THE MOVEMENT OPERATIONS OF VERB COMPLEMENTS IN ỌGBA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the movements operations of verb complements in Ọgba. The language is spoken across forty-one communities in Ọgba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. This study adopts the Trace Movement theory which states that any grammatical constituent that moves from its extraction site to the landing site leaves a trace (an empty category also known as ghost copy) at the extraction site. It employs the descriptive survey design. The data for the study were collected through the intuition of the researcher and unstructured elicitation oral interview technique. The method of data analysis that is adopted in this study is purely descriptive method of morpheme-to-morpheme glossing. It is observed that there are three grammatical constituents that can move from the VP slot in Ọgba. The grammatical constituents are the NP, PP and the CP. This suggests that the V which is the lexical head of the VP remains in-situ. The extraction site of the moved constituents is typically the VP while their landing site is the SPEC-C^I. That is, all the grammatical constituents moved leftward. The paper did not find a case of rightward movement. This is because what triggers the movement of these grammatical constituents in the language is the desire for communicative prominence. It was affirmed that focus or emphasis is achieved in Ọgba through clefting or relativization.

KEYWORDS: Noun phrase, Prepositional phrase, complement, clausal complement, Ọgba

INTRODUCTION

In grammatical terms, "complement" is an expression which merges or combines with the head word to project the head (in this case, the verb) into a larger structure of essentially the same kind. It also refers to a word, phrase, or clause that is essential to complete the meaning of a given construction (Radford, 1997). In other words, complements are usually arguments (that is, expressions that help complete the meaning of a predicate). Thus, verb complementation is one of the central areas in the grammar of Ọgba. This is because some verbs in the language obligatorily co-occur with a complement of some sort, which always specifies their meaning. The complement of a verb in a construction can be a noun or a noun phrase, which may be a

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direct object, an indirect object, a subject complement, an object complement, or a meaning-specifying grammatical element. Furthermore, it is observed that the grammatical elements that function as external and internal arguments can move from one syntactic position to another. Therefore, this paper examines the movement operations that are commonly associated with verb complements in Ọgba.

THE ỌGBA LANGUAGE

Scholars such as Ojum (2016), Isaac (2018) and Ikpo-Weke (2020) opine that the nomenclature "Ọgba" refers to both the language and its native speakers. However, Isaac (2018, p. 2) insists that the "Ọgba Kingdom is found in the Niger Delta flood plain, with Ekpeye, Engeni and Ijaw areas to the south West, Egbema, Oguta and Awara to the North West and Ndoni Kwale and Orashi to the West and North West." He also declares that Ọgba Kingdom is rich in both natural and human resources. Some of the rivers in the area are: The Orashi River, the Sombreiro River and Omoku River. Like other human languages, Ọgba has dialectal variations. While Ojum (2016) insists Ọgba has five dialectal variations which include Egni, Usomini, Igburu, Idu and Omoku; Isaac (2018) says that there are only two dialects in Ọgba (Egni and Igburu). On the other hand, both Ojum (2016) and Isaac (2018) uphold that Ọgba dialects are mutually intelligible. More so, Ojum (2016) observes that the five dialects have wide variations in terms of tone and intonation, and in terms of lexical items. The data for this study is drawn from the Idu dialect.

Tonal Convention

The significance of tone in Ọgba cannot be overemphasized. The term "tone" refers to the variation in pitch. It is customarily seen as the distinctive pitch level of a syllable. Tones are generally placed on the peak of the syllable, which is habitually a vowel or a syllabic consonant. This suggests that in Ọgba, the pitch of the voice is used to distinguish the meaning of morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that otherwise are the same in terms of their segementals. In view of the foregoing, Emenanjo (2015, p. 113) admits that "to ignore tone is to ignore an important code which not only identifies the language but also makes it unique." For instance:

1a.   égbé   HHT   'hawk'
b.   ègbè   LLT   'trap'
c.   ègbé   LHT   'gun'

According to Ahiamadu (2000), Ọgba has two major tones: high and low, which are followed by a down-step tone and a mid-tone. The mid-tone is not usually marked in Ọgba. Thus, the mid-tone is conventionally left unmarked in this research. So, any unmarked tone should be read as mid.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper employs the Trace Movement. According to Ndimele (1992), Mathews (1997) and Nwala (2016), the Trace Movement theory states that any grammatical constituent that moves from its extraction site to the landing site leaves a trace (an empty category also known as ghost

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copy) at the extraction site. This theory is considered appropriate for this paper since it examines the movement operations of verb complements in Ọgba.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Meyer (1995), the term "complement" refers to a grammatical constituent that performs a common role by permitting a direct object to follow a transitive verb. He also states that whereas a subject complement follows a transitive verb, an object complement follows a direct object. More so, Mathews (1997) says that the term "complement" originates from the French word for "completing"; thus, he describes it as a grammatical unit which is joined to another grammatical unit (commonly referred to as "head") to form a projection of the head. In the opinion of Isaac (2003) and Ndimele (2003), complement is a general concept that comprises all the essential features of the predicate with the exemption of the verb. Isaac (2003) clearly observes that the essential status of a complement is reliant on the verb and its argument structure. Furthermore, Angitso (2015, p. 505) asserts that "movement rules move grammatical elements around in a construction sentence." For that reason, this paper investigates the movement operations of verb complements in Ọgba.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs the descriptive survey design. This design is considered appropriate for this study because it is difficult for the research to compile all the movement operations of verb complements in Ọgba. Accordingly, a sample of the movement operations of verb complements is drawn from the language. The data for this study are drawn from two main sources- primary and secondary sources. The researcher used her knowledge or intuition as a native speaker of Idu dialect of Ọgba to collect the primary data. But, the researcher did not allow her intuition to influence the study unduly. The researcher also draws data from other proficient speakers of Ọgba through the use of unstructured elicitation oral interview method. The reason for the unstructured elicitation oral interview is to obtain in-depth information through face to face verbal communication. The use of oral interview is considered suitable for this study because the researcher believes that it is straight-forward and easy to analyze. The secondary data are drawn from books and other library materials that are available in the language. The technique of data analysis that is adopted in this study is purely descriptive method of morpheme-to-morpheme glossing. This paper adopts the descriptive approach because it does not impose any linguistic rules to the language.

THE MOVEMENT OPERATIONS OF VERB COMPLEMENTS IN ỌGBA

The movement rules that operate in Ọgba move grammatical constituents from one syntactic position to another. This substantiates the statement of Angitso (2015, p. 505) that "movement rules move grammatical elements around in a construction sentence." The data gathered in this study prove that the grammatical constituents that function as V complements are NP, PP or CP and they can move from one syntactic location or position to another. In what follows, this study presents the movement operations that apply in Ọgba under three headings:

The Movement of NP Complements in Ọgba

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In Ọgba, an NP complement can from the VP to the SPEC-I^I of the matrix or superordinate clause. It is a good example of an A movement. One of the factors that prompts the movement of an NP complements in the language is the desire for communicative prominence. For instance:

2a.   Wọ́   vnà   ní   yé   n-vnà.
        3PL scold Prep. 1PL Pref.-scold
        'They scold us.'

b.   N-vnà$_i$ ká wọ́   vnà   ní   yé t$_i$.
        Pref.-scold RC 3PL scold Prep. 1PL
        'We were scolded by them.'

c.   Yé$_i$ ká wọ́   vnà   ní t$_i$ n-vnà.
        1PL RC 3PL scold Prep. Pref.-scold
        'We are the ones they scolded.'

d.   *Ụ́lọ̀ nyná$_i$ mé rnụ́ Ngozi t$_i$.
        House Det. RC NP FUT work.

The examples in 2a-c demonstrate that in Ọgba, an NP complement that functions as an internal argument can move into the SPEC-C^I of the CP where it can be emphasized or focused. Figure 1 is a structural representation of NP complement movement in the language:
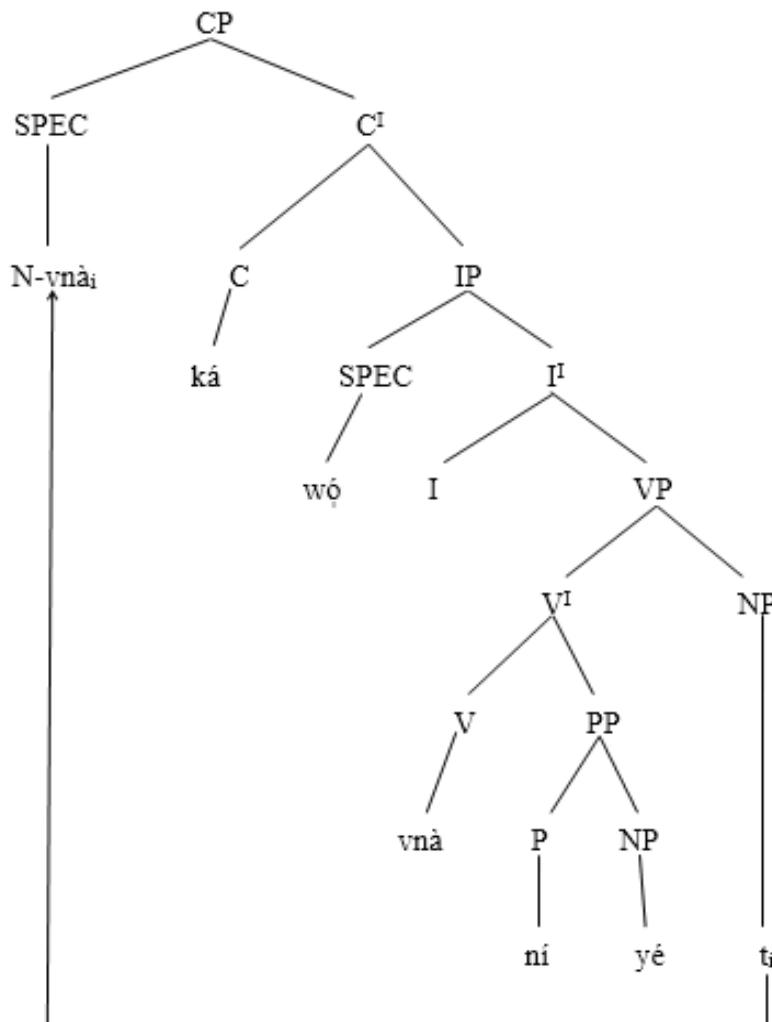
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Fig. 1: A Tree Diagram Illustrating NP Complement Movement in Ọgba

In figure 1, it is observed that the NP complement "n-vnà" 'scold' which is syntactically the IO in 2a moves from its original position to the SPEC-C^I while still retaining its thematic features at the extraction site. This suggests that the moved constituent leaves a trace at the extraction site. It is noticed that the movement of an NP complement does not affect its theta role as a patient. More so, the figure 1 reveals that in Ọgba, an internal argument can be fronted so that it occurs in sentence initial position where it is given communicative prominence. It is further observed that whereas the NP that is governed by the P which is the lexical head of the PP can move into the SPEC-C^I, the PP remains in-situ. Additionally, it is construed from the examples in 2b-c, and figure 1 that all NPs in accusative position in the language move leftward. That is, whereas the NP complement in the VP moves to the left, the NPs in the external argument position (the SPEC-I^I) remains in-situ. Once more, the examples (2b-c) indicate that the C(omplementizer) "ká" is an obligatory grammatical element whenever an NP complement moves from its extraction site which is usually the internal argument position to its landing site which is typically the SPEC-C^I. This accounts for the ungrammaticality of 2d. That is, 2d is

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ungrammatical for two reasons, first, the external argument (subject) has been moved from its original position to the object position in the VP. Secondly, it is ungrammatical because of the absence of the C.

The Movement of PP Complements in Ọgba

The data gathered for this study show that there are two P(prepositions) in Ọgba. That is, the "ní" 'for' and "lá" which is a locative preposition. It is observed that whereas the former (ní 'for') remains in-situ even when the grammatical constituent(s) that functions as its complement move, the latter (lá) and its grammatical constituents can move from the VP into the SPEC-C^I of the complement clause. For example:

3a.   Wọ́ mé bí   l'ụ́lọ̀   nyná.
       3PL FUT live Prep.-house Det.
       'They will live in that house.'

b.   l'ụ́lọ̀   nyná$_i$ ká wọ́è mé bí t$_i$.
      Prep.-house Det. RC 3PL FUT live
      'It is in that house that they will live.'

c.   *ụ́lọ̀ nyná$_i$ ká wọ́è mé bí lá t$_i$.
      house Det.   RC 3PL FUT live Prep.

d.   *lá$_i$ ká wọ́è mé bí t$_i$ ụ́lọ̀   nyná.
      Prep. RC 3PL FUT live house Det.

4a.   Emeka znú   òsí l'áhìá.
       PN   steal+PST thief prep.-market
       'Emeka stole in the market.'

b.   l'áhìá$_i$ ká Emeka znú   òsí t$_i$.
      Prep.-market RC PN   steal+PST thief
      'It is in the market that Emeka stole.'

c.   *áhìá$_i$ ká Emeka znú   òsí lá t$_i$.
      market RC PN   steal+PST thief

d.   *lá$_i$ Emeka znú òsí t$_i$ áhìá.
      Prep. PN   steal thief market

The examples in 3a-d and 4a-d prove that in Ọgba, a PP complement and its grammatical constituents especially the NP in the VP slot can move into the SPEC-C^I of the CP where it can be assigned communicative prominence. The 3c-d and 4c-d reveal that neither the P which is the lexical head of the PP nor its complement which is usually an NP can move in isolation. That is, a P in the PP cannot move with the NP which functions as its complement. This accounts for the ungrammaticality of 3d and 4d. In the same vein, examples 3c and 4c indicate that an NP which functions as the complement of the locative preposition (lá) cannot move without its head (P). Figure 2 is a structural representation of PP complement movement in the language:
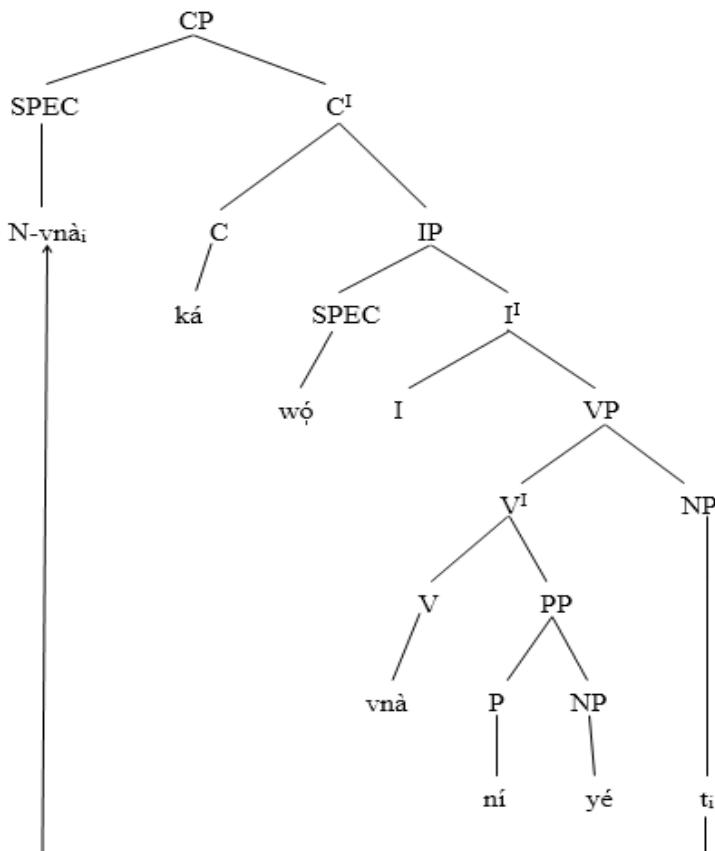
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Fig. 2: A Tree Diagram Illustrating PP Complement Movement in Ọgba

Figure 2 shows that PP complement movement is related to the movement of NP complement in Ọgba. Like the NP complement in figure 1, the PP which is syntactically a V complement as in 3a and 4a moved from its original position to the SPEC-C^I while still retaining its thematic features at the extraction site. It also leaves a trace in the extraction site like the NP complement. It is further observed that the movement of a PP complement does not affect its theta role as a patient. Again, the examples in 3b, 4b and figure 2 show that in Ọgba, a PP can be fronted where it becomes the focus of the construction. Furthermore, it is noticed that PP complement moves leftward. That is, like the NP complement, it moves to the left (the SPEC-I^I) while the subject or the external argument remains in-situ. Additionally, this study revealed that the C(omplementizer) "ká" is an obligatory grammatical element whenever PP complement moves from its extraction site which is commonly the internal argument position to its landing site which is normally the SPEC-C^I.

The Movement of CP Complements in Ọgba

The data collected for this study show that a full-fledged clause can function as the complement of a V in Ọgba. The complementizers that are commonly used to introduce complement (subordinate) clauses in Ọgba are wò, wọ́lá and ká. In other words, the complementizers are generally used to link or connect main clauses and subordinate clauses in the language. Like the NP and PP complements, a CP can move from one syntactic position to another. For instance:

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5a.   Wọ́ kwú [wọ́lá nná   gíyè   mé zú áznù].
      3PL say   RC   mother our FUT buy fish
      'They said that our mother will buy fish.'

b.   [Wọ́lá nná   gíyè   mé zú áznù]ᵢ á-bụ́ hné wọ́ kwú tᵢ.
      RC   mother our FUT buy fish   3SCL thing 3PL say
      'What they said is that our mother will buy fish.'

c.   *[Wọ́lá nná   gíyè mé zú áznù]ᵢ wọ́ kwú tᵢ.
      RC   mother our FUT buy fish   3PL say
      'What they said is that our mother will buy fish.'

The parts in bracket in examples 5a-b demonstrate CP in Ọgba. The examples indicate that a complement clause in Ọgba generally consists of a complementizer and an I(nflectional) P(project) which projects into a SPEC and I^I. Figure 3 is a structural representation of CP movement in Ọgba:
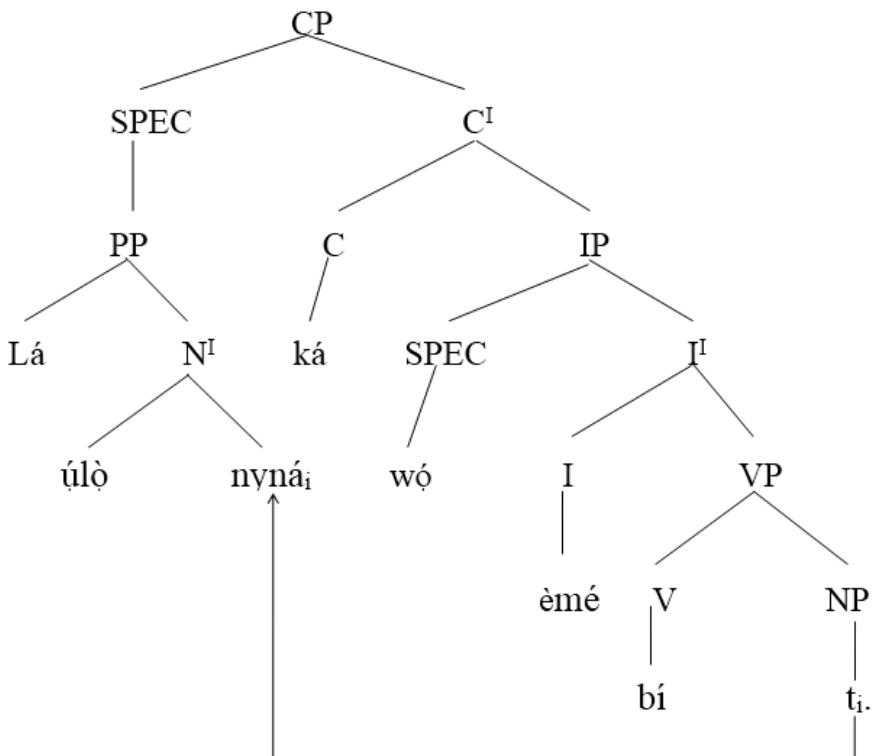

Fig. 3: A Tree Diagram Illustrating the Movement of CP in Ọgba

Figure 3 indicates that a CP which syntactically occurs as a V complement can move from its original positions to the SPEC-C^I. The tree diagram shows that the embedded clause that constitutes the SPEC-C^I originates from the VP. That is, its original position is the NP node where it was governed or C-commanded by the V of the matrix clause. It is also noticed that the movement was initiated because of the yearning for communicative prominence. More so, it is observed that even though the CP moved to a higher clause, it still remains the internal argument

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of the V. Again, it is observed that CP movement in the language is made possible by the relativizer "á-bụ hné" which connects the moved constituent and the matrix clause. For that reason, its omission results in ungrammaticality as in 3c.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is deduced that there are three grammatical constituents that can move from the VP slot in Ọgba. The grammatical constituents are the NP, PP and the CP. This suggests that the V which is the lexical head of the VP remains in-situ. The extraction site of the moved constituents is typically the VP while their landing site is the SPEC-C^I. That is, all the grammatical constituents moved leftward. The researcher did not find a case of rightward movement. This is because what triggers the movement of these grammatical constituents in the language is the desire for communicative prominence. Figures 1, 2 and 3 demonstrate that focus or emphasis is achieved in Ọgba through clefting or relativization.

It is observed that all the moved constituents in figures 1, 2 and 3 leave a trace or a ghost copy at their extraction site. Thus, no other grammatical constituents can appropriately occupy the empty position occupied by the trace without resulting in ungrammaticality. This is in line with the Trace Movement Principle which states that "when a given constituent moves from its source position into a landing site, it leaves behind at the source position an invisible form" which can be referred to as a ghost copy of the moved category (Ndimele, 1992, p. 100).

RECOMMENDATION

This paper recommends that language teachers, linguists, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should use the information in this paper to develop instructional materials for the teaching and learning of the Ogba language.

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