À-ì-Derived Nominals in Yorùbá[1]

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Abstract

There are two accounts in the literature on the status of "àì", an entity that derives certain nominals in Yorùbá, namely, the account that "àì" is a single negative morpheme and the account that "àì" consists of two morphemes "à" and "ì". In the first account, the claim is that "àì" nominalizes minimally a verb (phrase) to derive nouns by a morphological process of prefixation. The second account claims that "à" and "ì" jointly nominalize the same constituent in the same process. This paper argues along the line of the view that àì consists of two morphemes from morphological, semantic and syntactic points of view.

As for their morphology, it is shown that each of the two elements, namely, "à" and "ì" is a distinctive morpheme which contributes to the derivation of àì-nominals: while "ì" is analyzed as the negative (Neg) prefix morpheme that supplies the negative interpretation of the verb, "à" is treated as the nominalizer (Nom) morpheme that nominalizes the derived 'negated Verb Phrase'.

On their semantics, the paper demonstrates that only Non-referential nominals are derived through the àì-twin prefix as in àì-dé 'inability to arrive'; thus the possibility of deriving R(eferential) nominals with either of them e.g. àì-daran 'act of not pasturing'[23] is completely ruled out.

As for their syntax, the paper proposes that "à" and "ì" are functional elements comprising of the negation morpheme "ì" and the nominalizer morpheme "à"; each of which projects even though none is independent

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[2] By R-nominals we mean nouns that denote things whereas E-nominals denote events
[3] Cf. *darandaran* 'pastoral' which is referential.

of the other in this particular derivation processes. It therefore argues along the lines of Ajíbóyè, Déchaine & Stewart (2004) that "àì" derived nominal expressions have the structure of a Nominal Phrase (NomP). Adopting the minimalist program of Chomsky (1995), the paper claims that the negation morpheme -ì first merges with α which can be a Verb Phrase with an Aspectual Phrase or a Modal Phrase or both occurring optionally yielding a Negative Phrase (NegP). If the derivation stops at this, the derivation crashes; so, the derivation continues as the nominalizer à- merges with the NegP to form the NomP, a derivation that converges.

1. Introduction

Yorùbá is one of the languages whose nominalization processes are very robust. Prominent among such processes are nominalization by affixation, nominalization by duplication, nominalization by compounding and nominalization by truncation. Yet, there are numerous desentential names; this last case of nominalization can be seen as involving a complex compounding process. Nouns that are derived by affixation include adding a vowel prefix to a verb phrase. This is sometimes accompanied by some phonological processes such as deletion and coalescence. In this paper, I examine only nouns derived by prefixing _àì_ to a verb phrase or entities slightly bigger.

There are two views in the literature on the status of "_àì_". On the one hand is the view that "_àì_" is a single negative prefix that nominalizes verbs to derive nouns (Bamgboṣe 1990, Owólabí 1995, Ogunkeye 2005, Táíwò 2006). On the other hand is the view that "_àì_" consists of two morphemes (_à-_ and _ì-_) that jointly nominalize a verb (phrase) to derive nouns (Awoyale 1975, Awobuluyi 2005; Oyebade & Ilori 2005, 2010). The morphological process in both instances is prefixation. In this paper, I will argue along the lines of the latter by not only reiterating earlier position but also by drawing evidence from two dialects of Yorùbá to backup the morphological account. I will also re-examine the twin-prefixes-analysis from syntactic and semantic points of view claiming that

"*à*" and "*ì*" twin prefixes are separate heads which participate in a process that derives the *NomP*.

2. The Status of *àì* in Nominal Expressions

The discussion here splits into two. In 2.1, the focus is on the status of *àì* in nominal expressions in Standard Yoruba. In 2.2, the attention is shifted to two dialects of Yorùbá for more supportive evidence for the view that *àì* are separate elements.

2.1 àì as One-Morpheme

This section briefly examines the status of *àì* in one aspect of Yorùbá nominalization process namely, nominalization by affixation. The data presented below show the various contexts where *àì*- occurs as prefix in derived nominals in Yorùbá. First, is the presentation of *àì* as a unitary (indivisible entity).

(1)   a. (i.)   àì + simplex verb
              àì-sùn – 'act of not sleeping/inability to sleep'
              Prefix: sleep

        (ii.)   àì + Verb Object
              àì-mọ̀ ìwé – 'inability to do well academically'
              Prefix: know book

      b.   àì + Aspect + verb+ object
              àì-máa-rí mi – 'failure to see me regularly'
              Prefix: Habitual-see-me

      c. (i.)   àì + Aspect + verb

              àì-tètè-jí – 'failure to wake up early'
              Prefix" early-wake

        (ii.)   àì + Asp + compound verb

              àì-lè-sáré – 'inability to run'
              Prefix: able-run

        (iii.)   àì + Asp + Asp + compound verb
              àì-lè-tètè-gbéra – 'inability to take off early'
              Prefix: able-early-lift body

(iv.) àì + Asp + Neg simplex verb
      àì-gbọ́dọ̀-má-ṣe – 'something not to be left undone'
      Prefix: must-neg-do

As earlier mentioned, a lot of works have claimed that *àì* is an indivisible entity. I will only review Taiwo (2006) which seems to be more recent and more comprehensive. I split Taiwo's approach to two. First, is the attempt to debunk all the claims made by Awobuluyi to support the view that *àì* are two separate morphemes, though to me, unsuccessfully as I totally agree with Awobuluyi in his arguments and analysis of *àì* as two separate morphemes.[4] The second part of Taiwo's work is an attempt to give more evidence in support of a single morpheme analysis of *àì*.

The following are the reasons put forward. First, if *àì-* is divisible into *à-* and *ì-*, then why are the following not well-formed in Standard Yoruba? *à-sàn* Nom-heal' versus *ì-sàn* Neg heal', *à-jẹ* Nom heal, versus *ì-jẹ* 'Neg-eat' *à-gbọ́n* Nom-be-wise' versus *ì-gbọn* Neg-wise' etc. whereas, according to Taiwo, take *àì-* as one prefix does not lead to such ill-formedness as reflected in the grammaticality of *àìsàn* 'not being well/sickness', *àìjẹ* 'not eating', *àìgbọ́n* 'not being wise/lack of wisdom' etc. Second, is the claim that the *à-* found in *àì-* is not the same as *à-* that derives *àlọ* 'departure' and *àbọ̀* 'returning'. Whereas *à-* prefix which derives words such as *àlọ* and *àbọ̀* has restrictions according to Taiwo, *àì-* as a distinctive morpheme derives nouns from verbs without any restriction. While the claim that *à* has limitations in the verbal element that it combines with is true, it is noted that this fact is not peculiar to *à-*prefix. Indeed, it seems to be the case with other single prefix in the language. Consider the prefix '*-è*'. Though it derives nouns such as è-rò 'thought', *è-tò* 'arragnement', *è-dì* 'spell', it cannot derive *è-gbàgbọ́*, *è-mọ̀*, etc. We now turn to the second view which claims that *à* and *ì-* are two separate morphemes.

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[4] The only instance where my view diverges from Awobuluyi's has to do with his claim that *ì* is a preverbal element and that is probably the only argument that Taiwo puts forward which looks plausible. See details below.

2.2 *àì*[5] as Two Morphemes

According to Awobuluyi (2005:1-7), using verbs like *lọ* 'go', we can derive new words such as *àlọ* and *àìlọ*, both of which are interpreted as event nominals 'departure' and 'non-departure' respectively. Note that the difference in meaning between the two examples is due to the presence of "*ì*" in *àìlọ*. It is this element that invariably supplies the negative meaning of departure in this latter example. Other evidence from Awobuluyi's work comes from the fact that *àì*- can be split into two in the sense that another free morpheme can occur between them as illustrated in (2).

(2)   **a.** à   jẹ   ì   jẹ   tán   >   àjẹẹjẹtán
          prefix   eat   prefix   eat   finish   'in-exhaustive eating'

      b. à   mu   ì   mu   tán   >   àmuùnmután
          prefix   drink   prefix   drink   finish   'in-exhaustive drinking'
                                                                  (adapted from Awobuluyi 2005: 3)

      c. à   jẹ   ì   wo   ẹyìn
          prefix   eat   prefix   look   back

In (2a) for example, the verb *jẹ* 'eat' and *mu* 'drink' occurs between *àì*; this according to Awobuluyi is another clear evidence that *àì* cannot be treated as one morpheme. Observe that even with free morphemes such as monosyllabic verbs (*dé* 'arrive' *sùn* 'sleep') or disyllabic nouns (*omi* 'water, *ilé* 'house'), the language does not allow infixation (Awobuluyi 2008) let alone bound morphemes such as the one under review. So, if indeed "*àì*" is a single morpheme, there is no way a free morpheme such as monosyllabic verbs can come in between them as seen above. However, to Taiwo, the examples in (2) are derived as shown in (2').

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[5] There are at least three types of "*ì*" in Yorùbá:
a.   ì- prefix which serves as a Nom(inalizer) as in ì-lù (Nom-beat) 'drum', ì-tọ (Nom-urinate) 'urine'
b.   ì- negative prefix which combines with a verbal element in à-nominalization process as in à-ì-lù (Nom- Neg-beat)
c.   ì- the preverbal element which functions as a question word: Kò tí ì lọ 'Has s/he not gone?'
  In this paper, our concern is the negative prefix shown in (1b).

(2') a. à   jẹ   àì   jẹ   tán
           prefix   eat   prefix   eat   finish

      b. à   mu   àì   mu   tán
           prefix   drink   prefix   drink   finish

      c. à   jẹ   àì   wo   ẹ̀yìn
           prefix   eat   prefix   look   back

The representation in (2) can easily be dismissed on the account of violation of principles of economy and naturalness. The principle of economy prefers a language that makes use of few rules than the one that uses more rules. The representation in (2') involves deletion of *à* of *àì* before assimilation can apply. By contrast, the analysis that claims that *àì* are two separate morphemes straightforwardly accounts for the derivation by allowing the first *jẹ* to split the two morphemes. Secondly, there is no known language that epenthesizes a morpheme only to later delete the same element as Taiwo's proposal suggests.

There is also more morphological evidence that further establishes the claim that *à-* + *ì-* are two separate prefixes. The first of the two entities i.e. *à* like any other oral vowel (except *u*) can be used independently as a nominalizer morpheme in the language. That the prefix *à* and the prefix *ì* (as a negative morpheme) are separate prefixes is established in the following examples where *à* acts as an independent nominalizer.

(3) a. à + lọ   àlọ   'departure'
     b. à + bọ̀   àbọ̀   'returning'
     c. à + tò   àtò   'arrangement'
     d. à + sè   àsè   'feast'

More important is the contrast in meaning in the parallel examples where *ì* shows up in (4).

(4) a. à + ì + lọ   àìlọ   'not going/refusal to go'
     b. à + ì + bọ̀   àìbọ̀   'non-returning'
     c. à + ì + tò   àìtò   'lack of arrangement'
     d. à + ì + sè   àìsè   'not cooking'

Comparing (3) with (4) drives the point home. The pair of examples constitutes polar antonyms which is due to the presence of *i̱* in the latter and its absence in the former. As earlier pointed out, admitting *àì* as one morpheme will be highly suspicious morphologically as it will be the only derivational morpheme that is bi-syllabic in the language. The next question to ask is this: can *ì-* under review also stand on its own as a separate bound (nominalizer) morpheme independent of *à-* prefix? The answer is "no". The reason is that negation morpheme in most languages can only go with verbs and verb related elements when in isolation and not nouns. In other words, if *ì-* the negator morpheme is used as a prefix; predictably, it can only derive a verbal entity (e.g. kì í wá 'Neg Habitual come[6]') and not a nominal entity. In Yorùbá, such morphological process does not exist. Thus, we cannot have the forms in (5) where with *ì,* the negative nominal interpretation is the intended meaning.

(5) a. ì +   rí   *ìrí
         Neg   see

     b. ì +   rú   *ìrú
         Neg   stir

     c. ì +   sè   *ìsè
         Neg   cook

     d. ì +   fò   *ìfò
         Neg   jump

     e. ì +   dẹ̀   *ìdẹ̀
         Neg   loose

     f. ì +   tọ̀   *ìtọ̀
         Neg   urinate

     g. ì +   jẹ   *ìjẹ
         Neg   eat

     h. ì +   jà   *ìjà
         Neg   fight

If a verb phrase or a sentence has to be negated, it has to be with *kò, kì* or *má*, e.g. *kò wá* 'S/he did not come', *kì í wá* 's/he doesn't use to come', *má lọ* 'Do not go' and not with *ì*. Note however, that there is

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[6] Note that in this verbal domain, the negative morpheme retains its consonant.

another prefix: *ì-* which is a homophone of the negator morpheme nominalizer *ì* and can derive event nominals as in (6).

(6)   a.   bọ   offer sacrifice   ì + bọ   ìbọ 'deity'
          b.   lù   beat   ì + lù   ìlù 'drum'
          c.   fẹ́   to love   ì + fẹ́   ìfẹ́ 'love'
          d.   ṣọ́   guide   ì + ṣọ́   ìṣọ́ 'vigil'
          e.   dájọ́ judge   ì + dájọ́ ìdájọ́ 'judgment'

The fact that we have one *ì* deriving the unattested Yorùbá words as in (5) and another one deriving attested Yorùbá words as in (6) is another (language internal) evidence that the two prefixes are not the same: one is a bound morpheme i.e. *ì-* that must combine with *à-* in the early part of the derivation to jointly nominalize a verb; that is the one under consideration. This prefix morpheme alone cannot derive nominals in the language.[7] The other is also a bound nominalizer (cf. examples 6) that simply attaches to a verb phrase to derive a noun.[8]

Another morphological support comes from other nominalization in the language which involves the use of two morphemes erroneously taken to be one morpheme. There are two of such cases that we present here. One is the derivation of nouns meaning ownership (owner of X) or X-er in (7).

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[7] Note that in some other languages, negation morpheme can freely combine with some lexical categories to derive new words. English is one of such. Consider (i).

(i)   a.   un + important
        b.   un + heard
        c.   un + done
        d.   un + do
        e.   un + spoken

Consider the use of such verbs in (ii).

(ii)   a.   You must **undo** the work
        b.   It is **unheard** of.
        c.   That is an **unimportant** matter.

[8] Observe that in Yorùbá, the equivalent of English *un*-prefix can sometimes translates to a combination of the nominalizer *à-* and the negativizing *ì*-morpheme.

124

(7) a. oníṣu < oní + iṣu 'yam owner/seller'
     b. aláta < oní + ata 'pepper owner/seller'
     c. oníbàtà < oní + bàtà 'shoes owner/seller'

In the above examples, *oní-* is treated just as one-morpheme (Bamgbose 1990: 108-109; Owólabí 1995: 94, Oyebade 1998: 81). Such proposal contrasts with the view being expressed herein. In fact, Awóbùlúyì (1992) has shown the incorrectness of one morpheme analysis of *oní-*. Instead, a two-morpheme structure of *o-* 'agentive prefix' and *ní* 'to have' has been proposed. Awóbùlúyì in the cited work shows that the verb *ní* 'have' and *ni* 'own' can independently combine to form a verb phrase. Again, we give examples involving *ní* for the sake of consistency.

(8) a. níṣu < ní + iṣu 'have yams'
     b. láta < ní + ata 'have pepper'
     c. níbàtà < ní + bàtà 'have shoes'
     d. nibàtà < ni + bàtà 'own shoes'

It is this verb phrase that the agentive morpheme 'o' attaches to, to derive the **'owner/seller of X'.**

Another case is the one that involves *òǹ* as in (9).

(9) a. òǹkọ 'the one who writes or makes heaps'
     b. òǹgbìn 'the one who plants'
     c. òǹhú 'the one who uproots'
              (Adapted from Oyelaran 1990)

In this second set of examples, the derivation is as illustrated in (10).

(10-i) a. òkìkọ ò + kì+kọ 'one who writes/makes heaps'
        b. ògbìgbìn ò + gbì + gbìn 'the one who plants'
        c. òhìhú ò + hì + hú 'the one who uproots'
              (cf. Oyelaran 1990)

There are two things worthy of note here. First is the fact that the syllable that derives *ǹ* has an underlying syllable CV structure like *ní* and *ni*. Second, is that the process deriving the forms in (10), has been described as reduction (Akinlabi 2007). Thus, after deleting an obstruent consonant, vowel /i/ then reduces in sonority to a syllabic nasal.

(10-ii)   UR   obstruent deletion   vowel sonority reduction
          òkìkọ   òìkọ   òǹkọ

The point we are making is that like *oní*, *òǹ* also comprises of V-CV; a structure that is never a single affix in the language. The two cases parallel the *àì* case under review. In what follows, I draw more evidence from Mọ̀bà and Owé dialects of Yorùbá and conclude that the so-called prefix *àì-* in Standard Yorùbá is nothing but a fusion of two bound morphemes of the V-CV syllable structure.

Mọ̀bà is the variety of Èkìtì (call it a sub-dialect) spoken in the North West of Èkìtì State which comprises of Mọ̀bà Local Government Area in Èkìtì State and major parts of Òkè-ẹ̀rọ́ and Èkìtì Local Government Areas in Kwara State.[9] The fact emanating from this sub-dialect is that the second vowel namely *ì-* is rendered as *rì* in this speech form.

(11)   a.   àrì- + sùn   'act of not sleeping'
              Prefix sleep

        b.   àrì- + mọ̀wé   'inability to do well academically'
              Prefix know book

        c.   àrì- + tètè-jí   'failure to wake up early'
              Prefix early-wake

        d.   àrì- + ọ́-sáré   'inability to run'
              Prefix -able-run

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[9] See Bamisile (1986) and Ajíbóyè (1991). Olúmúyìwá (2007) in fact claims that Mọ̀bà speech form is a dialect on its own. In our own opinion, there is more to establish before we can claim that Mọ̀bà a separate dialect.

e.   àrì- + ọ́-tètè-gbéra[10]   'inability to take-off early'
      Prefix -able-lift body

f.   àrì- + gbọdọ̀-ma-débẹ̀   '(same function) one must
                                not attend'
      Prefix-must-Neg-reach there

What is reported in Mọ̀bà is also marginally attested in Owé, one of the dialects spoken in the North East of Yorùbá. The major town where this dialect is spoken is Kàbà. Some examples of words featuring these two morphemes are given in (12).

(12)   a.   à-rì- + hùn   'act of not sleeping'
        b.   à-(r)ì- + mọ̀wè 'inability to do well academically'
                              (Médùbí personal communication)

Observe that while *rì* appears in (12a), it optionally shows up in (12b). According to Medubi (p.c.), it might be the case that [r] optionally deletes in certain environments that we do not presently understand. The optionality might also be due to the influence of Standard Yorùbá where [r] obligatorily deletes.[11] The question that arises is whether there are cases in the language where there are V-CV prefixes which derive nouns. From what we showed with respect to *oní* and *òni*, the traditional account which claims there are V-CV prefixes in Standard Yorùbá does not hold. It does not hold in these two dialects either. With this, I conclude that, like *o-ní* and *ò-ni,* "*à-rì*" or its reduced form *à-ì* are nothing but two morphemes.

Finally, judging by the kind of tones they bear, we know that prefix vowels are of two types in Yorùbá, namely, the low-toned prefix and the mid-toned prefix. If indeed, *àì* is one morpheme, we expect to see its mid-toned counterpart *ai-*, but this is not the case as we only have

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[10] The realization of the modal *lè* in Standard Yorùbá as *ọ́* in Mọ̀bà and the high tone suppression on *má* as *ma* are not orthogonal to the focus of this paper and as such we do not give them any further discussion.
[11] The same form is realized in Ìkòlé Èkìtì (Sàláwù 2001: 112) and Ikóro Èkìtì (Afọláyan (p.c.).

a-dájọ̀ 'judge' but not **ai-dájọ̀*. This is another piece of evidence that shows that "*àì*" is not one but two morphemes.

To recap, the discussions in this section can be summarized as both synchronic and diachronic. Synchronically, there are two reasons for upholding the view that "*à*" and "*ì*" are two separate morphemes. First, one can notice that in all other word formation processes in the language, there is none that involves deriving a noun by prefixing a VV or VCV as one morpheme to the base. Second, the fact that free morphemes can occur between the two in Standard Yorùbá straightforwardly demonstrates that *àì* cannot be considered as one morpheme. Diachronically, the realization of *ì* as *rì* in Mọ̀bà and Owé dialects is a further indication that the form of the negative prefix in Standard Yorùbá is an innovation that could be explained by deletion process. I turn to the account of *àì* from a semantic point of view.

3. The Semantics of *àì*- Derived Nominals

This section accounts for the semantics of nominal expressions that are derived by a combination of *à*- and *ì*-prefixes and demonstrates that they derive only event nominals. Déchaine (1993) and Ajíbóyè *et al.* (2003) among others distinguish two kinds of nominalizations in Yorùbá. These are R(eferential) and E(vent) nominals. By R-nominals we mean nouns that denote things whereas E-nominals denote events. First, I present referential nominals.

According to Longbardi (1994), referential nominals behave like DPs and as such they have the capability to denote things. In Yorùbá, they can be derived by the prefixation of the mid toned agentive nominalizer *a*- to a VP.

(13)	a.	a	+	pa	ẹja		apẹja
		Nom		kill	fish		fisherman
	b.	a	+	dà	ẹran		adaran
		Nom		chase	animal		herdsman
	c.	a	+	là	igi		alagi
		Nom		split	wood		hewed man

Since our focus is on event nominals, we are not going into any details on this category of derived nominals. Readers are referred to Ajíbóyè et al. (2003) for a full account.

Event nominals on the other hand denote events rather than things. There are two prefixes that are capable of deriving this type of nominals: ì- and à- (Ajíbóyè 2003: 31). First, we look at event nominals derived through the prefixation of ì- as shown in (14).

(14)   a.   ì-kànìyàn   < kà ' count' + ènìyàn 'person'
              'act of counting (census)'

        b.   ì-gbadé   < gbà 'receive' + adé 'crown'
              'act of receiving crown (coronation)'

        c.   ì-jobì   < jẹ 'eat' + obì 'kolanut'
              'act of eating kolanut'

        d.   ì-kíni   < kí 'greet' + ẹni 'person'
              'act of greeting'

        e.   ì-bọrìṣà   < bọ 'worship' + òrìṣà 'deity'
              'act of worshiping a deity'

Examples of the second type of event nominals i.e. those that are derived by à-prefix are given in (15).

(15)   a.   à-rí-wí-sí   < rí 'see' + wí 'say' + sí 'to'
              'fact of having a say'

        b.   à-fi-ọkàn-sí   < fi 'use' + ọkàn 'mind' + sí 'to'
              'fact of putting one's mind on something'

        c.   à-fi-ara-ṣe   < fi 'use' + ara 'body' + ṣe 'do'
              'using one's body to do something'

        d.   à-jọ-jẹ   < jọ 'together' + jẹ 'eat'
              'act of eating together'

        e.   à-jọ-ṣe   < bá 'with' + ṣe 'do'
              'jointly carried out'

Again, we concentrate only on event nominals derived with the à-prefix in this paper since that is the category of nominals that has

direct bearing to our discussion. One property that differentiates R-nominals from E-nominals is that event nominals cannot take *àwǫn,* the plural word since such derived nouns are non-referentials.

(16) a. *àwǫn ì-kǫ̀wé < kǫ 'write' + ìwé 'book'
          plural ACT write-book

    b. *àwǫn ì-dẹ̀gbẹ́ < dẹ 'hunt' + ìgbẹ́ 'bush'
          plural ACT hunt-bush

By contrast, event nominals do take *àwǫn.*

(17) a. àwǫn a-pẹja   'fishermen
          plural Nom-kill fish

    b, àwǫn a-daran   'hersmen'
          plural Nom-drive animal

The language internal evidence as revealed in the examples in (15) namely, that *à* can independently serve as a nominalizer is the first piece of evidence to show that *àì* should be analyzed as two independent morphemes as further illustrated in (18). Thus, to negate derived nominals with *à,* all we need do is attach the *ì* prefix to a verb (phrase) and thereafter attach the *à-* prefix to the structure.

(18) a. à-ì- + kànìyàn   'act of not counting people'
          nom-neg + count-person

    b. à-ì- + mọ̀wé   'inability to do well academically'
          nom-neg + know book

    c. à-ì- + tètè-jí   'failure to wake up early'
          nom-neg + early wake

    d. à-ì- + lè + sáré   'inability to run'
          nom-neg able + run-race

    e. à-ì- + lè-tètè-gbéra   'inability to take up early'
          nom-neg + able lift-body

    f. à-ì- + gbọ́dọ̀-má-ṣe 'something not to be left undone'
          nom-neg + must not do

130

Consequent upon this fact, I reiterate further that the two prefixes though separate jointly contribute to the interpretation of the derived nominals of the type under consideration. In this particular case, none of them (especially the *ì-* prefix) can stand on their own. This is shown by the ungrammaticality of (19). Whenever *à* alone combines with a verbal element of the type under study to derive nouns, the outputs are the unattested forms.[12]

(19)　　a.　　*à- + sùn
　　　　　　　　nom- + sleep

　　　　b.　　*à- + mọ̀wé
　　　　　　　　nom- + know book

　　　　c.　　*à- + tètè-jí
　　　　　　　　nom + early wake

　　　　d.　　*à- + lè + sáré
　　　　　　　　nom-+ able + run-race

　　　　e.　　*à-+ lè-tètè-gbéra
　　　　　　　　nom- + able lift-body

　　　　f.　　*à-+ gbọ́dọ̀-má-ṣe
　　　　　　　　nom-neg + must not do

Similarly, if only the prefix *ì* is attached to a verbal element, the output is ungrammatical.

(20)　　a.　　*ì- + sùn
　　　　　　　　neg + sleep

　　　　b.　　*ì- + mọ̀wé
　　　　　　　　neg + know book

　　　　c.　　*ì- + tètè-jí
　　　　　　　　neg + early wake

　　　　d.　　*ì- + lè + sáré

---

[12] That the output of this process is not well formed is a little puzzling though. This is because there are other instances when *à* combines to give acceptable forms. One example is *à + bò* (Nom + cover) which gives *àbò* 'shield'.

131

> neg able + run-race

　　e.　　　*ì- + lè-tètè-gbéra
　　　　　　 neg + able lift-body

　　f.　　　*ì- + gbọ́dọ̀-má-ṣe
　　　　　　 -neg + must not do

The puzzle as to why the forms in (19) are not attested has been addressed in section 2. There is no single morpheme prefix that has no restriction in its derivation capability. One thing that is not yet clear to us is what determines what a given prefix can derive as opposed to what it cannot derive. We leave this for future research. Let us turn to the syntax.

4. The Syntax of Nouns Derived by Prefixing *àì-* to Verbal Elements

As we turn to the syntactic account of derived nominals with *à* and *ì*, one thing worthy of note is the type of entity that "*àì*" can attach to. As shown in (1), *à* and *ì-* can only attach to a minimum entity of a Verb Phrase which may be just an intransitive verb (1a-i) or a transitive verb (1a-ii), an aspect with a (in)transitive VP (1b), one or more modal followed by a VP (1c).

In accounting for the syntax of these nominal expressions, I propose that they have the structure of NomP where the nominalizer is the head which may take the VP, AspP etc. as its complement. I propose that nominals derived by the prefixes: *à-* and *ì-* have the structure of NomP arguing that this NomP has three constituents: the Nominalizer, negation element and the nominalized entity which I labeled 'Nom' and 'α' respectively.
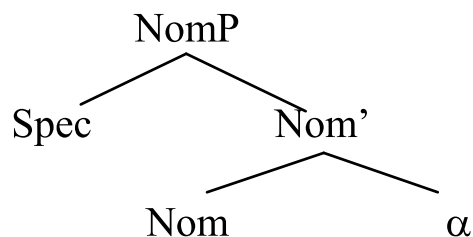
4.1 Internal syntax of NomP

There are two versions of generative approach that I consider in accounting for the internal structure of the NomP: Head projection in X-bar model and the Merge account of the Minimalist Program.

4.1.1 Head Projection Principle

Following the X-bar theoretical framework where the heads projects first to the Intermediate Projection which in turn can further extend to the maximum projection the claim is that the Nom(inalizer) is the head of this type of nominal expressions which projects to NomP and this Nom takes α as its complement.

(21)

```
                         NomP
                        /    \
                    Spec      Nom'
                             /    \
                          Nom      α
```
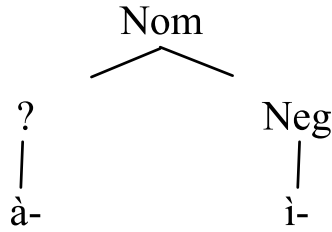
(cf. Ajíbóyè et al. 2003: 24)

Thus, the *Nom* is a category changing morpheme that changes a VP, NegP, AspP etc. to a NomP.

Next is to show what the complement of *Nom* i.e. the designated α is. Following from the examples so far given, we see that α is at least a VP as shown in (25). In other words, *à* and *ì* can attach to a constituent equal to or greater than a VP. When the constituent is greater than a VP, it must be a Functional Phrase (cf. Ajíbóyè et al. 2003: 25). The full range of what a NomP can be is further illustrated in (26).
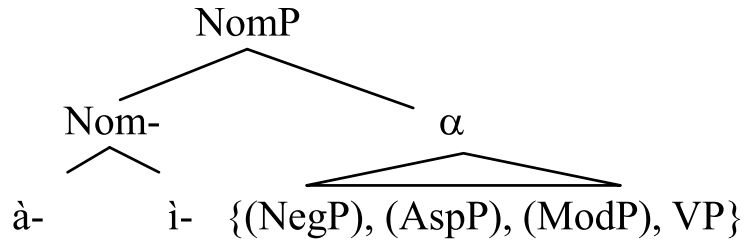
(22) a.   [_{NomP} Nom-*ì* [VP]]
      b.   [_{NomP} Nom-*ì* [AspP, VP]]
      c.   [_{NomP} Nom-*ì* [ModP, VP]]
      d.   [_{NomP} Nom-*ì* [AspP, ModP, VP]]
      e.   [_{NomP} Nom-*ì* [NegP, AspP, ModP, VP]]

There remains the question of how and where "*ì-*" attaches in the structure. One possible way is to propose that *àì* as a unit (23a) is the *Nom* which projects NomP taking α i.e. the verbal element as its complement. This proposal yields the structure in (23b).

133

(23)　a.

```
              Nom
             /    \
          ?          Neg
          |           |
          à-          ì-
```

　b.

```
                NomP
              /      \
          Nom-           α
          /  \          /    \
        à-    ì-   {(NegP), (AspP), (ModP), VP}
```

The problem with the above structure is that it leads us to admit that *àì* is an entity; an analysis I have rejected from the onset. It also wrongly suggests that the two elements are the same. Precisely, it fails to show that while *à* assumes the status of the category changing of for instance, a verbal element to a noun, the other i.e. *ì* contributes the negative meaning but it still retains the category of the entity it combines with.

4.1.2 The minimalist Approach

Adopting the operation merge in the minimalist approach it will be the case that *Nom* and α simply merge (Chomsky 1995, Radford 1997). Thus, for instance, in deriving *àìsùn*, what we have is a situation where *àì* as *Nom* and *sùn* merge. As already demonstrated above, the two make different semantic contributions to the derived nominal: while *ì* contributes negativity, it is *à* that contributes the nominal status of the derived entity.

The second approach makes the claim that there are two steps that are involved in using the complex prefixes to derive E-nominals. The first step is to merge the negative marker *ì-* to α to give us the intermediate level (24).

(24)　a.　　　$[_{Neg}$ ì+ $[_{VP}$ lọ]]　>　　　[NegP ìlọ]]　　?
　　　b.　　　$[_{Neg}$ ì+ $[_{VP}$ bọ̀]]　>　　　[NegP ìbọ̀]]　　?
　　　c.　　　$[_{Neg}$ ì+ $[_{VP}$ bò]]　>　　　[NegP ìbò]]　　?
　　　d.　　　$[_{Neg}$ ì+ $[_{VP}$ tò]]　>　　　[NegP ìtò]]　　?
　　　e.　　　$[_{Neg}$ ì+ $[_{VP}$ sè]]　>　　　[NegP ìsè]]　　?

Note that the intermediate level in (24) is not attested. Stopping here will make the derivation to crash. We need to go further to ensure that *à-* obligatorily merges with the intermediate structure to yield us the surface form in (25).

(25) a.   à + ìlọ >   àìlọ
      b.   à + ìbọ̀ >   àìbọ̀
      c.   à + ìbò >   àìbò
      d.   à + ìtò >   àìtò
      e.   à + ìsè >   àìsè

The alternative is to first merge *à-* with α as in (23) above. The fact that forms such as *àlọ* and *àbọ̀* are grammatical may lend credit to such an assumption. This will force us to add *ì-* as an infix in order to derive what we have on the surface. Plausible as this may be, it runs counter to our claim that both *à-* and *ì-* are prefixes. A linear approach that we adopt gives preference to **Right-to-Left** prefixation. In this case, the negative marker *ì* must first merge with the verb phrase or a bigger entity as the case may be. The next stage is for *à* (the second prefix) to merge with the NegP.

What remains to be addressed is the issue of how the twin-prefixes merge to α in the syntax. In (26) it is assumed that the "Neg" first merges with α to yield NegP. It is this that the agentive morpheme merges with to yield the NomP.

(26)

merge

NomP: Nom- NegP = 2nd
Agentive à = 1st merge
Neg ì
α
(AspP), (ModP) VP
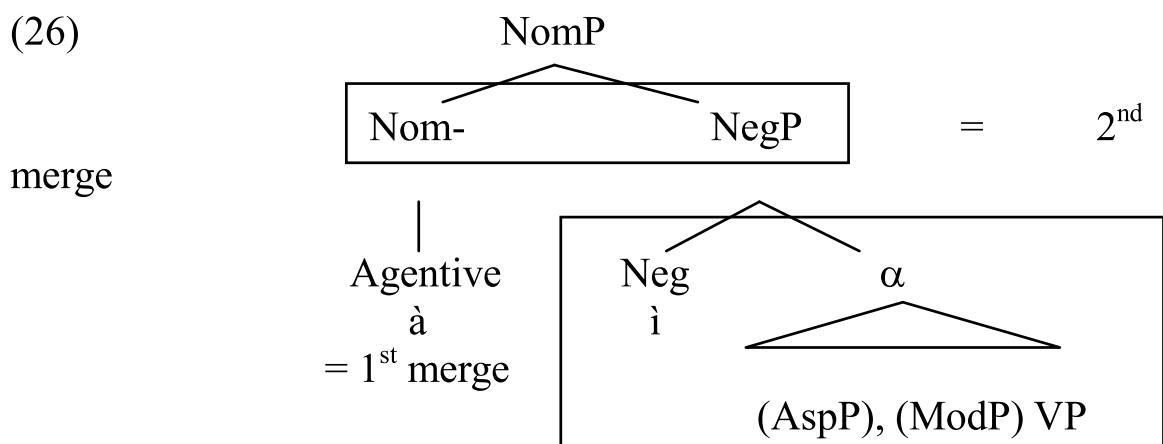
This proposal is in the line of the Projection Principle within X-bar theory where it is claimed that every X projects an X' (Haegeman

1994, Roberts 1997). In other words, whatever X denotes determines its projection. In (26), there are two phrases: the lower phrase and the upper phrase. The heads of the two phrases are 'Neg' and 'Nom' and those are the categories which project to NegP and NomP respectively.

The structure in (26) is favoured for two reasons. First, is the question of linearization: Neg merges with α before the NegP merges with the *Nom* prefix *à* to yield the output NomP. The second reason is that it is this structure that shows the two as separate prefixes. If *à* were to attach first, then *ì* will no longer qualify to be a prefix but an infix, as it has to be inserted in between the *Nom* and α.

4.2 External syntax

Having looked at the internal structure of *à-ì*-derived nominals i.e., the NomP, this section looks at the distribution of these nouns. Like non-derived nominals, *à-ì-* derived nominals are capable of being subject of a matrix clause. In addition, they can function as complements of the verb.

(27) a. **Àìgbọ́ràn** ṣe ikú pa ọmọ ọba
'The act of disobedience caused the death of the king's child.'

b. Ọmọ ọba ṣe **àìgbọ́ràn**
The king's child is disobedient.'

They can also be focused (28a), topicalized (28b) or relativized (28c).

(28) a. [[**Àìgbọ́ràn**] ni [ó ṣe ikú pa ọmọ ọba]]   *Focus*
'It is an act of disobedience that caused the death of the king's child.'

b. [[**Àìgbọ́ràn**], [ohun burúkú ni ---]]   *Topical*
'An act of disobedience, it is a bad thing.'

c. [[**Àìgbọ́ràn**] [tí ọmọ ọba ṣe]] ---   *Relativized*
'The act of disobedience that the king's child is involved in---'

Finally, *à-ì-nominals* can serve an answer to a content question.

(29)　a.　Kí ni ó ṣe ikú pa Bádé?
　　　　　'What is the cause of Bade's death?'

　　　b.　**Àìgbọràn** ni ó ṣe ikú pa á
　　　　　'Disobedience FOC AGR cause death kill 3sg
　　　　　'It is an act of disobedience that caused his death'

The emerging fact shows that nominal expressions derived by à- and ì-prefixes have the exact distribution that basic nouns in the language have.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined nominals derived from the morphemes: *à* and *ì* in Yorùbá making the following claims. Morphologically, *à* and *ì* are two morphemes and not one: *à-* is an agentive prefix morpheme whereas *ì-* is a negation prefix morpheme and the two prefixes jointly mark verbal elements to derive **nominals** (whose event is never achieved). First, *ì* attaches to a verbal element to yield a NegP and the Neg which is the Head takes a VP as its complement. The *Nom* morpheme *à* in turn merges with this intermediate structure to yield event nominals **that have never been**, namely *àìjẹ*. Syntactically, the internal structure shows that event nominals of the type under consideration consist of the Nom *à* and *ì* and α which merge in certain specific ways to derive NomP. The derivation follows the linear order of *ì* first combining with α to derive the intermediate level which we call NegP. This in turn is the constituent that *à* merges with to derive the NomP. Externally, *à-ì*-nominals have the distribution of ordinary nouns as they occur in all contexts where canonical nouns occur.

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