THE STRUCTURE OF ÓMÙÀNWÀ ÌKWÉRÉ VERB PHRASE

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ABSTRACT

This work is a descriptive study of the structure of verb phrase in Ómùànwà Ìkwéré. Ómùànwà is one of the twenty-four dialects of Ìkwéré language spoken in Rivers State. The study examines the verb phrase in Ómùànwà; describing structurally the possible projections of the verb phrase in Ómùànwà and analysing the verb phrase structures with X-bar paradigm. The study adopts descriptive survey design using structured interview to elicit data from the respondents. The research reveals among other things that Ómùànwà Ìkwéré verbs usually do not exhibit –rV skeletal past tense marker just like some other Igboid languages. The past tense form of a verb in this case is understood contextually. The findings also identify V alone as well as the verb with NP, double objects (NP^2), PP, S^1, A and Adv as the possible constituents of verb phrase structure in the dialect. Some inherent verb complements found are not cognate with their verbs but still form an inseparable semantic unit. The researcher recommends for more extensive research on types and behaviours of Ómùànwà Ìkwéré verbs generally.

KEYWORDS: Structure, Ómùànwà Ìkwéré Verb Phrase

INTRODUCTION

Human speech can be decomposed into smaller units known as lexical categories/word classes. These categories include nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives and prepositions. The combination of words or morphemes to these categories, especially the content bearing ones can lead to the formation of phrases or clauses thereby giving rise to such terms as noun phrase, verb phrase, adjectival phrase, adverbial phrase, prepositional phrase or clauses. In other words, phrasal categories are formed through the affixation and combination of words to the lexical categories. In the study of the grammar of any language, the verb is seen as an essential element. The verb phrase is a syntactic construction that contains the verb as its lexical head, which is always obligatory in the phrasal configuration. It may, however, contain other constituents. According to Walls (1987:118), the verb phrase of any sentence among other constituents consists of a verbal element, which is central in the grammar of any language. It is the verb that states the number and nature of other elements that may occur in the predicate such as object and complement. The verb controls the nominal or argument distribution and also determines the thematic functions of nominals which occur in its domain. In the English language, all verbs function within the verb phrases. A simple verb phrase comprises a lexical verb which performs the function of the main verb of the VP, which can have a maximum of zero to four helping (auxiliary) verbs to mark modality, aspect and voice. On the other hand, English compound verb phrases comprise conjunction of two or more simple VPs.Verb phrases can be classified into finite and non-finite verb phrases. The former is used to show tense and agreement where

suitable, and contains a subject which obligatorily functions in the subject position. The opposite is the case in non-finite verb phrase as it does not mark tense. Non-finite verb is referred to as a verbal which includes gerunds, infinitives, and participles. The finite verb in its simplest form contains a full or lexical verb.
Examples: 1.a) The boy ran
              b). Ada kisses Obi
It is important to note that where lexical verb singularly forms the predicate, it is marked with tense and, where necessary, agreement (for agreement rich languages). Verb and verb phrases explain the inner compositions and occurrence in typical environment of verb phrases and clauses. They give in details the argument structure and verb alternations such as passivization, middle formation, dative alternations and so on. Verb movements moreover give in-depth description of word patterning.

Fromkin and Rodman (1993) and Ndimele (2008:) in their different works present possible constituents of the verb phrase based on the English language. According to Fromkin and Rodman (1993:204), verb phrase can comprise the followings:
a) VP ⟶ V (single verb). Example: He wept.
b) VP ⟶ V NP here, the verb phrase comprises a verb and a noun phrase.
                For instance: the man killed the goat
c) VP ⟶ V NP PP The verb phrase contains a verb, a noun phrase and a prepositional phrase. Example: the girl stole the money from the cupboard.
d) VP ⟶ V PP Verb phrase can consist of a verb and a prepositional phrase. Example: she climbed into the rubber drum.

However, Ndimele's (2008: 122-127) projection of the possible constituents of verb phrase differs a little as can be observed from the followings:
a) VP ⟶ V_i (Verb intransitive)
b) VP ⟶ Vt + NP (Verb transitive followed by noun phrase)
c) VP ⟶ {Vt +NP+NP }Summarily, the verb phrase can consist of a verb and two noun phrases. This is the characteristics of ditransitive verbs.
d) VP ⟶ Vcop + {Adv / Adj / NP}   the verb phrase in this case comprises a linking or copula verb followed by an adverb, adjective or a noun phrase.
e) VP ⟶ Vm + NP. (middle verb plus noun phrase in object position). Middle verb, as Ndimele (2008) notes, can co-occur with an object like transitive verb but cannot be passivized. Example: Mary resembles her mother.
f) VP ⟶ $V+S^I$ (a verb plus a full-fledged clause).

Fromkin and Rodman's (1993) project verb with a prepositional phrase alone as a possible constituent of the verb phrase which was not included in Ndimele's study. On the other hand, Ndimele's version of possible constituents of verb phrase contains some elements such as copula verbs with modifiers and qualifiers, middle verbs as well as full-fledged clauses. This present work investigates Ómùànwà verb phrase from Ndimele's standpoint.

The Ìkwéré people are located in the Southern part of Nigeria, which is currently known as South South/Niger Delta region. The name 'Ìkwéré' denotes both the people of the region and the language. Given that, it may not be wrong to say that Ìkwéré is a geographical language. In

official documents, Ìkwéré is spelt with a double '-rr-', which is 'Ikwerre', where as it carries a single '-r-' in her orthography. The orthography spelling corresponds with the way the natives pronounce it (Alerechi, 2007). Hence, in the spirit of descriptivism, this work adopts the orthography spelling of Ìkwéré language.

Historically, Ìkwéré was formerly regarded as a sub dialect of the Igbo language. This assumption can be found in the works of Wente-Lukas (1985:169) as cited in Ndimele (2010:2), which states:

> The belt formed by Owerri, Awka, Orlu and Okigwe divisions constitutes (the) 'nucleus' area; its people have no tradition of coming from any other place…we assume an early migration from this area into the Nsukka-Udi highlands in the north and into Ìkwéré, Etche, Asa, and Ndokki in the south.

Consequent upon this claim, Ìkwéré is seen as a part of Igbo even as they speak Igboid lect. Ndimele (2010:3) however, questions and faults this assumption as he declares that 'any argument based on the premise that all the people who speak Igbo-related lects must have migrated from some parts of the Igbo, is premature'. In his works on Etche, he further claims that the nomenclature 'Igbo' was adopted to refer to some group of people living in a particular region of Nigeria. As regards Ìkwéré assuming the status of a distinct language away from Igbo, Oweleke (2013:530) has this to say, "Native speakers of Ìkwéré, Ukwuani and Ika varieties since the end of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war have argued that their speech forms are independent languages rather than the dialects of Igbo, even though they share high degree of mutual intelligibility with other Igbo dialects". One can reason with this view favourably as sociolinguists have warned that mutual intelligibility and lexicostatistics are not adequate parameters for distinguishing language and dialect (Agbedo 2000, Oweleke 2013). The fact is that some political and cultural factors, other than linguistics play vital roles in determining what a variety of speech should be seen as – language or dialect. Nwala (2015) clearly notes this, when he says that the issue of language and dialect is a controversial one, which is political. Besides, Ìkwéré has many varieties which can be regarded as a dialect cluster spoken in wide geographical area in Rivers state. These varieties of Ìkwéré are mutually intelligible. According to Emenanjo (2006:39), "a number of very close dialects make up a dialect clusters", which in turn can become a language given time. In this regard, one can claim that the many varieties of Ìkwéré confer on her the status of a language.

Although there are several language studies going on in the linguistics world, however, with respect to dialects and lects, a lot needs to be covered. Ikekeonwu's (1986:11) statement attests to this fact as she opines that "…while it is therefore crucial to study individual languages, dialects or 'sub languages' within these languages should be given adequate linguistic analysis". This is supported in Alerechi's (2007:6) report that the 'Ìkwéré language, though comprising "highly diverse dialects, need linguistic investigation in order to project the uniqueness of the language". Thus, notwithstanding the number of studies being currently carried out on various dialects of Ìkwéré, many aspects of these varieties are yet to be investigated. Against this backdrop, this study is premised on the need to fill this gap as it draws its data from Ómùànwà, a dialect of the Ìkwéré language.

The main aim of this study is to describe the structure of Ómùànwà Ìkwéré verb phrase using the X-bar parameter. Hence, the need to examine the internal structure of Ómùànwà Ìkwéré verb

phrase, identifying its possible constituents and their positions in the verb phrase, as well as representing them in the X-bar (X^I) tree diagrams. The study adopts a descriptive approach. There are twenty-four dialects of Ìkwéré but this work focuses on Ómùànwà dialect, which is classified under Northern Ìkwéré dialects (Alerechi, 2007). It has its sisters as Elele, Apani, Omerelu, Ubima, Isiokpo, Omagwa, Ipo, Omademe, Omudioga, Igwuruta, Egbeda, Aluu and Ibaa. More so, the present study does not investigate the type of verbs existing in the chosen dialect, rather, it examines the possible constituents of the verb phrase.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Theoretical studies
        Grammar according to Ndimele (2008:80) is described "as a body of innate linguistics rules concerning a language which is possessed by a normal native speaker of that language". It is language in totality. There have been different approaches to the study of grammar which result to the emergence of several theories of grammar such as generative grammar which include finite state grammar (FSG), phrase structure grammar (PSG) and transformational generative grammar (.TGG). The TGG, as Ndimele (2008) notes, underwent four major revisions namely - Standard Theory, Extended Standard Theory, Revised Extended Standard Theory and Government and Binding. This study has as its thrust on the X-bar theory, an aspect of Government and Binding Approach. The transformational generative grammar (TGG) in Ndimele's (2004) view was introduced into the sphere of syntax by Chomsky in 1957 consequent upon the inadequacies encountered in phrase structural grammars (PSG). In addition to PSGs inadequacies is Chomsky's belief in the presence of universalities in languages, which he showed in TGG model.
In the words of Crystal (1997:394), transformation is a grammatical process by which "two levels of structural representation are placed in relation to one another". The two levels of structural representation involved in TGG are Deep Structure (DS) and Surface Structure (SS). The ability to relate underlying structure to surface structure is made possible through some transformation rules (T-rules), (see Ndimele (2008), Anigbogu, et.al (2010) and Mbah (2012)). There are four basic types of transformation: Permutation/movement, deletion, substitution/copying and adjunction (see Ndimele (2008), Anigbogu, et.al (2010) and Mbah (2012)). Ndimele (2008) notes that these T-rules are named according to the actions they perform.

As against the transformational (construction-specific) rules of earlier generative grammar models, Ndimele (2004:19) notes that government and binding (GB) narrows down all the permutation rules to a unified T-rule known as Move-alpha (Move-α), "which is bound by the same condition (Subjacency) in all the languages." Given that, move-alpha (move α) has become the ultimate rule in GB. The position of GB model is that all natural languages have a common principle of syntax with a few parameterized rules. In this regard, Ndimele (2004) remarks that interest now shifted from devising specific rules to universal principles. As regards the notion of systems of principles, GB has subsystems that interact at the interface. These include: X-bar theory, Government theory, Theta theory, Case theory, Binding theory, Bounding theory and the Control theory. For the purpose of this study, the focus would be on X-bar theory.

The X-bar syntax is a theory of phrasal analysis which, according to Ndimele (2004), was introduced into grammatical analysis by Chomsky (1970) and later popularized by Jackendoff (1977). The theory deals with phrasal projections of different types of syntactic categories

identifying additional levels of phrase structure, which are determined using bar symbols. As Ndimele (2004) notes, the X- bar convention was introduced to remedy the constraints and restrictive nature of PSG and to make popular the notion of headedness. The PSG was inundated with a lot of issues such as its inability to recognize the importance of the head of a phrase; inability to recognize the presence of intermediate categories, which are smaller than phrasal categories (maximum) but bigger than lexical ones (minimal); inability to analyze ambiguous sentences and mirror sentences (e.g. the girl who came in now is my friend); inability to explain the fact that two constructions that are superficially different may have the same deep/underlying structure (e.g. active and passive sentences), among others.

In the work of Chomsky (1970) "Remarks on nominalization", the normal phrase structure symbols such as NP, VP,PP, AP and so on were remodeled using a more uniform notation 'X' which stands for the head of a phrase. Thus, 'X' now represents different word classes such as N(noun), V(verb), A(adjective) and P(preposition). Moreover, the theory reveals the bar constituent levels (X^I) within the phrase structures, which are intermediate projections of the phrase categories. The intermediate projections are heads of grammatical units, for instance the head of VP is the verb, likewise other grammatical units. The X^I nodes dominates the X.

The X-bar schema according to Jackendoff (1977) as modified in Ndimele (2004:35) for English is:

2.a) $XP \rightarrow SPEC_x^I$ - X

b) $X^I \rightarrow X$ - $Compl_x$.

X is the head of phrase which is compulsorily a lexical (minimal) category. X is always taken as zero projection (X^o). The $Compl_x$ is the complement of the phrase. This complement is usually subcategorised by the lexical category which is imbued with lexical information. Complement in the word of Jackendoff (1977:14), "…is an abbreviation for some sequence of nodes: since it never seems to be referred to as a constituent, it does not stand for a node". X^I stands for intermediate projection while XP is a different way of writing X^{max} or X^n. SPEC is the specifier of the phrase whereas X^n is the maximal projection (Ndimele, 2004). It is pertinent to note at this point that the maximal projection is linked to its head through an intermediate category.

Fig 1
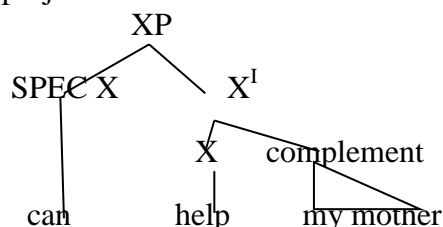
The XP (X-bar) in this schema is a VP or V-bar. The head is the X (verb), which is *help*, followed by a noun phrase (NP) *my mother*. *Can* is the specifier. Specifiers in the word of Mbah (2008:173), "are those constituents, which precede the lexical head in the head final languages". However, the Igbo language has no phonologically filled specifier as it is a head initial language (Mbah, 2008). Mbah further clarifies that all the grammatical elements that follow after the head, for instance, the noun phrase are known as Determiner phrase (DP). At every level of syntax, representations are projected from the lexicon, wherein sub categorization attributes of the lexical items are viewed. This brought about what Chomsky calls 'projection principle.

The position of head in GB theory varies from one language to another, hence, it is said to be language specific. A language may have its entire head to the left or the right of its complement.

Furthermore, a language can be said to be 'head-initial' or 'head-final' language depending on the position of the head in relation to its complements (Ndimele, 2004, Mbah, 1999). For instance, in Igbo, we can have

3. Obi gburu ehi   'Obi killed a cow'.
  NP   V   NP

Obi is the subject while *gburu ehi* is the verb phrase, which in this case serves as the complement of the head *Obi* (NP). The complement contains the verb *gburu*, as well as a second NP *ehi* in object position. The above example substantiates Mbah (2008) position that Igbo is a head-first language. Meanwhile, in X-bar syntax, the direction of the branching V^{11}, with V as its complement, is to the right.

In summary, the crux of X-bar theory, which is about the internal structure of syntactic elements, is that (almost) every phrasal constituent has its head upon which other elements of the constituent depend. Its merit, according to Napoli (1993), is based on its ability to distinguish between functional and lexical categories.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Several studies have been carried out on languages, dialects and sub dialects found in Rivers state and beyond. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, only little has been done on verb phrase in different dialects of Ìkwéré, especially in the Ómùànwà dialect. This section reviews some empirical studies related to the present study.

Mbah (1999) in his work on *Studies in Syntax: Igbo Phrase Structure*, devotes a chapter to verb phrase. His primary aim is to examine 'the head of the verb phrase, its complement and its characteristics. He states that the Igbo language is seen as verb language, which many Igbo scholars in their various studies have tried to establish. Meanwhile, the aspects of inherent verb complementation and transitivity are still attracting scholarly contention. However, Mbah's work is motivated by his desire to show that the structures of certain predicate constituents comprise V, V^I or V^{II}. He however, holds the view like some other scholars, that lexical verb heads occur transitively and not intransitively. This claim presumed that all verbs are transitive. In other words, all Igbo verbs are transitive. The V^I, complement is found to contain the participle along with the bound cognate noun (BCN) or bound verb complement (BVC) which is currently known as the stator. Mbah's work projected extensively the numerous constituents of V^I as well as V^{II}, which are drawn from X^I and X^{II}. Though this aspect of Mbah's work and the present study are similar in the theory handled but they differ in terms of the scope.

Benamasia (2003) studies verb phrase in Ibani under the framework of government and binding. She claims that the V-bar (verb phrase) comprises the head V and its specifier tense, complements and adjuncts (optional). She remarks that the choice of complements occurring with Ibani verbs is dependent on the semantic and syntactic properties of the verb. She further examines the possible constituents that are allowed into V-bar in Ibani. The possible constituents found in the V-bar, according to her, include:

(a) V which is one place argument
(b) The NP complement +V – two place argument; an external argument, which acts as the subject of the verb and internal argument, which is the object of the verb.

(c) The PP complement usually contains an NP preceding the P. In addition, she submitted that the PP is usually head final in the language. The PP consists of two types – locative and commutative, and

(d) Adjunct which is optional.

Benamasia's study differs from the present one both in the theoretical framework and scope of study.

Kosu (2016) carries out a descriptive study of the verb phrase in Nkoroo (Kirika), an Ijoid lect spoken in Opobo/Nkoroo Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study examines the phonological, morphological and syntactic features of Nkoroo verb. It reveals that Nkoroo verbs can inflect for tense, aspect, modality, negation and have different verbal categories. It is however, established that the complements of the verb in verb phrase constructions precedes the verb. Hence, Nkoroo is said to be head-final language. Kosu's study, though has some attributes of the present study, differs in the scope of study.

Aku (2016) also carries out a related study on verb complements in Isoko. The aim is to identify different types of complements that co-occur with the verb. The study is based on descriptive method of analysis. The findings reveals that the copula verb is an empty category which is not reflected in the syntactic structure but recoverable from its semantic interpretation. He also claims that non-finite clause complement is expressed differently in Isoko as compared to English. Aku's study examines verb complements in Isoko, while the present study examines the structure of verb phrase in Ómùànwà Ìkwéré, identifying its possible constituents. In addition, Aku's work is not based on any theoretical framework.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts X- bar theory, an offshoot of Government and Binding (GB) theory. The X-bar theory was incorporated into a more embracing framework referred to as Government and Binding (GB) syntax by Chomsky in 1981. As earlier stated, this period heralds a shift from specific rule systems to systems of principles in grammatical description. What informed the choice of this theory is the fact that it (X-bar theory) puts the analysis of phrase within a generative grammar in a better perspective. Unlike PSG, which has limited number of projections, X-bar model allows unlimited possible numbers of projections (Ndimele, 2004). In addition, the X-bar syntax accounts for the intermediate categories which are not recognised in PSG. Under X-bar model, X^n, XP or X^{max} stands for maximal projections of a head, X or X^o stands for minimal projection which is a lexical head, where X^I symbolizes the intermediate category. X^n dominates X^I, which in turn dominates X^o. However, X dominated string of constituents that need not to be specified are represented with the symbol $\triangle$ (Ndimele, 2004).

On the issue of the number of bars to be used in analysis, Mbah (2012:102) remarks that there are varied views on the value of '^{n}' in X-bar across syntactic categories. He further notes that scholars like Chomsky suggests two (2) for other categories except verb, which carries three (3), while Jackendoff suggest two (2) for all categories. Other suggestions range from 3-6 bars. But this study adopts Jackendoff's view $\triangle$

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is the descriptive survey. The research population comprises all the native speakers of Ómùànwà dialect of Ìkwéré but for manageability only

twenty three respondents were purposively selected to serve as the research working population. Data were collected through structured interview. The respondents were given the modified version of English verb phrase based on Fromkin and Rodman (1993) and Ndimele (2008) discussion of verb phrase, which they (respondents) provided the correct possible equivalents in Ómùànwà Ìkwéré. The data were scrutinized by a phonologist in the Department of Linguistics, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, along with two other post-graduate students of linguistics (subsidiary informants), who are natives of Ómùànwà for verification and reliability check. The respondents were selected based on their status as competent native speakers of Ómùànwà Ìkwéré, their academic qualifications, and their proximity to the dialect.

The analysis is cast into the framework of X^I (X-bar) theory. This theory has the potentials to portray the elements containing in the verb phrase structures of any dialect or language including Ómùànwà dialect. The study is purely descriptive based on the native speaker's usage of the dialect.

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

Ómùànwà Ìkwéré verb phrase

The data gathered for this research show instances of all the possible verb projections that can serve as verb complements in Ómùànwà dialect of Ìkwéré. The verb phrase (VP) is structurally, the highest enlargement of the verb (Ndimele, 2008). The verb is always the head of the verb phrase. The verb phrase in Ómùànwà dialect given the data handled in the study showcases the possible projections of the verb, which must take complements to be meaningful or grammatical, as well as others which may or may not. The head of the phrase, which is the verb, can occur with other phrasal syntactic categories such as noun phrase (NP), prepositional phrase (PP), adjectival phrase (AdjP) and adverbial phrase (AdvP) as complements. Usually, the complement is selected by the head, which is regarded as intermediate projections. We also found very few cases of intransitivity in the dialect. The following schemas as evidenced in the data examined, illustrate the possible projections of the verb phrase in the dialect.

$VP \longrightarrow V_i$

$VP \longrightarrow V_t + NP$

$VP \longrightarrow V_t + NP + PP$

$VP \longrightarrow V_t + NP + NP$

$VP \longrightarrow V_{copula} + \begin{Bmatrix} Adv \\ Adj \\ NP \end{Bmatrix}$

$VP \longrightarrow Vm + NP$

$VP \longrightarrow V_t + S^1$

However, in order to enhance readability, noun or pronoun would be used in the subject positions but enclosed in square brackets to show its exclusion from verb phrase.

Intransitive verb/ the verb alone: A verb phrase in Ómùànwà Ìkwéré can consist of a verb only. An intransitive verb can express grammaticality without an object. In other words, intransitive verbs can exist alone without an object NP. The construction can be schematised thus: $VP \longrightarrow V_i$. The followings are examples of intransitive verbs.

4   a). [O]   hiélé

[He return PERF]
He has returned

b). [Ọ] fx∃ (lá)
[He leave (PERF)]
He left (has left)

We can use X-bar model to represent the syntactic structure(s) thus:
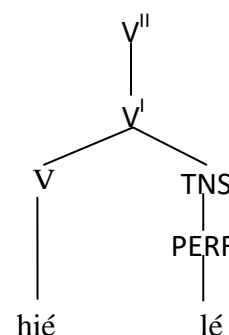
Fig. 2: Verb alone

Figure 2 above clearly shows that the VP only subcategorises V, which is intransitive.

Verb and NP Complement

In Ómừànwà Ìkwéré which is an SVO dialect, a verb phrase can comprise a verb followed by a Noun Phrase. The NP serves as the complement of the verb phrase only. The complement contains one place argument or complement which is known as the direct object. The object is that part of the verb phrase upon which the action of the verb is felt. This fact can be schematized as follow: VP ➔ V + NP. The following examples attest to this fact:
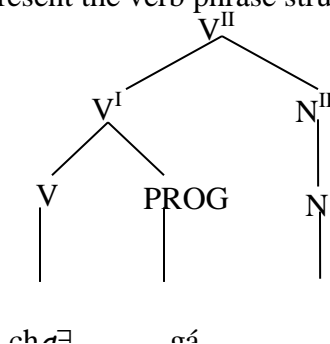
5.a. [Ada] chògá ∫∃wà∫≅∫
[PN want-PROG money]
Ada is looking for money

b. [Ézè] gbù ágwɋ⊥⊥
[PN kill+PST snake]
Eze killed the snake

c. [Ézè] rìPST édè
[PN eat cocoyam]
Eze ate the cocoyam

We can use the X-bar model to represent the verb phrase structure thus:

Fig.3: Verb and NP complement

Most times, the past tense in this dialect is not overtly marked with –rV morpheme but understood in context as the present and past tenses have the same forms.

Verb and NP plus PP compliment

In Ómùànwà Ìkwéré, it is possible for a verb phrase to consist of a verb followed by a noun phrase and a prepositional phrase. This can be schematized as follows: VP

Vt+NP+PP. The PP may contain an NP projected as a noun. In addition, the PP in this case can be seen as an adjunct. The PP as an adjunct in this context provides an additional information which even when omitted does not result to ungrammaticality of the construction. The following examples illustrate this fact:

6 .a [Ézé] pn∫≅à à ńhnê n' àbàl∫≅
     [PN flogPST 3SG thing PREP night]
     Eze flogged him/her in the night

b.   [Wè] rì édé n' ɋ≅tx∃tx∃
      [3PL eat PST cocoyam PREP morning]
      They ate cocoyam in the morning

c.   [O] dnò ∫∃wà∫≅∫ n' ímé órò
      [3SG keepPST money PREP inside house]
      S/he kept the money in the house

We can use the X-bar tree model to represent the verb phrase structure thus:

Fig. 4
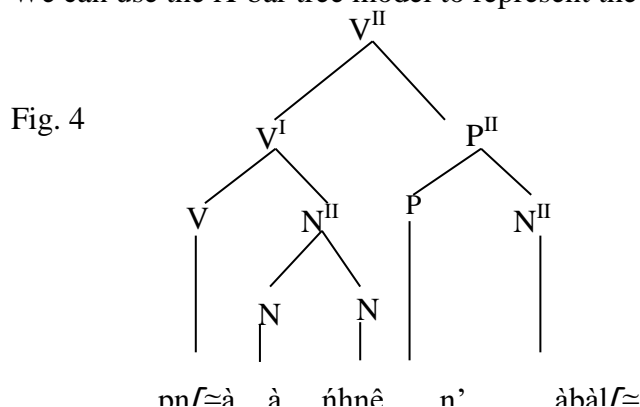
Meanwhile, the word *ńhnê* "thing" in example 6a is a bound cognate noun (BCN) which is an obligatory constituent of the verb *pn∫≅à* '"flogged", without which the meaning of the verb becomes incomplete. In Emenanjo's (2015) view, BCN is an integral part of the verb. Emenanjo's (2015:487) also categorized two types of PP compliments in Igbo. They are (a) those that are the constituents of the verb; and (b) simple prepositional phrases, which may be either constituents of the sentence or the VP. He classifies the later as adjuncts which can be moved to first or final position in a construction. In example (6a-b), the PPs as complement are the constituents of the verb phrase. In which case, they can be moved to initial positions. For instance, the construction *N' ɋ≅tx∃tx∃, wè rì édé* (In the morning, they ate cocoayam), is a possible expression in the Ómùànwà dialect

Verb and double Object (NP^2) complement

Ómùànwà Ìkwéré, the possible projections of verbs in this case are so strong that they require two arguments in their internal domain. This gives credence to Carmie (2007) stance that there are predicates that take two obligatory arguments. With regard to their respective roles, the

two arguments are referred to as direct and indirect objects. It is schematized as follows: VP   V+NP+NP.

The structure of the verb phrase in this section reflects dativization process whereby an indirect object of the sentence comes before the direct object of the verb (Ndimele, 2008:194). In this case, only the first NP is housed within the lexical head of the projection, while the second NP is not. Examples of this structure are shown below:

7. a [Úrè] nyèogàrà Uche ʃ∃wàʃ≅ʃ≅
       [PN give PST PN money]
       Ure gave Uche the money

    b. [Eze] zùnì Ada *ǫ*gb*ǫ*-alʃ≅
       [PN buy- clitic PN canoe land]
       Eze bought a car for Ada

    c. [Eze] znì PST Ódò áká-áˈrnu
       [PN teach PN handwork]
       Eze taught Ódò a handwork

We can represent this fact using an X-Bar model as thus:

Fig 5: Verb and double object Complement
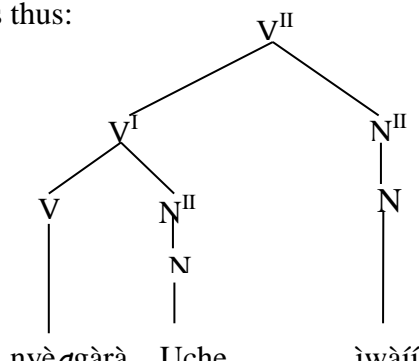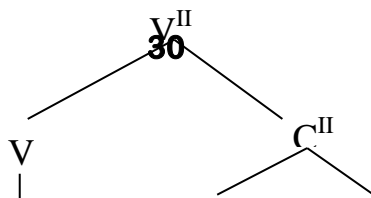

Verb and clause complement

The verb phrase sequence can be made up of a verb followed by a sentence or clause that is introduced by a complimentizer. This fact can be represented thus: VP⟶V_t+S^1.
The following examples illustrate this fact.

8. a.   [*Ǫ*∃] bʃ≅à *ńgè wé làgà èchílé whèèwhè*
        [3SG comePST when 3PL go-PROG dayPST]
         S/He came when they were going yesterday

    b. [Wè] sì*ní we dèè èsí ji tná*
        [3PL say PST that 3PL FUT.PRT cook yam today]
        They said that they will not cook the yam today

    c. [*Ǫ*maa] kwnàkàtàrà ákwná *rú ńgè dídí á làhièrè*
        [PN cry CONT. PST cry reach time father 3SG go-come-PST]

         *Ǫ*maa cried until her father returned

The italicized elements in example (8a – c) are the embedded clauses which are part of the VP. In example 8c, the verb *kwnàkàtàrà* occurs with its inherent complement *ákwná*, which is sequentially bound to the verb just as in the Igbo language. Moreover, the clause constituent in Radford's (1988) view, is finite as it incorporates a finite verb which can be marked for tense, as well as possess an overt subject that is assigned a nominative case. The finite clause complementizer as shown in example (8a –c) are known as declarative finite clause complement,

which according to Ndimele (2010) is used in the expression of statements. Using X-bar syntax this construction is represented thus:

Fig 6: Verb and clause complement

|___↑

The structure above shows that the verb bià is the head of the VP, while the complementizer *ńgè* is the head of the CP. The +tense INFL gà governs the nominal w*é* and assigns it a nominative case, there is also a flip-flop movement of the PROG marker gà on the verb là. Gà also servesas a pre-head modifier of the verb là, while he adverbial phrase serves as a post-head modifier of the verb là

The copula verb and its complement

The verb phrase in Óm*ù*ànwà Ìkwéré can consist of copula verb followed by an adverb, adjective or noun phrase. The complement accompanying the copula or linking verb usually according to Ndimele (2008), identifies or describes the NP in the subject position of the construction. It serves to connect the subject with the predicate. *This fact can be schematised thus:*
 [VP 〕   Vcop +   Adv
  ⌐   Adj
  └NP 〕
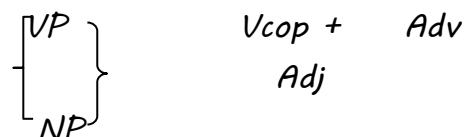
The following examples illustrate this fact

9 a. [Ọ] b*x*∃ ny*é* nwèrnè
      [3SG Cop.be PERS girl]
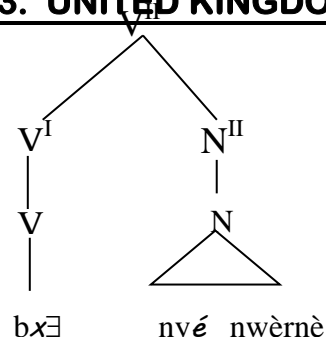   *She is a girl*

b.   [*Èbì*] d*ì* ógólógó
      [PN   Loc   long]
          Èbì is tall

We can draw an X-bar diagram of this VP structure thus:

Fig. 7: The copula verb and its complement

The middle verb and NP complement

The verb phrase in Ómùànwà Ìkwéré comprise also of a middle verb followed by an NP object. In the view of Ndimele (2008), middle verbs act like transitive verbs with regards to taking of object but differ in the case of passivization. Middle verbs can neither be rendered in passive voice nor occur with manner adverbs. This fact can be schematized thus: VP ➤ Vm + NP. Examples of middle verb constructions in the dialect include the followings:

10. a [Ò] làrà ńnè á
        [3sg resemblePRES mother 3sg POSS]
        She resembles her mother
    b [Ò] nwèrnè ényì
        [3sg have friend]
        S/He has a friend
    c [Ò] nwèrnè éwú óchníchà
        [3Sg Have goat adj. white]
        S/he has a white goat

Using X-bar tree, the construction can be represented as in Fig. 8 below.
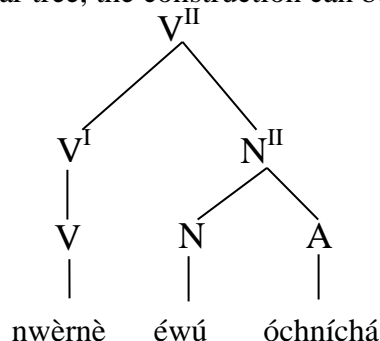
SUMMARY

The main purpose of the study is to the structure of the verb phrase in Ómùànwà Ìkwéré within the frameworks of X- bar theory. Given the data analysed in the study, it is found that the internal structure of Ómùànwà verb phrase can consist of the verb which is the functional heard of the phrase occurring with different range of possible subcategorisations. In other words, the Ómùànwà verb phrase is found to occur with different complements.

The possible projections of the verb phrase in the dialect as revealed in the study include: the verb alone (as shown in section 4.2); the verb with noun phrase complement (cf. 4.3); the verb with NP and PP complement (cf. 4.4); the verb with double NP complement (cf. 4.5); the verb with clause complement (cf. 4.6); copula verb and its complements (cf 4.7) and middle verb with

NP complement (cf. 4-8). Intransitive verbs in the Ómùànwà dialect are negligible. Meanwhile, the X-bar module is used to project clearly all the possible structures of the verb phrase as found in the dialect for easy comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The verb is central to the grammar of Ómùànwà Ìkwéré as there is hardly any sentence without a verb. Ómùànwà Ìkwéré is an SVO dialect and the verb determines the possible syntactic elements it can combine with to form the verb phrase. We cannot claim that the data handled above are exhaustive but we hope at least that: it is adequate enough to showcase the

possible structures of verb phrase in the Ìkwéré language as evidenced in Óm*ù*ànwà dialect. In contrast to the Igbo language, the verbs in this dialect do not usually have '–rV' past tense markers. In addition, the Ómùànwà Ìkwéré is found to be head-initial dialect as the complements come after the lexical head. This finding is line with Mbah (2008) assertion that Igbo is a head-initial language.

This study is descriptive in nature and the X-bar theory is used to illustrate all the possible projections. The study also helps to capture the adequacy of X-bar theory in studying the structure of verb phrase in the dialect. One advantage of X-bar theory is its ability to project the possible constituent structure of the verb phrase in Ómùànwà Ìkwéré. The present study justifies Ndimele (2004:38) remarks that "X-bar theory is formulated in such a way as to provide a universal format for finite set of phrase structure rules".

Finally, we recommend for more extensive investigation on types and behaviours of Ómùànwà Ìkwéré verbs. We further recommend investigations on other types of phrase in the dialect in the spirit of the clarion call on language description and documentation in the linguistics world.

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