
“Begin to go to the farm (now).”

(iii)

(a) *Ògunḃọ́ wẹ́ gà yu àran.*

Ògunḃọ́ wẹ́ Gà yu àran  
N M PROG eat meat  
“Ògunḃọ́ can start eating meat.”

(b) *Sáde wẹ́ gà kọ́ ọ̀yì.*

Ògunḃọ́ wẹ́ gà kọ́ ọ̀yì  
N M PROG fetch water  
“Sáde can start fetching the water.”

In (20) above, the alternant form *gà* [+PROG, +ALT] replaces *í* [+AUX, +PROG] in imperative constructions (see (20ii a–c)), it also features after some modal verbs (see (20iii a–b)). The element that performs the function of “ongoingness” in the Standard Yorùbá is *ń*; that of the Yorùbá Àkókó is *í*. The two grammatical formatives have some common phonological features but they differ in some other features as shown in (21).

21.

↓	<b>Standard Yorùbá</b>	<b>Yorùbá Àkókó</b>
↓	<i>ń</i> [+AUX, +PROG]	<i>í</i> [+AUX, +PROG]
↓	+ High Tone	+ High Tone
<b>Features</b>	+Nasal	-Nasal
↑	+Consonantal	+Syllabic
↑	-High	+High
↑	+Sonorant	+Sonorant

The prominent features that distinguish the two items are [+cons] / [-syll] and [+nasal] / [-nasal]. It seems difficult to establish any conceptual derivation between [+cons] and [-syll] and between [+nasal] and [-nasal] for the items that mark the progressive aspect in the standard Yorùbá and Yorùbá Àkókó. One plausible argument is to claim that both *í* and *ń* are derived from *mí* [+AUX, +PROG]. There are some other dialects of Yorùbá like Ìjẹ̀sà, Èkìtì, where the constituent *mí* [+AUX, +PROG] has undergone the phonological processes in (22); namely that the vowel first nasalizes then deletes and eventually yields a phonetic variation.

22.  $mí \rightarrow ní \rightarrow í \rightarrow ń$

We can as well establish it that the standard Yorùbá just nasalized the Yorùbá Àkókó progressive marker from *í* to *ń* i.e. from [+syllabic] to [+cons].

The Yorùbá Àkókó progressive marker is the only item that occurs in imperative constructions in a peculiar manner. In (20 ii a–c) above, the suppletive *gà* [+PROG, +ALT] occurs to indicate that the sentences are imperative. Other aspectual types (perfective, habitual) and negators, etc, cannot frequently occur with the imperatives; this is shown in (23).

23.

(a) \**mà í vè*.  
     *mà í vè*  
     HAB go

(b) \**mà í kọ*  
mà í kọ òyì.  
HAB fetch water

(c) \**á vè*.  
á vè  
PERF go

(d) \**á kọ òyì*  
Á kọ òyì.  
PERF fetch water

All the sentences in (23) are considered ungrammatical in Yorùbá Àkókó because imperative constructions are the semantic sense notion given to them. If otherwise, they will be grammatical sentences. We note that the non-progressive counterparts of the sentences in (20ii a–c) will be rendered as shown in (24a–c) below.

24.

(a) *vè*  
Vè  
“Go”

(b) *kọ òyì*  
kọ òyì  
“Fetch water”

(c) *Vě ùwà*  
Vě ùwà  
“Go (to the) farm”

Instances where the progressive occur in the Yorùbá Àkókó negative constructions are shown in (25b–c); observe that the NEG *má* is the same with that of the Standard Yorùbá.

25.

(a) *Gà vẹ ùwà*.  
Gà vẹ ùwà  
PROG go farm  
“Start going to the farm.”

(b) *Má vẹ ùwà*.  
Má vẹ ùwà.  
NEG go farm  
“Do not go to the farm.”

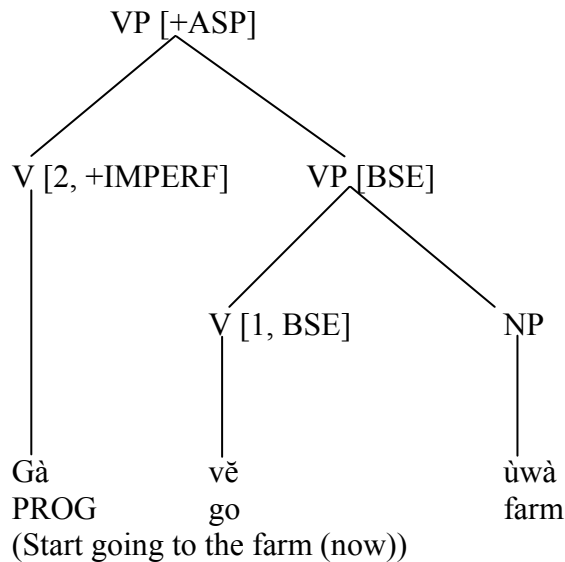
(c) *Má gà vĕ ùwà.*

Má gà vĕ ùwà  
 NEG go PROG farm

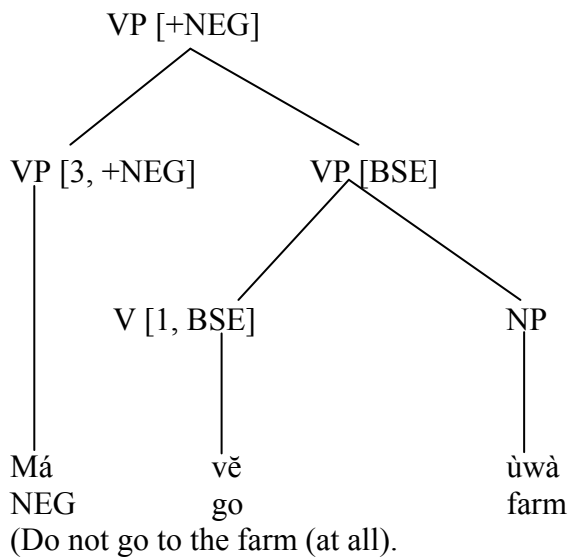
“Don’t be going to the farm (at all).”

Both the positive and negative constructions in (25a&b) could give rise to the structure in (26a&b) respectively.

26. (a)



(b)



The peculiar manner with which the grammatical formative *gà* [+PROG, +ALT] occurs in those Yorùbá Àkókó imperative constructions, shown in (20ii a–c) above, now repeated as (27a–c), needs further analysis and clarifications.

27.

(a) *Gà vẹ́.*

Gà vẹ́

PROG go

“Start to go (now)”.

(b) *Gà kọ ọ̀yì.*

Gà kọ ọ̀yì

PROG fetch water

“Begin to fetch water (now).”

(c) *Gà ú vẹ́ ùwà.*

Gà ú vẹ́ ùwà

PROG 2sg go farm

“Begin to go to the farm (now)”.

In pragmatic terms, the notion of futurity can be read to those sentences in (27). If this happens, it will change the imperative constructions therein to declaratives. We however discover that apart from serving as the progressive aspect marker, Yorùbá Àkókó also uses *gà* to mark a future tense<sup>3</sup>; accordingly, it has an additional [+FUT] feature. Examples are (28).

28.

(a) *Ọ̀gunbọ̀ gà yu àran.*

Ọ̀gunbo gà yu àran

N FUT eat meat

“Ọ̀gunbọ̀ will eat the meat”

(b) *ń gà vùwà.*

ń gà vùwà

1sg FUT go-farm

“I will go to the farm.”

(c) *Ẹ̀ gà kọ ọ̀yì.*

Ẹ̀ gà kọ ọ̀yì

1pl FUT fetch water

“We will fetch water.”

(d) *Vá gà yàyu.*

Vá gà yàyu.

3pl FUT eat-yam

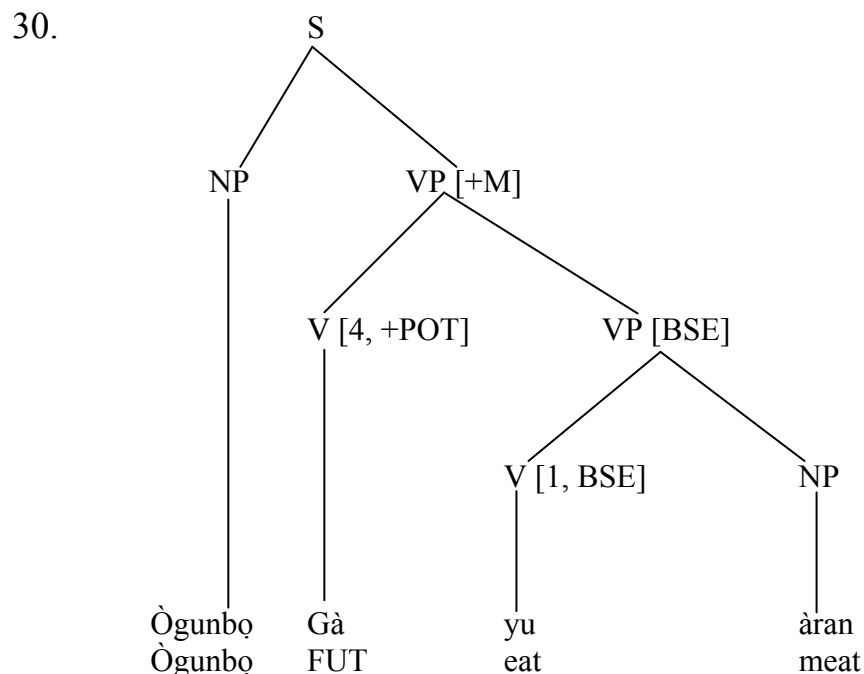
“They will eat the yam.”

From (27) and (28), we have the same item marking the progressive aspect and the future tense in Yorùbá Àkókó:



29. [+ AUX: gà] → [+ASP, +PROG]  
 [+ AUX: gà] → [+TNS, + FUT]

We generate the structures in (26a) above and in (30) below so as to demonstrate the different grammatical functions of the AUX *gà* in Yorùbá Àkókó.



In order to get the Yorùbá Àkókó progressive aspect marker *í* [+ PROG] in the right order with some other auxiliary verbs, as encapsulated in the GPSG rule schema already given in (10) above, we can establish a rule instantiation like (31) below.

31.

n	X	y	H[n]	Gloss
2	+ASP	- AUX	í	PROG

(31) stipulates that if *í* [+ PROG] or its supplement *gà* [+ PROG, +ALT] occurs first in the VP, it cannot be followed by any other AUX. Thus (32a & b) are grammatical while (32c & d) are not.

32.  
 (a) *Mú í ñdù.*  
 Mú í ñdù.  
 1sg PROG grow-up  
 “I am growing up.”

(b) *Gà ñdù.*

Gà ñdù  
 PROG grow-up  
 “Be growing up.”

(c) \**Mu í á ñdù.*

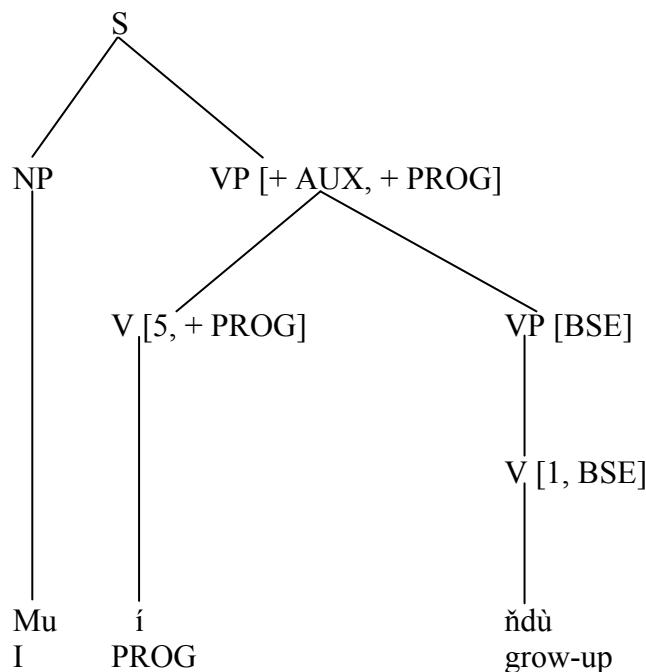
Mu Í á ñdù.  
 1sg PROG PERF grow-up

(d) \**Gà gà ñdù.*

Gà gà ñdù  
 PROG FUT grow-up

The sentence in (32a) will generate the structure in (33).

33.



## 4.2 THE YORÙBÁ ÀKÓKÓ PERFECTIVE ASPECT

According to Comrie (1976: 16), perfective aspect indicates “a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation.” It is this definition that prompted Adewøle (1989: 85) to suggest that the High Tone Syllable (HTS) be regarded as “the element marking the perfective aspect in Yorùbá.” Awobuluyi (1975: 229) had earlier established HTS as “a preverbal adverb which indicates the non-future tense.” Oyelaran (1982: 22) claims that HTS is “a definitizer.” Apart from proposing HTS as a perfective marker, Adewøle (1986: 89–91), in another work, also regards the perfective as “an Unmarked Category” of aspect. He regards the perfective as an unmarked member of the aspectual subcategories so as to account for its co-

occurrence with other aspectual categories like HTS, tense markers and other aspect markers. Meanwhile, in order to account for the syntactic distribution of *ti*, “has/have/had” the item generally regarded by many scholars as past tense marker or as a perfective marker, Adewole (1991: 13–15) introduces the notion of phase system in Yorùbá. He says the item that is used in the language to mark phase is *ti* “has/have/had.” This proposal is very attractive but we find it difficult to accept it in its entirety. The reasons for this are not far fetched:

In the first instance, Adewole argues that Yorùbá is a tenseless language; he therefore rejects Awobuluyi’s submission that HTS indicates non-future tense. But while proving that HTS is a perfective marker, Adewole says it co-occurs with tenses in the language. This is a contradiction. Since he believes that there are no tenses in the language, then it is not possible for HTS to co-occur with tense markers.

In addition, Adewole (1991: 15) clearly agrees that phase shares the ‘complete’ notion with the perfective. This implies that phase and perfective are not “often confused with each other” as he claims, but rather we believe that they are basically the same. This is so because if Adewole believes that phase and perfective share the same notion of completeness, then in terms of their internal temporal structure, his suggestion that the perfective should be marked by HTS, while phase should be marked by *ti* “has/have/had” cannot be justified. A single syntactic category cannot be marked by two different formatives. A question that is pertinent here is that, does *ti* “has/have/had” and HTS share the same complementary distributional properties relative to utterance situation? We believe that phase and perfective are the same because they relate two S-token to each other in the same manner. Therefore, the idea that HTS is a perfective marker and that the perfective is an unmarked category of aspect, will be difficult to sustain.

We regard the perfective as a marked member of aspect subcategory in Yorùbá Àkókó because it does not become void whenever it occurs with other category of aspect (see (34) & (36) below). In other words, our findings reveal that *á* [+ PERF] “has/have/had” and not HTS, is the element marking the perfective in Yorùbá Àkókó; this is shown in (34). We also note that the Yorùbá Àkókó perfective marker has a variant: *tì* [+ PERF, +ALT1, +NEG]. This suppletive occurs only in negative constructions, see (38) below. It should be noted that although the item *á* [+ PERF] borne a high tone, it should not be confused with HTS. Since it is not an HTS, then the issue of the neutralization of the perfective will not be feasible in Yorùbá Àkókó aspectual contrasts.

34.

(a) *Ògunḃo á yu àran.*

Ògunḃo á yu àran.

N PERF eat meat

“Ògunḃo has eaten a meat.”

(b) *Ò á yuवेवे.*

Ò    Á            yuवेवे.  
1pl PERF eat-food  
“We have eaten the food.”

(c) *Supo á vẹ ùwà.*

Supo á            vẹ ùwà.  
N        PERF to farm  
“Supo has gone to the farm.”

(d) *Babà á nùgbọgbọ.*

Babà á            nùgbọgbọ  
Man PERF sleep  
“The man has left.”

The two elements (*á* and *ti*) that mark the perfective aspects in both standard Yorùbá and Yorùbá Àkókó are completely unrelated if we consider their morpho-phonemic features. What affirms their differences are the different tone markings. The Yorùbá Àkókó perfective marker has a high tone. This may re-open the issue of HTS as a perfective marker as proposed by Adewole (1986). We however note that although *á* [+ PERF] “has/have/had” bears a high tone, it should not be mistaken as HTS form. The reason is that, following Awobuluyi (1975), it is not morphological /í/ in any contexts in Yorùbá Àkókó VP, it is always /á/. Again, it does not have a zero variant in any of the Yorùbá Àkókó sentences. Above all, the perfective is a marked category in the dialect.

Following GPSG’s ID and LP-rules framework, where the right order of the Yorùbá Àkókó perfective aspect marker *á* [+AUX, + PERF] could be established, we can instantiate a rule like (35).

35.

N	x	y	H[n]	Gloss
3	+ASP	- ASS, + ALT + HAB + OBL + POT + PROG	á	PERF

The rule instantiation<sup>4</sup> in (35) says that *á* [+ PERF] “has/have/had” can be immediately followed by either the habitual *mà í*, the obligative *gbọdọdọ*, “must” the potential *wẹ*, “can” the assumptive *gà*, “will” or the progressive *í*. Examples are stated in (36).

36.

(a) *Èmẹ á í vẹ ùwà.*

Èmẹ á            í            vẹ ùwà  
2pl PERF PROG go farm  
“You have started going to the farm.”

(b) *Vá á wè vĕ ùwà.*

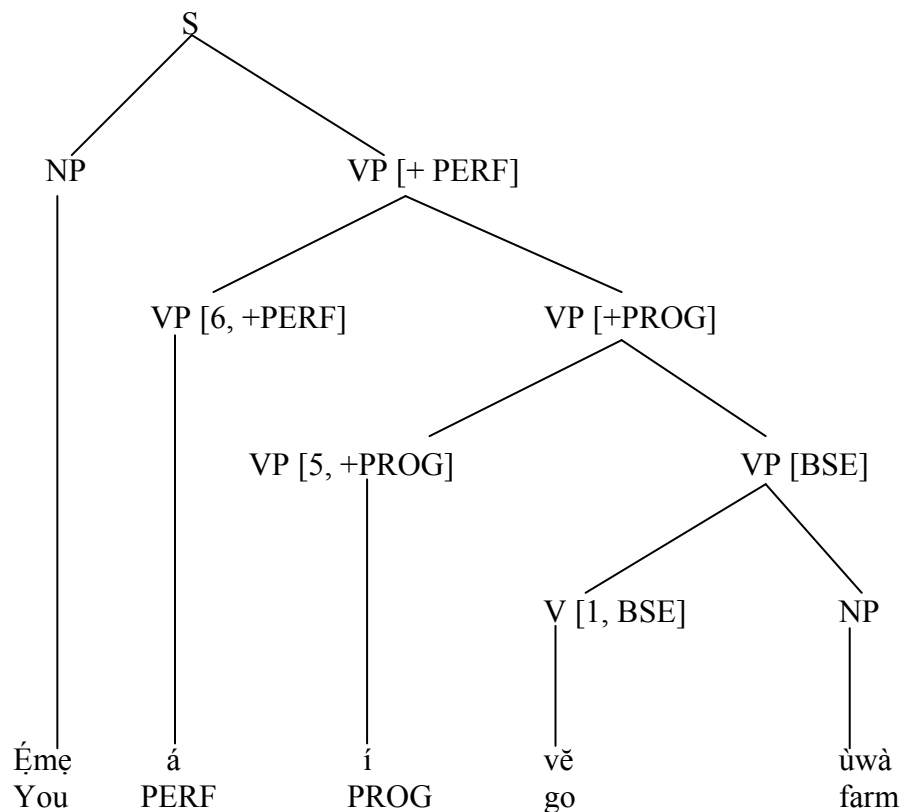
Vá á wè vĕ ùwà  
 3pl PERF POT go farm  
 “They might have gone to the farm.”

(c) \**Ògunbọ á gà yu àran.*

Ògunbọ á gà yu àran.  
 N PERF ASS [+FUT] eat meat.  
 \*“Ògunbọ has will eat meat.”

(36c) above is ungrammatical because the rule in (35) does not permit the assumptive *gà* [+ASS, +FUT] to follow the perfective *á* in any Yorùbá Àkókó utterances. The examples in (36a) can generate the structure in (37).

37.



### 4.3 ASPECT AND NEGATION IN YORÙBÁ ÀKÓKÓ

What we intend to do here is to briefly state the Feature Co-occurrence Restrictions (FCRs) and the Linear Precedence Rules (LPRs) noted for the negative verbs in Yorùbá Àkókó. We present Yorùbá Àkókó NEG formatives and the alternants in (38).

38. (a) *káà* [+NEG]  
 (b) *má* [+NEG, +ALT1]  
 (c) *áà* [+NEG, +ALT2]  
 (d) *à* [+NEG, +ALT3]  
 (e) *àí* [+NEG]  
 (f) *tì* [+ PERF, +ALT1, +NEG]

In (38i), *káà* [+NEG] always functions as the head verb of the VP, and it is a negative verb. The necessary FCR, as specified in (13) above, states that all the +NEG items in (38) cannot be preceded by any other verbs. The only exception will be *má* [+NEG, +ALT1] in Yorùbá Àkókó. *má* [+NEG, +ALT1] and *kó* [+NEG, +ALT3] are the exceptions to this FCR in the standard Yorùbá. We have already noted the fact that Standard Yorùbá and Yorùbá Àkókó use the NEG element *má*, it includes a [+ALT] feature specification. We however cannot establish *kó* [+NEG] in the Standard Yorùbá as either a NEG morpheme or a NEG variant in Yorùbá Àkókó negative constructions. Moreover, the necessary LPR which will account for the NEG morphemes in (38) above has already been stated in (11) repeated as (39) below.

39. LPR 1: V K { [+NEG] }  
 { [+NEG], [+ALT 2] }

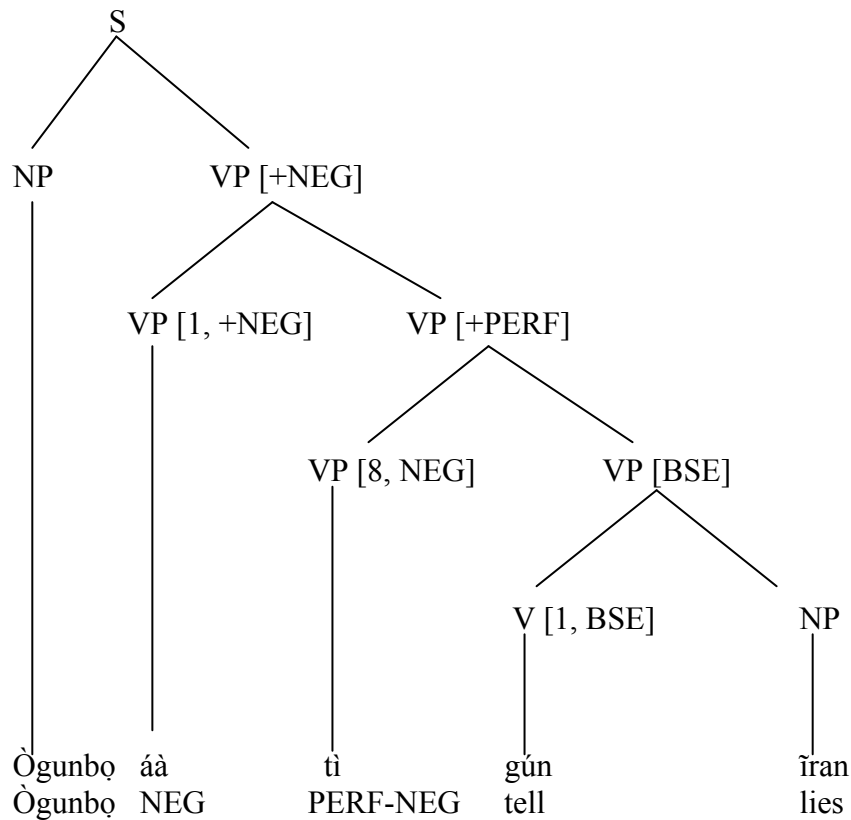
What (39) stipulates in essence is that no [+NEG] can immediately precede either itself or its variants. This is in consonance with the restriction in (13a) above repeated as (40).

40. FCR 1: [+NEG]  $\supset$  [+AUX]

We observe that *áà* [+NEG] cannot co-occur with the item that marks the perfective aspect in Yorùbá Àkókó i.e. *á* [+ PERF], but it can occur with its alternant *tì* [+ PERF, +ALT, +NEG] within a VP [+ NEG]. This is exemplified in (41) which generate the structure in (42).

41.  
*Ògunbọ áà tì gúnran.*  
 Ògunbọ áà tì gúnran.  
 N NEG PERF tell-lies  
 “Ògunbọ has not told any lies.”

42.



If we examine the Yorùbá Àkókó negative constructions in (43a–c) below,

43.

(a) *Ná à ló ñghọ.*

Ná à ló ñghọ

2sg NEG cut tree

“You did not cut down the tree.”

(b) *Úwòn káà bọyín.*

Úwòn káà bọyín.

3sg NEG drink-water

“He/she does not drink water.”

(c) *Éhò vá àí gúnra.*

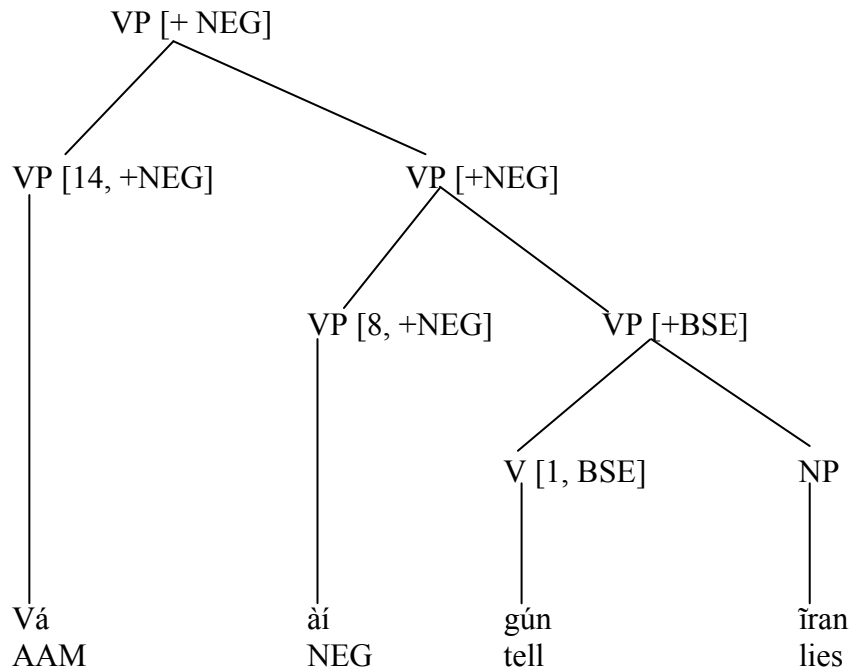
Éhò vá àí gúnra.

3pl AAM NEG tell-lies

“They do not tell lies any more.”

we will discover an element *vá* [AAM]<sup>5</sup> occurs as the first item in the negative sentence in (43c). If we take a cue from Oṃṣuyi (1991: 10), we can call *vá* [AAM] “a prohibition morpheme.” *Vá* also seems to mark the cessation of events previously in progress. It functions as a form of negation marker which usually translated as “any more.” The grammatical structure of the VP in (43c) is shown in (44).

44.



The instantiation rule which introduces those negative verbs in (38) above is given in (45) below. It says modals (obligative, potential, etc) and perfectives can follow *káà* [+NEG], but the LPR1 in (39) will not permit any other verb to precede it; hence the ungrammaticality of (46a). Similarly, the potential and the habitual can all follow *má* [+NEG, +ALT], but the LPR1 in (39) will prevent the perfective from following it; hence (46b) is also ungrammatical. In addition, *gà* [+ASS], *wè* [+POT] “can/may” can follow the negative verb *àí/à* [+NEG] but *á* [+PERF] cannot, for this reason (46c) is not grammatical. The LPR1 in (39) will not allow it to be preceded by any verb.

45.

n	x	y	H[n]	Gloss
4	+NEG	+PERF, ALT	<i>káà</i>	not
		+OBL	<i>áà</i>	
		+POT		not
		+HAB	<i>má</i>	
		+POT		
		+ASS	<i>àí</i>	not
		+POT	<i>à</i>	

46.

(a) \**Émè í káà vë ùwà.*

Émè í káà vë ùwà  
 2pl PROG NEG go farm



(b) \**Má á ñdù.*

Má            á            ñdù  
NEG- ALT PERF grow

(c) \**Ògunbọ àí á yu àran.*

Ògunbo àí        á            yu        àran  
N            NEG PERF eat        meat

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper sets out to examine the structure of the different markers of aspect in Yorùbá Àkókó. Yorùbá Àkókó systematically distinguishes between different aspectual contrasts through some morphological markers that are completely different from those of the Standard Yorùbá. There are remarkable changes in the tones borne by the aspectual markers in Yorùbá Àkókó. Using GPSG as a framework, we also accounted for some co-occurrence restrictions and the right order of Yorùbá Àkókó auxiliary verbs. This work has shown that the perfective in Yorùbá Àkókó cannot be treated as an unmarked member of the aspectual subcategories. Some issues regarding aspect and negation in Yorùbá Àkókó are also discussed in this paper. We hope that this presentation will be another call to other scholars to start studying the various dialects of the Yorùbá language.

## Notes

1. Familiarity with GPSG as proposed by Gazdar et al (1985) is assumed in this paper.
2. Adéwólé (1991: 11–12) also refers to this same proposition, taking a cue from Òké's (1969) hypothesis.
3. We assume that *gà* [+FUT] in Yorùbá Àkókó has the same function as *yóò* [+FUT] in the Standard Yorùbá. We however note that these formatives may also indicate the modal verb: [+POT].
4. See Adéwólé (1989: 4–5) for the sequence and co-occurrence of AUX in Standard Yorùbá.
5. Oṣoniyi (1991: 6) says this type of auxiliary mark time relations with respect to the verbs they modify; he tags it Aspectual Auxiliary Marker [AAM].

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