

BICLAUSAL CONSTRUCTIONS: TYPOLOGY IN NGWA

By

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Abstract

Ngwa is a dialect under Igbo. The word *Ngwa* also refers to the people and the geo – political area known as Ngwa land. A biclausal construction is a construction that has double inflectional projection in its structural representation. This paper seeks: to find out the various types of biclausal constructions in Ngwa and to establish if all biclausal constructions in Ngwa have overt markers of coordination or subordination. Data for the study were obtained from competent native speakers using the translation method where some English sentences were translated into Ngwa. As a native speaker of Ngwa, my intuition helped in the assessment of the data that were collected. The framework employed for the, the presentation and analysis of data in this paper is the x-bar theory of syntax. The choice of framework provides the required base for the illustration of biclausal constructions in Ngwa. The paper finds out that biclausal constructions in Ngwa are of various types, that biclausal constructions in Ngwa are derived constructions, and that the constituents in biclausal constructions function as a composite unit in the expression of a single proposition. This paper recommends a further research in biclausal constructions in Ngwa.

Keywords: *biclausal, coordination, Ngwa, subordination, x-bar theory*

1.0 Introduction

Basically, constructions are monoclausal. Biclausal or multiclausal constructions are derived constructions that can all feature in the speech of every native speaker of a language. In any derivation which results in the biclausal or multiclausal constructions, certain syntactic processes like coordination and embedding take place. On monoclausal constructions in Igbo, instances abound, while on biclausal constructions in the Igbo language there is no wholistic study or typology of it in the Igbo language. cf. Igwe and Green (1964), Emenanjo (1978), Okonkwo (1980), Goldsmith (1980), Ume et al (1989), Ofomata (2002) Uwalaka (2010), and Anyanwu (2007). That being the case, the focus of this paper is to give the various types of biclausal constructions in Ngwa. In the subsections that follow, the following will be considered: a review of literature on biclausal constructions, theoretical framework employed in the discussion of biclausal constructions, Ngwa-Igbo, methodology, and a typology of biclausal constructions in Ngwa-Igbo.

1.1 Conceptual Review

According to Matthews (2007: 40), *bi-*, is a Latin prefix related to the word *two*. The word ‘biclausal’, would therefore refer to constructions that involve two clauses in a single syntactic structure. (cf. Lyons 1968: 266, Brown and Miller 1985: 151-3, Wallwork 1985: 79, Carnie 2007: 201-6, Matthews 2007: 40). Biclausal constructions are derived constructions. Carnie (2007: 202)

has observed that a ‘clause’ as a constituent (subordinate) syntactic unit, when embedded in an independent clause results in the derivation of a construction with two clauses. For example:

1. Peter said that Danny danced.

In (1), the matrix clause is the entire construction: *Peter said that Danny danced*, while the embedded clause is: *that Danny danced*. Thus, there are two clauses involved in the derivation of the construction in (1). Such constructions are marked with the presence of an overt or covert complementizer. Sentences such as (1) are described as *subordinate biclausal construction* in this paper. The type of syntactic process involved in the derivation of (1), is known as *subordination*. Subordination, according to Robins (1989: 220), “means making a sentence-like structure to substitute for a noun or an adjective or an adverb in relation to some part of a main clause: and this is the principal way in which basic sentence patterns are expanded”. Thus, subordination or embedding is a way of expanding sentences. Another syntactic process of deriving biclausal sentences is through *coordination*. Coordination is a process of conjoining units of equal status, which could be phrasal or sentential. Sentential coordination involves the conjunct of sentences that are sisters to each other in a coordinate construction, using coordinators such as: *and* a coordinating conjunction, *but*, a contrastive coordinate conjunction, or *or*, a distributive coordinate conjunction, as the case may be in the English language. (cf. Brown and Miller (1985: 154)). For example:

2. Darin will eat a squid sandwich but Raiza won’t. (cf. Carnie (2007: 384).

The sentence in (2), involves two coordinated simple structures: *Darin will eat a squid sandwich*, and *Raiza won’t*, linked by the coordinating conjunction *but*. Because there are two simple sentences involved in this coordinated structure, such constructions are called *coordinate biclausal construction*. Having tried to explain what a biclausal construction is and the syntactic processes of deriving it, the next part of the paper discusses the theoretical background on which biclausal constructions in this paper will be accounted for.

1.2 Theoretical framework

The framework adopted for data analysis in this paper is the x-bar theory of structural representation. The notion of x – bar theory was first introduced into grammatical analysis by Chomsky (1970) in his article entitled *Remarks on Nominalization* and was later expanded by Jackendoff (1977) in a monograph entitled *x – Syntax*. The major concerns of the x – bar theory are: to account for word order, to determine the configuration of the D – structure, to determine the direction of movement if there is any, to demonstrate constraints in the movement of structural constituents, to determine the structural relationship between the head of a construction and other members of the construction such as: determiners, complements and adjuncts, to recognize intermediate categories like: (N¹, V¹, P¹, I¹), which are larger than the terminal lexical categories; (N, V, P, A) but smaller than the phrasal categories such as: (NP, VP, PP, IP) and so on. (cf. Ndimele 2004: 34). The tree diagrams in this paper will reflect this as required.

1.3 Methodology

Data for the analysis were obtained through the interview of native speakers between 40 and 65 years, as an introspection to validate the intuition of our intuitive knowledge. In the sub sections that follow data showing the various types of biclausal constructions in Ngwa is presented.

1.4 Bicausal Constructions in Ngwa: A Typological Classification

In the following sub-sections, the analytic causative, indirect wh-questions, relative clause construction, overlapping construction, result construction, cleft construction, pseudo-cleft construction, serial verb construction and coordinate bicausal constructions are the various types of bicausal constructions found in the corpus on Ngwa are presented and analyzed using the x-bar format.

1.4.1 Analytic causative construction

Analytic causative constructions, also referred to as syntactic causative constructions, are bicausal constructions that require two events, one leading to the cause of the other, (cf. Okabe, 2008: 19). An example of this, in the Ngwa-Igbo is given as follows:

- 3a. Úchè_i ì me -rè, Àdhá_j é-bhéé épè_k.
- | | | | | | | |
- Uche pr. make. past Adha pr. peel orange

‘Uche made Adha to peel the orange.’

The causative construction in (1a), is made up of two clauses:

- b. Úchè_i ì-me-rè
- | | | |
- Uche pr. make past
- ‘Uche made’.
- c. Àdhá_j ì-bhè-rè épè_k.
- | | | | |
- Adha pr. peel past orange
- ‘Adha peeled the orange’.

(3b), is the causative clause. (3c), is the embedded non-causative clause. The embedding of (3c), in (3b), resulted in the derivation of (3a). (3b), which is the causative clause, has a causative verb *mèrè*, ‘made’. In this causative clause, the causative agent is ‘Uche’, which is the subject of the construction in (3a), while ‘Adha’ is the causee object or the subject of the embedded clause that executes the action instigated by the subject of the causative clause.

The tree diagram below, representing the causative construction shows that it is a construction with a double TP projection, which implies that there are two clauses in the sentence. In the tree diagram, the *-rV* bicausal in that there are two events involved in such constructions. A past inflectional suffix is lowered to the verb from the tense bar of the tense projection for the full realization of the verb *mè*, ‘do/cause to’, to *mèrè* ‘did/cause’. This is because the *-rV* suffix is a verbal morpheme. The tree also shows that the subject originates from Spec VP and then moves to Spec TP. The tree diagram of (3a) above is given below as figure (1):

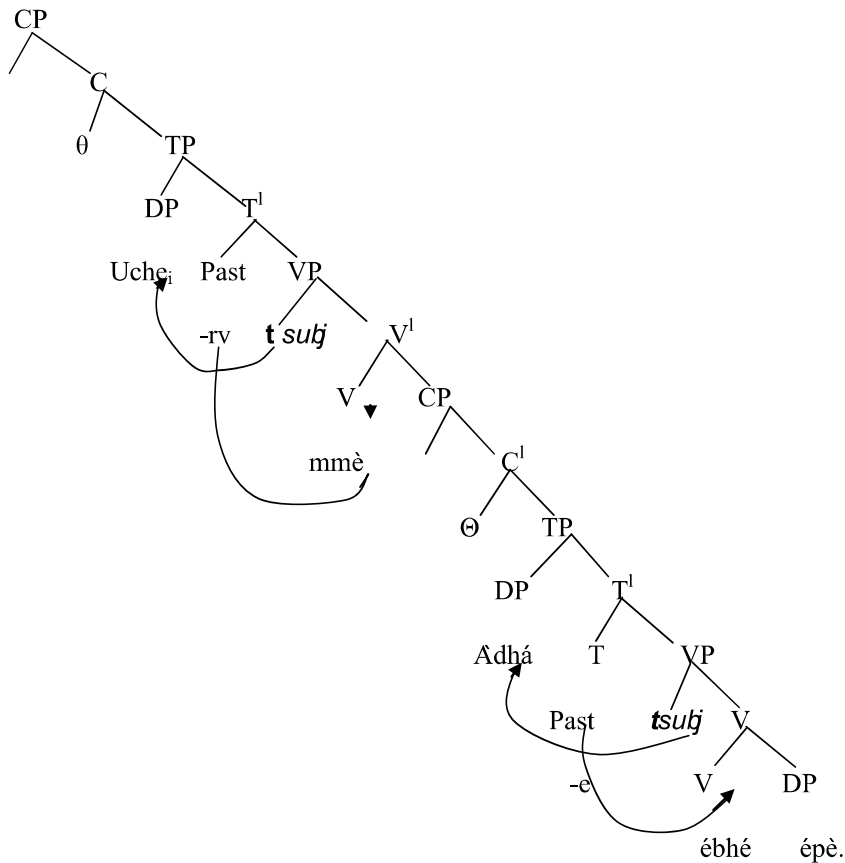


Fig. 1: Diagram illustrating biclausal construction in the analytic causative construction

1.4.2 Indirect WH-Questions

Indirect wh-questions are embedded questions that are formed using complementizers such as: *what, when, who, and if*. (Goldsmith 1980: 374). Below is an example of indirect wh-question in Ngwa:

- 4a. Úchè_i ò- jù- rù Adhá_j, mà ó_j gà í - gá órú_k?
- Uche pr. ask. past Adha conj. she go- pr.go work?

‘Uche asked Adha if she would go to work.’

(4a), is a biclausal construction derived from two underlying constructions:

- b. Úchè_i ò- jù- rù Adhá_j.
- He pr. ask past Adha

‘Uche asked Adha’.

- c. M̀à ọ̀j ̀gà-ì ̀gà ọ̀rú̀k.
- | | | | | |
- conj. he go-pr.go work

‘If he would go to work.’

(4b), is the first clause, while (4c) is the second clause introduced by the conjunction *m̀à*, ‘if/whether’, which coheres the two clauses. It is the embedding of the second clause into (4b), that resulted in the derivation of (4a). The open vowel suffix *ọ̀* which comes after the verb is for phonetic extension of the vowel of the verb. It however harmonises with the vowel of the verb. From the tree diagram of the indirect WH-question below, it is observed, that the construction has a double TP projection which makes it a biclausal construction. The $-rV$ inflectional suffix in the x-bar representation of the WH-indirect question, is lowered to the verb *j̀ù*, ‘ask’ to get the past form *j̀ùr̀ù* ‘asked’. The arrows from SpecVPs, to SpecTPs, show that the subjects originate from SpecVP and then move to SpecTP. The tree representation of (4a), is given below as figure (2):

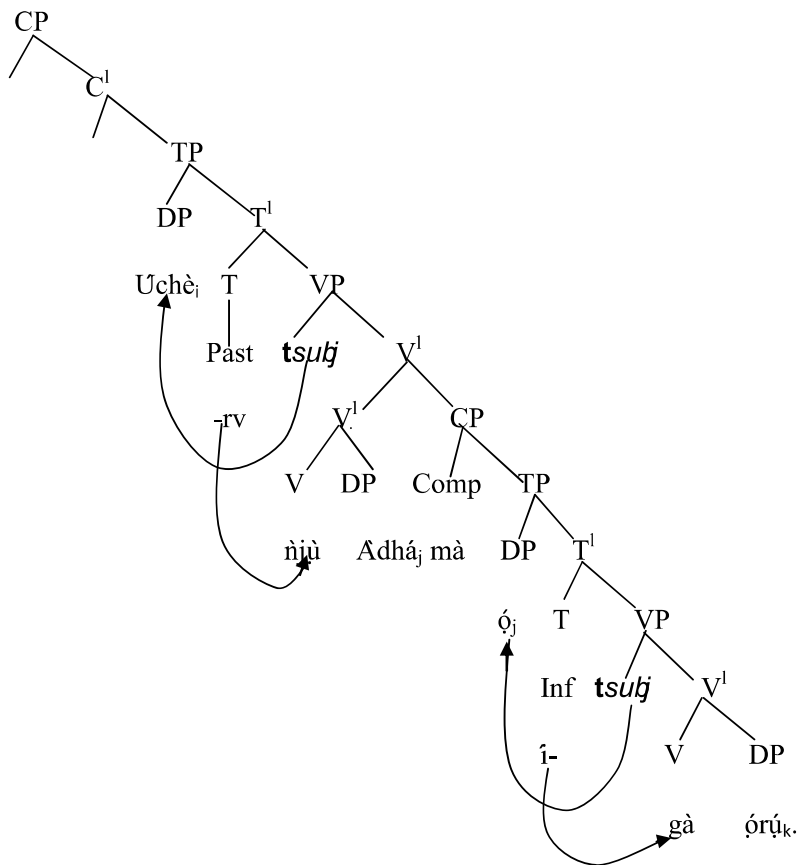


Fig. 2: Diagram illustrating biclausal construction in an indirect wh-question.

1.4.3 Relative clause construction/adjectival clause

A relative clause construction is an embedded construction that serves an adjectival role by giving more information about the noun contained in the matrix clause. (cf. Uwalaka, 2010: 189). For example:

5a. Nwátàkírí_i ónyé_i ñ-zù- rù ázù áhù_j a-lá-á- lā.
 | | | | | | | | | |
 child comp. pr.buy.past fish dem. pr. go.suf.perf.

‘The child who bought the fish has gone’.

(5a) is derived from the combination of two clauses:

b. Nwátàkírí_i a-lá- á- lā.
 | | | | |
 Child pr.go suf. Perf.

‘The child has gone’

c. Ónyé_i zù- rù ázù áhù_j
 | | | | |
 conj.buy past fish dem

‘Who bought that fish...’

(5b) is an independent clause in (5a). (5c) is the embedded clause introduced by the complementizer *ónyé*, ‘who’. The complementizer *ónyé* is coindexed with the subject of the entity *nwátàkírí*. This shows that the complementizer and the subject refer to the same nominal entity. It is also the complementizer that introduces the embedded clause of (5c), and joins the two clauses into a composite grammatical unit. The embedded construction, serves an adjectival role to the matrix clause in which it occurs. (cf. Uwalaka, 2010: 189). The tree representation of (5a), given below shows that the construction also has a double TP projection, showing that it is a biclausal construction. From the tree representation of (5a), the *-rV* inflectional past suffix is lowered to the verb *zù*, ‘buy’, for its full realization as *zùrù*, ‘bought’. The arrow from SpecVP to TP shows the origin of the subject, from the predicate and its movement to SpecTP.

- c. Kélèchí(yá)_j à- bíá
 | | | |
 Kelechi(he) pr. come.

‘Kelechi (he) came’.

(6b) is the first clause in the composite construction of (6a). In (6a), there is no conjunction connecting the two clauses in the construction. However, there is a comma (,) between the first clause and the second clause. In (6a), it is observed that the object of the first clause becomes the subject of the second clause and this is indicated by coindexing the object of the first clause with the subject of the second clause. Though the verb of the second clause has an open vowel suffix, it has a past reading because of the tense of the first verb which is implicated to the second clause. The two independent constructions put together resulted in the derivation of (6a): *Úchè ìkpòrò Kélèchí, yá àbíá*. ‘Uche called Kelechi and he came.’ The tree diagram of (6a), represented as figure (4), shows that it is a biclausal construction, in that it has a double TP projection. In figure (4) the *-rV* inflectional past tense suffix, is lowered to the verb *kpò* ‘call’, because it is a verbal suffix while the imperative suffix *-à* is lowered to the verb *bíá*, ‘come’. The arrow from SpecVP to TP shows the origin of the subject from the predicate and its movement to SpecTP.

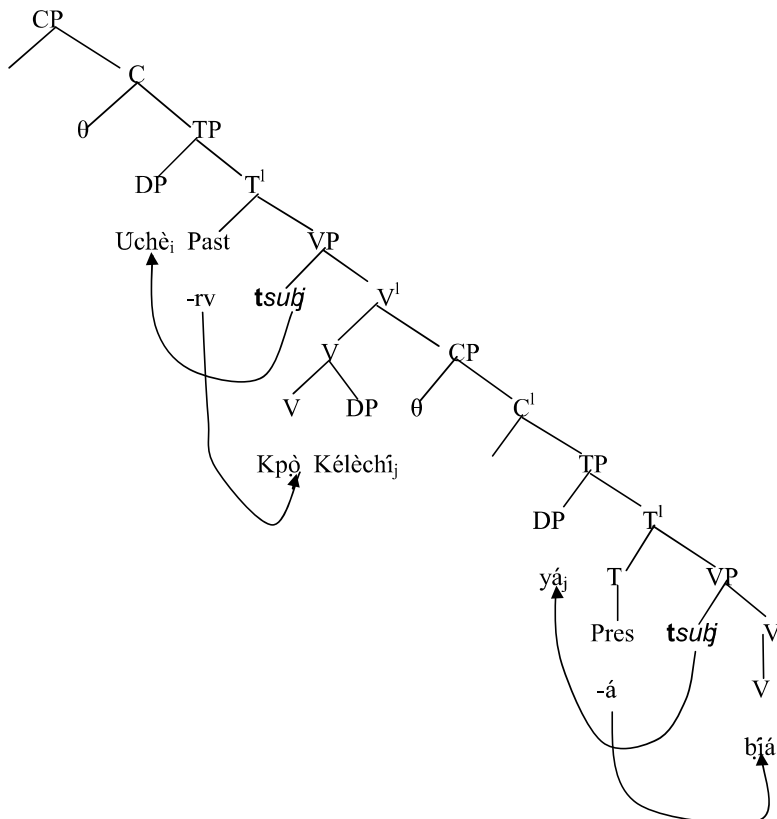


Fig. 4: Diagram illustrating biclausal construction in an overlapping construction.

1.4.5 Result / extent construction

A result or extent construction, is a biclausal construction where the relationship between the first and second clause involves both cause and temporal sequence, and which uses a complementizer that has the meaning *until* or *till*, to introduce its complement clause. (cf. Enfield (2011: 2), For example in Ngwa:

- 7a. Kélèchí_i ò- dè- rẹ̀ hwé_j dúm̀gbè áká_k ñ- rà- wà- rẹ̀ yá_i áhú.
 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
 Kelechi_i pr. write past. something conj. hand pr.pain Es. Past him body.

‘Kelechi wrote until his hand began to ache him’.

The construction in (7a), has two clauses:

- b. Kélèchí_i ò- dè- rẹ̀ hwé_j.
 | | | | |
 Kelechi pr. write past. something

‘Kelechi wrote something’.

- c. Dúm̀gbè áká_k ñ- rà- wà- rẹ̀ yá_i áhú.
 | | | | | | | | | |
 conj. hand pr.pain Es. Past him body.

‘Until his hand began to ache him’.

(7b) is the first clause in (7a). (7b) is an independent clause. (7c), is the second clause, which is the subordinate clause in (7a). The meaning of (7c), is only realized with reference to (7b). It is a combination of the two clauses that resulted in the derivation of the construction in (7a).

From the tree diagram of (7a), given below as figure (5). The arrow from SpecVP to TP, shows that the origin of the subject is from the verb, and its movement to SpecTP, where it is projected as the subject of the construction. The arrow from SpecT¹ in the first and second clauses, lowers the *rV* past suffixes to the corresponding verbs, *de* ‘write’ and *ra* ‘pain’ in the construction, because they are verbal suffixes.

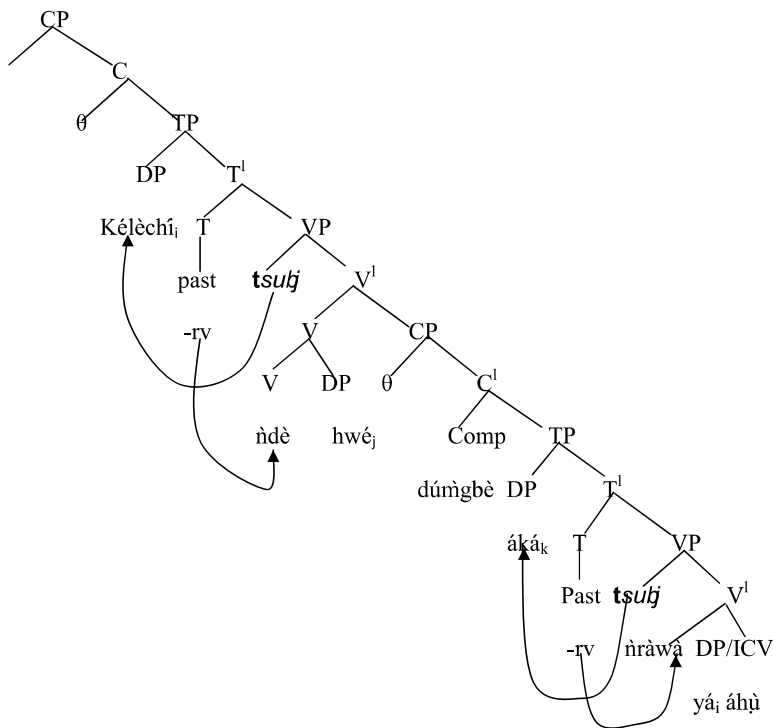


Fig.5: Diagram illustrating biclausal construction in result/extent construction.

1.4.6 Cleft – construction

A cleft construction, is a sentence, where the copula verb (is/was), is preceded by the expletive pronoun *it*, which is followed by a noun phrase and a relative clause. (cf. Matthews (2007: 59). For example:

- 8a. $\acute{U}ch\grave{e}$ \grave{n} - $r\grave{i}$ - $r\grave{i}$ $\acute{n}\acute{r}\acute{i}$ $\acute{a}h\grave{u}\grave{.}$
 | | | | | |
 Uche pr.eat.past food that
 ‘Uche ate the food.’
- b. \acute{O} $b\grave{u}$ $\acute{U}ch\grave{e}_i$ \grave{n} - $r\grave{i}$ - $r\grave{i}$ $\acute{n}\acute{r}\acute{i}$ $\acute{a}h\grave{u}\grave{.}$
 | | | | | | | |
 It be Uche pr.eat.past food that
 ‘It is Uche that ate the food.’
- c. \acute{O} $b\grave{u}$ $\acute{U}ch\grave{e}_i$
 | | |
 It be Uche
 ‘It is Uche’.
- d. \grave{n} - $r\grave{i}$ - $r\grave{i}$ $\acute{n}\acute{r}\acute{i}$ $\acute{a}h\grave{u}\grave{.}$
 | | | | |
 pr.eat.past food that
 ‘That ate the food.’ 0

(8a), is a simple declarative sentence. (8b), is a construction derived by the introduction of an extra clause by the insertion of the pronoun \acute{O} ‘it’ and the copula verb $b\grave{u}$ ‘be’ before the subject of the construction, $\acute{U}ch\grave{e}$. This derived construction is a cleft construction. It is a syntactic construct used to give prominence to nominals in a sentence. The presence of the copula verb before the subject in (8b), places an emphasis on it. The insertion of the copula verb, $b\grave{u}$, ‘be’ increases the number of clauses in (8a). Thus, (8b), which has two clauses, is a biclausal construction as indicated in (8c) and (8d). (8b), is the clause with the copula verb and it also is the first clause in (8b). (8d), is the second clause in (8b). (8d), is the embedded relative clause. Though, there is no overt complementizer which introduces (8d), as a relative clause in (8b), in Ngwa, its translation to the English language shows that this is implied. From the tree diagram of (8a), given below as figure (6). The arrows in figure (6), which moves from SpecVP, shows the origin of the subject ‘Uche’ to be from the predicate, from where it is moved into SpecTP as the subject of the construction then to SPEC-C¹ where it is projected for communicative prominence. The coindexations in the tree also help to show these movements. The arrow from T¹, lowers the $-rV$ past suffix to the verb, $r\grave{i}$, ‘eat’ because it is, its verbal suffix used in marking the past tense.

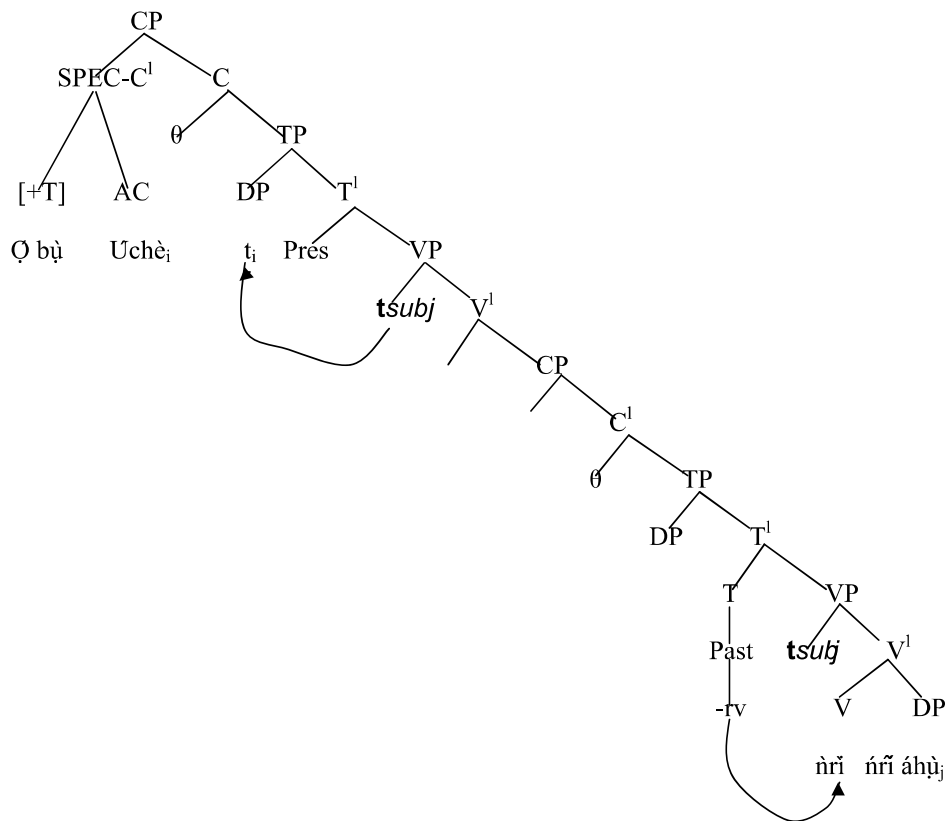


Fig.6: Diagram illustrating biclausal construction in cleft construction.

1.4.7 Pseudo – cleft construction

A pseudo-cleft construction is a sentence which begins with a wh-word, whose main function is for the communicative projection of some nominal constituents of the construction to which it is attached. (Brown and Miller, 1985: 364). The sentences in (9) illustrate this type of construction in Ngwa:

9a. Hwé Èbèrè_i ò-chò- rò m- bù jí_j.
 | | | | | | | |
 What Ebere pr.want pres pr. be yam

‘What Ebere wants is yam.’

(9a) is made up of two clauses:

b. Èbèrè_i ò-chò- rò jí_j
 | | | | |
 Ebere pr.want pres yam

c. Hwé m - bù.
 | | |
 what pr. be.

‘What is...’

(9a), is a pseudo-cleft construction, derived by the insertion of the wh-word *hwé* ‘what’ before the subject of the construction *Èbèrè* and the insertion of the copula verb *m̀bù* ‘be’ before the object of the construction *jí* ‘yam’. The presence of the wh-word before the subject, and the copula verb before the object, gives both nominals a communicative prominence in the derived construction. (9a), is represented as figure (7) in the tree diagram that follows. In the tree diagram, the arrow from SpecVP to TP, shows the origin of the subject ‘Ebere’ to be from the predicate, from where it is moved to TP and then to SPEC-C^l, where it is projected for emphasis. The arrow from T^l shows the lowering of the *-rV* assertive suffix to the verb *chò* ‘want’, because the *-rV* suffix is its verbal morpheme used to mark a present tense form of the verb.

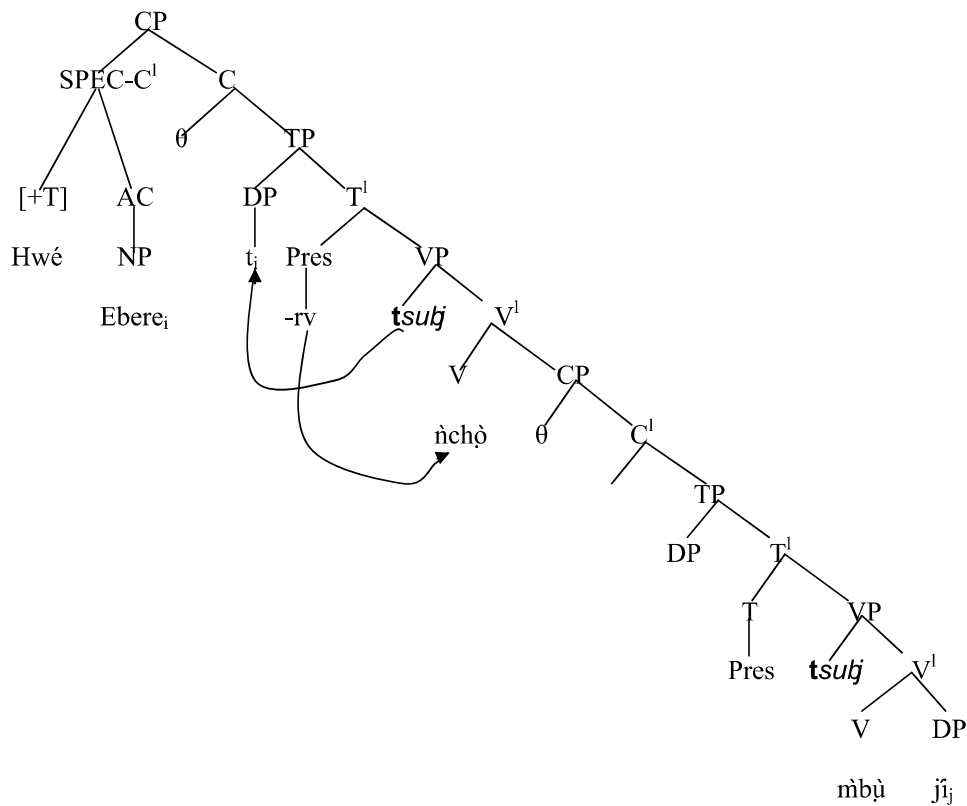


Fig.7: Diagram used to illustrate biclausal construction in a pseudo-cleft construction.

1.4.8 Serial verb construction

A serial verb construction is a complex construction made up of more than one verb expressing series of actions carried out by one agent. Underlyingly in a serial verb construction, each verb stands for a separate simple sentence (clause). On the surface however, the identical subjects of the separate verbs (clauses) have been deleted leaving only one overt subject, since the subject of the actions in the other clauses are the same. (cf. Stahlke (1970: 60), Emenanjo (1978: 200), Awoyale (1988: 1) and Matthews (2007: 365)).

The following, is an example of serial verb construction in Ngwa:

10a. Àdhá_i ò-gà-rà áhíá_j zú - ó ázù_k .
 | | | | | | | |
 Adha pr.go.past market buy.suf. fish

‘Adha went to the market and bought fish.’

(10a), is a derived construction from two clauses:

b. Àdhá_i ñ-gà-rà áhíá_j
 Adha pr.go.past market

‘Adha went to the market

c. Àdhá_i ñ- zù - rù ázù_k.
 Adha pr. buy.past. fish

‘Adha bought fish’.

(10b-c), are two simple constructions that have the same subject ‘Àdhá’. To avoid redundancy, the identical subject in (10c), is deleted, with the verb ‘zù’ ‘buy’ in the second clause ending with an open vowel suffix. Since, tense can only be marked on one verb in the series, in a serial verb construction, the past tense in the second clause, is implicated by the past tense of the first clause which has an open vowel suffix. In the tree diagram of (10a), represented as figure (8). The arrow from SpecVP to TP is used to show the origin of the subject *Adha* to be from the predicate, from where it is moved in to SpecTP as the subject of the construction. The arrow from SpecT¹, in the first clause lowers the *-rV* past suffix, to the verb *gà* ‘go’, because it is used to mark the past tense in the clause, while the open vowel suffix *-ó* ‘lowers to the verb *zù* ‘buy’ because it is part of the morphological composition of the verb.

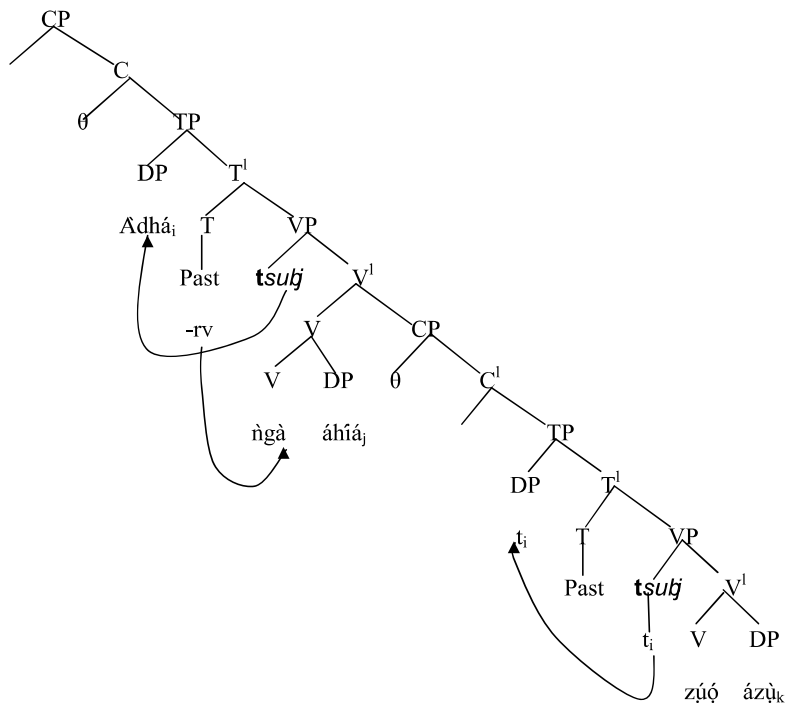


Fig. 8: Diagram illustrating biclausal construction in a serial construction.

1.4.9 Coordinate biclausal constructions

A coordinate biclausal construction is a construction in which the coordinate sentences are sisters; where in principle, each of the conjoined sentences should be grammatically independent. (cf. Brown and Miller (1985: 15), Murthy (2007: 259), Kirkpatrick (2010: 42), and Ejiboh (2011: 58)). The following is an example of a coordinate biclausal construction in Ngwa.

- 11a. Chídì ò- gà-rà áwòm mà Èbèrè ò-gà-rà òkhù..
 Chidi pr. go past farm conj. Eberè pr.go-past wood

‘Chidi went to harvest cassava but Eberè went to fetch fire wood’.

- b. Chídì ò- gà-rà áwòm.
 Chidi pr. go past farm

‘Chidi went to the farm’.

- c. Èbèrè ò-gà-rà òkhù..
 Eberè pr.go-past wood

‘Eberè went to fetch fire wood’.

(11a), is a coordinate biclausal construction, made up of the two simple sentences of (11b-c), that are conjoined by the coordinating conjunction *mà*, ‘but’. This shows that (11a) is a derived construction through the use of a conjunction. In the tree diagram below, (11a), is represented as figure (9). In (11) the arrows from SpecVPs to TPs are used to show the origin of the subjects *Chídì* and *Èbèrè*, to be from the predicate, from where it is moved into the SpecTPs in the two conjoined clauses as the subjects of the construction. The arrows from SpecTs, in the first and second clauses, lower the $-rV$ past suffixes, to the verb *gà* ‘go’, because they are used to mark the past tense in the clauses, also they are part of the morphological composition of the verb *gà* ‘go’ in each of the coordinated clauses.

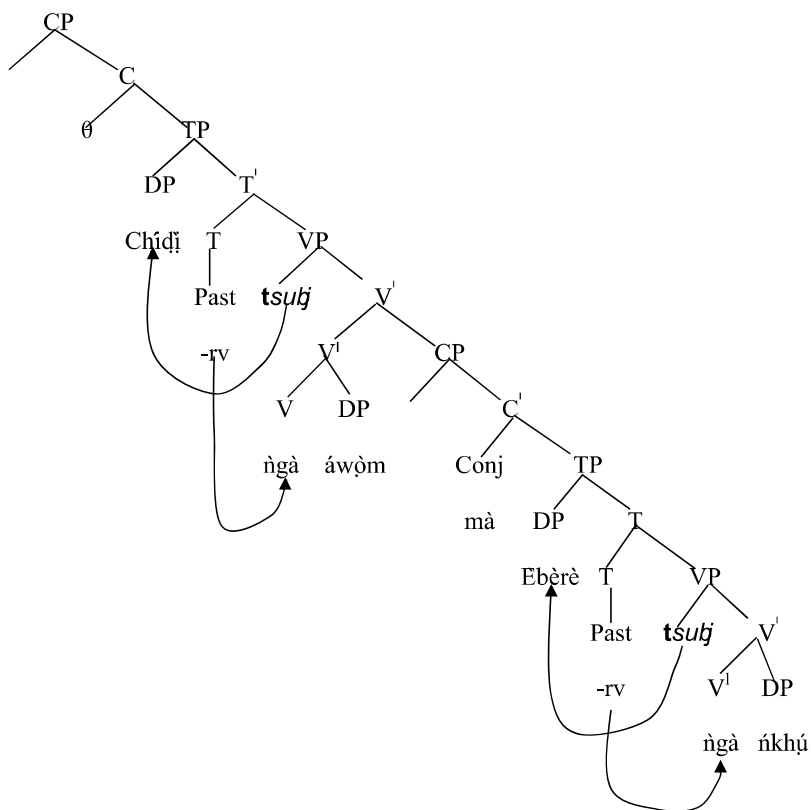


Fig.9: Diagram illustrating biclausality in a coordinate biclausal construction.

1.5 Conclusion

The work in this paper has been to give a typology of biclausal constructions in Ngwa. In an attempt to achieve this purpose, the x-bar framework was employed, because it gave the frame on which the biclausal constructions in Ngwa were projected to aid a better account of the various types of biclausal constructions in Ngwa. One of the major findings in this paper is that what qualifies a syntactic structure to be called a biclausal construction is its double IP projection. It was equally discovered that some biclausal constructions are derived via subordination, while some were by coordination. Some subordinate biclausal constructions, it was observed had no overt subordinate marker. The conjoined structures in coordinate biclausal constructions were discovered to be of equal status, while the biclausal constructions that are derived via subordination had an unequal status. In the biclausal serial verb constructions, there was subject sharing, tense spreading of the predicates in the construction. This work is expected to trigger more research in the study of biclausal constructions in Ngwa and other languages towards the attainment of competence and the establishment of more facts about Universal grammar and parametric differences.

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