

ARGUMENT STRUCTURE OF VERB COMPOUNDING IN URHOBO

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Abstract

This paper examines argument structure of verb compounding in Urhobo, using projection principle as a theoretical frame work. Projection principle requires that the moved element (embedded verb) leaves a trace in the base position. Its specific objectives are to investigate whether the verb is the determinant of sentence types and structure, whether all component of verb compound have the same structure and by extension to take the same number of arguments, as to be either subject or object-subject identity. The study reveals that most often the derivation of verb compounds is not straight-forward, that the actual interpretation of certain verbs does not yield a uniform pattern of analysis. Besides, one needs different statement to account for the transformation of verb compound from their multi-sentential sources. The study also reveals that the object of the first verb is also the subject of the second verb. In such case, there is deletion under the condition of identity. Finally, the paper reveals that there is movement of transformation to derive two intransitive verbs and makes them a compound transitive verb.

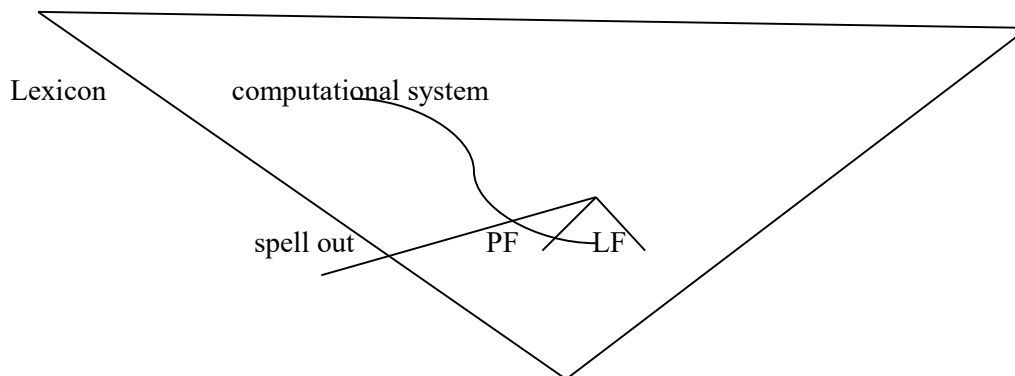
Keywords Argument structure, identity, object-subject, projection principle, verb compounding

Introduction

1. Background to the study

Computational system in the minimalist program refers to the capacity of grammar to generate from the lexical repertoire of the language to a logical apparatus for communication. In other words, the computational system refers to the stock of lexical items, and the resultant meaning. Napoli (1996) shows the computational system in the following way.

Fig.1



Minimalism sees language as a system consisting the lexicon and a computational system (CS). The computational system selects items from the lexicon and a determinable syntactic construction. Each formed construction is a structural description (SD) with two representations, namely the logical form (LF) and phonetic form (PF). Ohala (1999) in Imu (2015) adds that each derivation from the SD must satisfy all relevant co- occurrence restrictions. From figure 1 above, minimalism discards the terms deep structure and surface structure. Also, Chomsky (1981) does not regard deep structures as part of the conceptions which are virtually necessary.

Radford (2006) claims that spell out is the point in the derivation process when part of the syntactic structure is sent to the phonological form to be mapped to the phonetic form for proper morphophonemic checking and rendering. Sometimes, as in the case of some irregular morphophonemic derivation, some constituents may have null or zero spell out. In other words, when a syntactic form has a null spell out, it is sent, for instance, the morphonemic result of *put+ed* is *put*. The *ed* has a null spell out in the derivation of *put* (see Ejiofor 2010).

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical studies

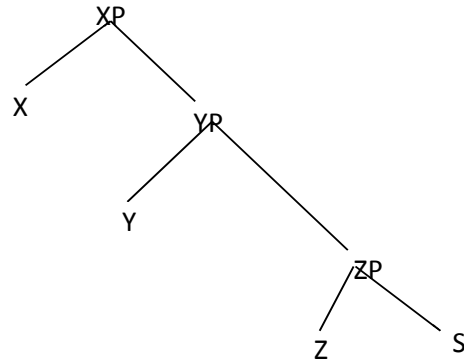
Chomsky (1981), remarks that NP arguments are those nouns with referential functions. They include names, variable anaphors, pronouns but not idiom chunks or elements inserted to occupy an obligatory position of syntactic structure. He claims that each position that satisfies the subcategorised frame of the lexical head of a construction is a θ - position. He maintains that argument bears one and only one θ -role, and that each θ - role is assigned to one and only one argument. Chomsky (1981) analyses the sentence - *John ran quickly*

He points out that there is an event which is a *running event* with *John* as its agent. He asserts that LF must be so designed that such expression is assigned θ roles that is, assigned the status of terms in a thematic relation. In a sentence, a predicate (e.g verb or adjective) assigns a specific semantic function to its complements and sometimes to its subjects. According to Asher (1994), the theta criterion concerns some lexical properties of predicates-namely, how many θ - role each assigns. The phenomenon of verb argument alternation has been studied by Levin (1993). He catalogues over 3,000 verbs into classes according to which alternations they participate. A central focus of Levin's work is that a verb's syntactic alternation is related to its semantic property, and that semantically related verbs will share the same alternations.

Agreement is a set of agreement features including specifications for gender, number, tone, and person. These features, according to Riemsdijk and Williams (1986), must agree with the subject NP and are (eventually) realised on the verb. Since agreement had the typically nominal features for gender, Number, and person, it had been suggested that agreement is a noun (i.e. [N+V]). **The student prefers for Bill to visit Paris*, is relevant in classifying agreement in that sentence given that every NP must get case, this means that the subject of an infinitival clause will have to get case from outside the clause. It makes sense that the Infinitival clause should be able to appear only as objects of case assigners for those case assigners are needed to assign case to the subject of the infinitive. Napoli (1996) goes on to define the structural relationship of government thus:

For any head X, we say that X governs everything within its maximal projection (that everything within XP) that is not dominated by another phrase node VP contained in XP. In other words, government is blocked by another maximal projection. She gives an example with the tree diagram below

Fig.2



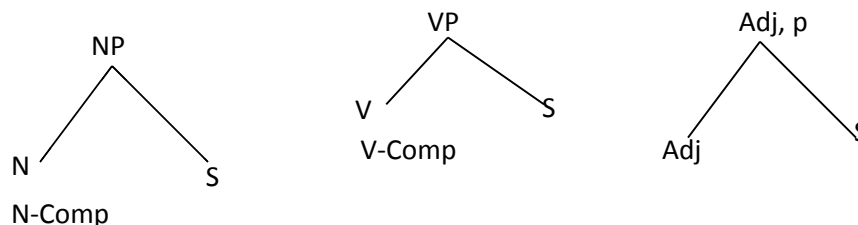
X governs YP since YP is contained in XP. But X does not govern Y or ZP or anything dominated by ZP because all those nodes are contained within YP.

Thus, Napoli (1996) concludes with the following sentences: If case assignment by [AGR] also depends on the relationship of government and if [+AGR] governs the subject of its clause, we can say that [+AGR] differs from V and P in being unable to be exceptionally governed. So [+AGR] cannot assign case to the subject of a sentential subject. The conditions for case assignment is aptly captured by Mbah (2006), α assigns case to β if and only if α is a case assigner, if α governs β or if α is adjacent to β .

Chomsky (1972) analyses how case is assigned among lexical items thus: The phenomenon of reflexive dominance and containment are relevant to case assignment by providing adequate syntactic provision for case assignment. The difference between dominance and containment is enunciated in the following paraphrase. The category α dominates β if every segment of α dominates β . The category α contains the category β if some segment of α dominates β .

The term complementation is generally limited to the study of clauses, finite or nonfinite, which serve as argument typically of verb and by extension also of other categories such as nouns, adjective and prepositions. Nooman (1985) sees complementation as the syntactic situation that arises when a notational sentence or predication is an argument of a predicate. Stockwell, Schacter and Partee (1973) describe complementation as an S introduced into the structure of right sister of some head item e.g.

Fig.3



Stocksbnswell et al. (1973) uses transitive and intransitive criteria to classify verb phrase complementation. Lester (1990) maintains that a complement completes the meaning of the subject and the verb. He says that a complement is the part of the meaning of sentence. According to him, a complement is a noun, pronoun or predicate adjective that is required by the verb in order to make a complete sentence. By this definition, a complement cannot be an adverb or prepositional phrase or be inside a prepositional phrase. Only nouns, pronouns and predicate adjectives can be complements.

2.2 Empirical studies

Aziza (2010) examines transitive and intransitive verbs. The transitive verb obligatorily take objects while the intransitive verbs do not take an object, and that transitive verbs may be used intransitively, when that happens, the construction takes an *-rv* suffix, with varying realisations, depending on the ATR requirements and some morphophonemic rules of the language.

Ajiboyi (2014) looked at the description of some of the morphological factors involved in compounding in Urhobo. It was observed that Urhobo has both headed and headless compounds. Though the heads of Urhobo compounds are left branching, there are instances where the heads are right branching. Pronominal affixes were found to head some Urhobo compounds.

Aziza & Utulu (2018) did a comparative study of Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò and explored the various procedures by which both languages adopt in deriving compounds. The study adopts a descriptive approach, that Èwùlù and Ùrhòbò, though are two different Nigerian languages, yet exploited almost the same morphological patterns of compounding to create new words.

2.3 Summary of literature review

The literature review above shows that a lot have not been done in arguments structure in Urhobo language using theoretical frame work within the minimalist program. This paper will investigate whether compound verb argument in Urhobo aligns with other languages or whether they are either negligible or nonexistent.

2.4 Theoretical frame work

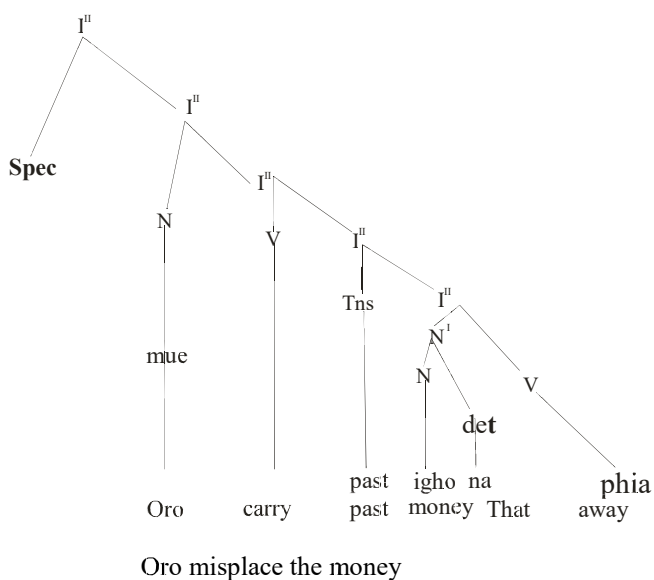
The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is projection principle; projection principle requires that the moved element (embedded verb) leaves a trace in the base position. In a nutshell, the verb is the determinant of sentence type and structure. Its not expected that all component of verb compound must have the same structure and by extension to take the same number of arguments, as to be either subject or object-subject identity.

3. Argument structure of compound verb in Urhobo

Compounding is the process where two or more words combined to form a new word. Most compounding verbs in Urhobo are derived from a combination of noun and a gerund and denote specific activities. While Lord (1975) states that the first component of a verb compound combines with any other component or an affix in the formation of compound verbs. Mbah (1999), Baker and Steward (1999), Ndiribe (2008), Oha (2010) and Aziza (2010) agree on the opinion that a compound verb is the function of the combination of two or more verbs stems. However, for a verb compounds to be transformed or derived, it implies that there should be single verbs to which the compound can be linked. Through syntactic movement of constituents, these single verbs can now form a lexeme called compound. Mbah (1999), Ndiribe (2008) and Imu (2015) are of the view that these components join together in the compounds to give a single meaning.

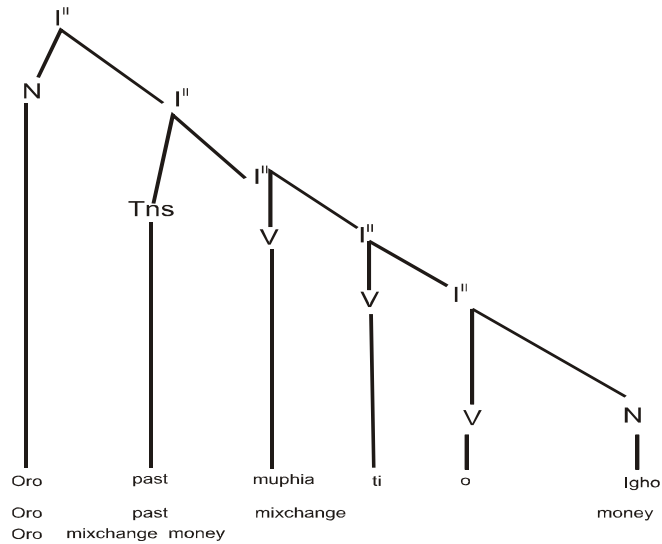
- Oro muè igho nà phiá
name carry money that away
Oro misplace the money away

Fig. 4



From fig.4 above, *igho-money* is internally assigned that role by *muè-carry* because *igho-money* is projected as object both at surface level (structure), while it is the subject of *phiá-away*, so *igho-money* is projected as object in the deep structure following the projection principle, it must be Projected as object both at surface structure and as well in the logical form. This is because N is a V complement projected by a C-commanding verb *muè-carry*. Therefore, its interpretation as a subject of *phiá-away*, does not violate co-occurrence restrictions. The projection of *igho-money*, as the object at the surface structure, while its copy as the grammatical subject of *phiá-away*, is deleted under identity. The structure yield the desired verb output as in the tree diagram below.

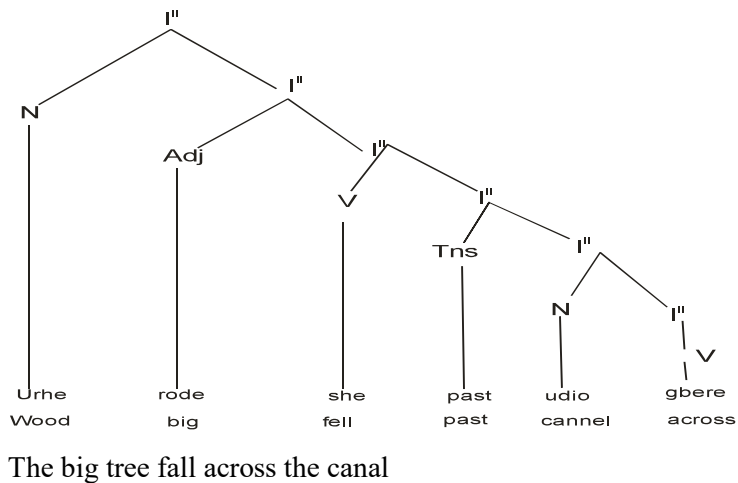
Fig. 5



- (3) ùrhe rodè shè gbèrè ùdio
 Tree big fall across/divide canal
 The big tree fall across the canal

This sentence has the same configuration of the sentence analysed above and it can be represented in a tree diagram as shown below.

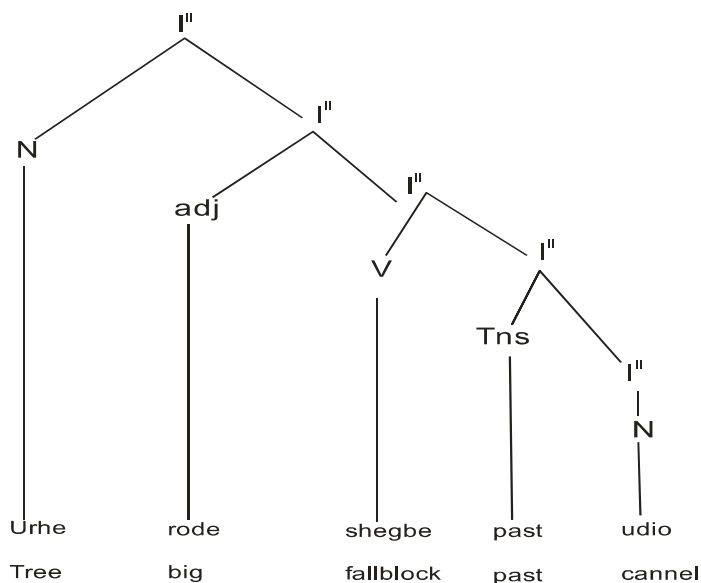
Fig. 6



In the diagram (fig 6) above *shè-fall* assigns theta role of subject to *ùrhè rodè-big tree* while *gbèrè-across* assign theta role of subject to *ùdio-canal*. It should be noted that *ùrhè rodè-big tree* retains its theta role both at the deep structure and at surface structure. *Ùdio-canal* is projected as the subject of *gbèrè- across* at the deep structure but the object of *shè-fall* at both surface structure and

the logical form. Therefore, transformation takes place, bringing the embedded verb; *gbèrè- across* adjacent to the matrix verb *shè-fall*; it should be noted that *shè-fall* prevails over *gbèrè- across* in grammatical function as the verb at the deep structure. This can be further illustrated in a diagram below.

Fig.7



The big tree blocked the canal

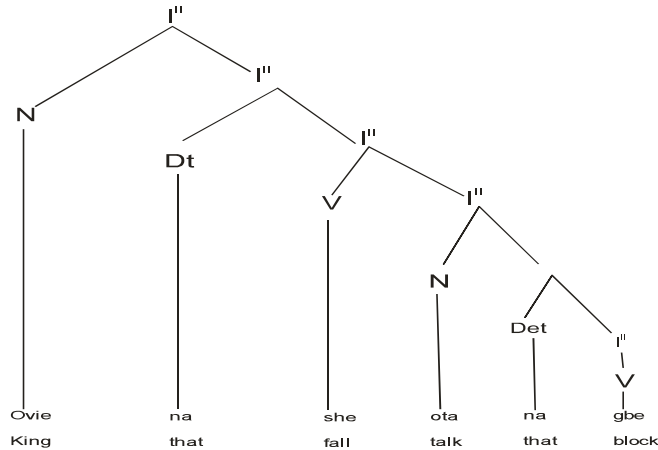
From the sentence above, sentence (3a) is a good example of a situation where the object of the first verb is also the subject of the second verb. In (3a), there is deletion under the condition of identity. In (3b), there is movement of transformation which brings together two intransitive verbs and makes them a compound transitive verb. Furthermore, there is verb compounding in which the subject of the first verb is also the subject of the second verb as the examples below buttress.

- (4a). òmètìtẹ̀ wàvrẹ̀ isikùrù nà
 name go/past pst school that
 òmètìtẹ̀ passed the school
 òmètìtẹ̀ wà isikùrù nà, òmètìtẹ̀ vrẹ̀ isikùrù nà
 name pass pst school that, name pass/above pst school that
 Ometite passed the school

In sentence (4b) above, òmètìtẹ̀ is both the subject of the verbs *wà-pass* and *vrẹ̀-pass*. There is also transformation and a deletion under the condition of identity. Moreover, the second òmètìtẹ̀ and the second *isikùrù nà-the school* are deleted. So, the verb *vrẹ̀-pass* is moved adjacent to the verb *wà-pass*, resulting in the compound verb *wàvrẹ̀-passed*. This analysis shows the subject of the first verb also is the subject of the second verb and they also have the same complements. However, the two verbs involved in this analysis are motion verbs.

In incorporations analysis of causative and applicative in a complex predicate, morphological causative occurs in bare form while the incorporated verbs bear the tense and aspect marking as in the example 5 below

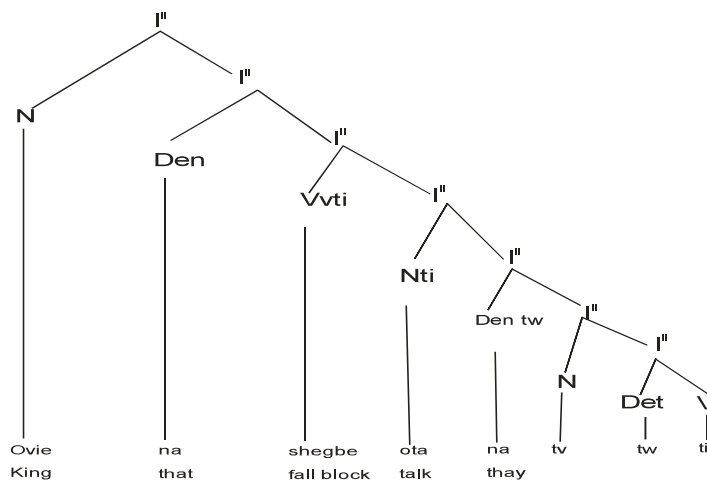
- (5) Oviè nà shègbèrè ota nà
 King that fall /across pst talk/issue that
 The king settled the matter/issue
 Fig. 8a



The king settled the matter/issue

Analysis of example (5) above indicates that at some point in time, derivation of verb, *gbèrè-block* moved from its base position to adjoin to the matrix verb *shè-fall* giving the S-structure below.

Fig.8b



The king settled the matter/issue

From the analysis, a number of issues are involved in the postulated analysis. The projection principle requires that the moved element (embedded verb) leaves a trace in its base position. In a nutshell, the verb is the determinant of sentence types and structure. It is not expected that all component of verb compound must have the same structure and by extension to take the same number of arguments, as to be either subject or object-subject identity.

4.1 Summary of findings

The study reveals that most often the derivation of verb compounds is not straight-forward, the actual interpretation of certain verbs does not yield a uniform pattern of analysis. So, one needs different statements to account for the transformation of verb compound from their multi-sentential sources, the finding reveals that the identity of the object of the verb is also that of the subject of the second verb.

The study also reveals that the object of the first verb is also the subject of the second verb. In such case, there is deletion under the condition of identity. Also the study reveals a movement of transformation which derives two intransitive verbs and makes them a compound transitive verb. It is therefore reveal that, there is verb compounding in Urhobo where the subject of the first verb is also the subject of the second verb.

4.2 Conclusion

The study reveals a handful of arguments. A number of issues are involved in the postulated analysis above. The projection principle requires that the moved element (embedded verb) leaves a trace in the base position. In a nutshell, the verb is the determinant of sentence types and structure. Its not expected that all component of verb compound must have the same structure and by extension to take the same number of arguments, as to be either subject or object-subject identity.

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