

COMPLEX VERBS IN NUPE AND YORUBA\*

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This paper examines the structural behaviour of various types of complex verbs in Nupe and Yoruba in relation to causative constructions. When such verbs occur in simple non-agentive causative sentences as well as in agentive non-causative sentences, they freely permit sentence embedding, resulting in biclausal causative structures. But in the case of non-agentive causatives, it is only Yoruba which allows the verbs to be irregularly embedded into causative matrix sentences in such a way that the biclausal causative structure constitutes input to Causative Clause Union, which compresses it into a uniclausal agentive causative sentence. Functionally, Yoruba uniclausal and biclausal agentive causatives are interchangeable in many cases. On the other hand, only uniclausal agentive causatives are attested in Nupe, as Causative Clause Union has disappeared from its grammar. It is concluded that causative constructions in these languages demonstrate clearly that the CCU rule is motivated by a diachronic process of moving from a pragmatic mode of expression to a syntacticized one, and where a particular target has been hit, the rule ceases to function.

0. Introduction

Grammatical descriptions of many languages of West Africa have shown that complex verbs comprising two or more syllables exist alongside monosyllabic verbs, which constitute the majority. A few examples include Gwari [Hyman and

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Magaji 1970], Idoma [Abraham 1967], Nupe [Banfield and Macintyre 1915, Smith 1969, Madugu 1981], and Yoruba [Ward 1952, Bamgboṣe 1964, Awobuluyi 1978]. A description of the typical morphological composition of such verbs is provided by Ward:

Verb stems may consist of one or more syllables: monosyllabic verbs are very common and there are a number of disyllabic verbs: verbs consisting of more than two syllables are less frequent, and of these, as well as of two-syllable verbs, many are compounds either of two or more verbs or of verbs and nouns (p. 76).

In the present study verbs of the type verb + noun in Nupe and Yoruba are singled out for discussion,<sup>1</sup> the purpose of this is not so much to give a formalistic account of syntactic structures containing them, but to provide evidence to support the notion that diachrony is an important explanatory parameter in language. In particular, following Givón [1979], it will be shown that certain synchronic rules involving these verbs in causative constructions are functionally motivated by diachronic processes of moving from one mode of expression to another and that at the completion of the processes, when a new mode has been rigidly established, the rules are dropped from the grammar.

The study is arranged as follows: section one provides the necessary background information, showing the nature of the morphological make-up of complex verbs and the fact that they have idiomatic meanings. Section two sketches the behavioural patterns of the verbs in causative constructions, where attention is focussed on certain processes of syntacticization. Section three is concerned with the nature of the emerging syntactic mode in which nouns functioning as Indirect Objects rather than Direct Objects, being Goal (target) Objects, most of them human, invariably occur immediately after the verb. Its widespread incidence is also highlighted. It is concluded that the structure can be accounted for in terms of the familiar generalization known as Top-

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<sup>1</sup>Nupe and Yoruba, both Kwa languages by Greenberg's [1963] classification and members of the Western South Central Niger-Congo by Bennett and Sterk's [1977] reclassification, are geographically contiguous, though not closely related genetically. In this study the illustrative materials are given in the orthographical conventions of the languages. Lexical tones are marked as follows: ['] High, [˘] Low, and Mid is left without any marking.

icality Hierarchy. Section four summarizes the discussion.

### 1. Components of the Complex Verb

A few introductory remarks on the morphological composition of the complex verb will be useful for subsequent discussion. We consider, then, the following examples:

- |             |    |     |       |        |                 |
|-------------|----|-----|-------|--------|-----------------|
| (1) Nupe:   | a. | mi  | è     | dínyé  | 'I am hurrying' |
|             |    | I   | Prog. | hurry  |                 |
|             | b. | eyé | è     | dín mi | 'I am hurrying' |
| (2) Yoruba: | a. | mo  | ń     | kánjú  | 'I am hurrying' |
|             |    | I   | Prog. | hurry  |                 |
|             | b. | ojú | ń     | kán mi | 'I am hurrying' |

In the examples of (1) and (2), the verb 'to hurry' in both languages comprises a verbal constituent (VC) followed by a complementing nominal constituent (CNC): Nupe *dín(e)yé* and Yoruba *kán(o)jú*. Whereas the two constituents are syntactically contiguous in the (a) sentences of (1) and (2), they are separated in their (b) counterparts. In terms of meaning, there seems to be no appreciable difference between the (a) and (b) versions.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes the meaning of a verbal component can be specified in isolation, as is the case in (1) and (2) above, where the CNC means 'eye': Nupe *eyé* and Yoruba *ojú*. In both languages, however, the VC does not have any independent meaning that we know of. The combination VC + CNC then functions as a semantic unit whose meaning cannot be deduced from the semantic amalgamation of its constituents. As a matter of fact, the meaning of a complex verb is independent of whether the meaning of one constituent, of both constituents, or of none of the constituents can be specified in isolation. The four possibilities are illustrated as follows:

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<sup>2</sup>Not all complex verbs split in this fashion, but those that do provide a way of recognizing their morphological composition. Nupe has an additional means of identifying them. This is by a systematic process of nominalizing V+N verbs as distinct from V+V ones. Thus *dínyé* 'to hurry' → *(e)yédín*, (i.e. V+N → N+V, and *yakpe* 'to believe' → *yiyakpe* (by partial duplication of the first V).

|    |        |              |        |                     |
|----|--------|--------------|--------|---------------------|
|    |        | complex verb |        |                     |
|    |        | VC           | CNC    |                     |
| a. |        | -            | +      |                     |
|    | Nupe   | dín          | (e)yé  | 'to hurry'          |
|    | Yoruba | kán          | (o)jú  | 'to hurry'          |
| b. |        | +            | -      |                     |
|    | Nupe   | gbín         | (e)ká  | 'to stray'          |
|    | Yoruba | fẹ́          | (V)ràn | 'to love'           |
| c. |        | -            | -      |                     |
|    | Nupe   | fẹ́          | (è)dùn | 'to sit'            |
|    | Yoruba | jó           | (V)kòó | 'to sit'            |
| d. |        | +            | +      |                     |
|    | Nupe   | tan          | (e)gwa | 'to plead'          |
|    | Yoruba | yí           | (o)wọ́ | 'to be out of hand' |

(+ signifies having meaning in isolation and - signifies its opposite; (V) = Unknown Vowel)

The first position (3a) means that the CNC, but not the VC, has meaning in isolation. This has already been noted in the examples of (1) and (2) above. Secondly, in (3b) the VC, but not the CNC, has reference. In Nupe *gbín* means 'to perish', but *-ká* has no independent reference. Similarly, the Yoruba VC *fẹ́* by itself may mean 'to love/want/marry', but an isolated meaning of the CNC *-ràn* is not known. Thirdly, (3c) stipulates that neither constituent of the complex verb has meaning in isolation. The verb 'to sit' (Nupe *fẹ̀dùn* and Yoruba *jókòó*) illustrates this. Fourthly, (3d) shows the possibility that both of the verbal constituents have identifiable references. Thus in Nupe we have *tan + egwa* 'rub hand', the semantic amalgam of which is different from the idiomatic meaning 'to plead'. And in Yoruba we have *yí + ọ̀wọ́* 'to turn the hand', the semantic combination of which is different from the meaning 'to be out of hand'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Bamgbose [1964], in fact, points out that in general, even if a Yoruba monosyllabic verb collocates with a noun and we find the same form fused into one (verb) elsewhere, the meaning of the two forms will be different, e.g. *kó eron: kẹ̀ron* (by contraction) 'collect meat' but *kẹ̀ron* means 'to be done for'. Awobuluyi [1978:55] also remarks that the idiomatic meanings of such

From the above observation, it is clear that complex verbs have idiomatic meanings. It is on the basis of this fact that a complex verb is regarded as a single lexical unit in this discussion, as opposed to a monosyllabic verb followed by its object, for example, 'to bruise one's arm' (Nupe bó + (e)kpá, Yoruba bó + apá). To recognize a VC and its CNC as separate entities will amount to claiming that each entity is an independent lexical entry, and this will lead to positing many lexical items in the lexicon which will at times lack dictionary meanings.

It should be observed that the CNC in (1) and (2) is a body part ('eye'). This is not an isolated case, for there are instances of other parts of the body involved, as the following partial lists show (where independent meanings of the verbal components are not available for morpheme-by-morpheme glossing, simply VC or CNC will be used):

- |     |        |    |        |                 |                      |
|-----|--------|----|--------|-----------------|----------------------|
| (4) | Nupe   | a. | gbómi  | gbó emi         | 'to argue'           |
|     |        |    |        | bark mouth      |                      |
|     |        | b. | patí   | pa etí          | 'to be apprehensive' |
|     |        |    |        | tie head        |                      |
|     |        | c. | sungwa | sun egwa        | 'to hold'            |
|     |        |    |        | VC hand         |                      |
| (5) | Yoruba | a. | bínú   | bí inú          | 'to be angry'        |
|     |        |    |        | VC stomach      |                      |
|     |        | b. | jéwó   | jẹ ọwó          | 'to confess'         |
|     |        |    |        | reply hand      |                      |
|     |        | c. | retí   | re etí          | 'to expect'          |
|     |        |    |        | VC ear          |                      |
|     |        | d. | jáyà   | já ayà          | 'to be afraid'       |
|     |        |    |        | snap hear/chest |                      |
|     |        | e. | yọnu   | yọ ẹnu          | 'to give trouble'    |
|     |        |    |        | pull out mouth  |                      |

But it is not the case that all CNC's are body parts. Sometimes they are probably cognate or indefinite objects:

- |     |      |    |        |          |            |
|-----|------|----|--------|----------|------------|
| (6) | Nupe | a. | kpógun | kpó egun | 'to shout' |
|     |      |    |        | VC CNC   |            |

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verbs in Yoruba provide a means of differentiating them from ordinary verb + noun combinations.

|     |        |        |        |            |                |                |
|-----|--------|--------|--------|------------|----------------|----------------|
|     | b.     | zèwùn  | zè     | ewùn       | 'to be angry'  |                |
|     |        |        | turn   | angry      |                |                |
|     | c.     | sunwùn | sun    | ewùn       | 'to quarrel'   |                |
|     |        |        | VC     | anger      |                |                |
|     | d.     | sùndàn | sun    | edàn       | 'to be afraid' |                |
|     |        |        | VC     | fear       |                |                |
| (7) | Yoruba | a.     | pàṣẹ   | pa         | àṣẹ            | 'to order'     |
|     |        |        |        | utter      | order          |                |
|     |        | b.     | bẹ̀rù  | bà         | ẹ̀rù           | 'to be afraid' |
|     |        |        |        | impinge on | fear           |                |
|     |        | c.     | jìyọ̀n | jà         | iyọ̀n          | 'to argue'     |
|     |        |        |        | fight      | dispute        |                |
|     |        | d.     | dámú   | dà         | àmú            | 'to worry'     |
|     |        |        |        | VC         | CVC            |                |
|     |        | e.     | bèèrè  | bí         | èrè            | 'to ask'       |
|     |        |        |        | ask        | CVC            |                |

The existence of complex verbs amidst predominantly monosyllabic verbs in these languages poses a number of interesting questions. One of them is whether such verbs constitute a distinct subcategory of verbs, reflecting in any significant way common syntactic and semantic features, apart from their typical CV-CNC structure. Further, one may inquire as to what factors control the structural behaviour of the CNC. And a very intriguing question could involve the evolution of such verbs. The rest of this discussion will focus attention primarily on the first two of the questions.

## 2. Transitivity and Causativity

Complex verbs in Nupe and Yoruba do not constitute a homogeneous subcategory of verbs, nor are they in opposition to monosyllabic verbs in terms of subgroupings. In other words, there are various subgroupings of complex verbs denoting different notions such as action, stativity, etc., just as there are monosyllabic verbs functioning in the same manner. For the purpose of this discussion, their syntactic and semantic properties will be examined from the perspective of Transitivity as proposed in Hopper and Thompson [1980] (HT).

According to them Transitivity is not merely a binary system of grouping clauses into Transitives and Intransitives, but a system comprising a number of parameters, "each of which suggests a scale according to which clauses can be ranked" (p. 252). The parameters are as follows:

|                       | HIGH                            | LOW                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (8) A. PARTICIPANTS   | 2 or more participants, A and O | 1 participant                 |
| B. KINESIS            | action                          | non-action                    |
| C. ASPECT             | telic                           | atelic                        |
| D. PUNCTUALITY        | punctual                        | non-punctual                  |
| E. VOLITIONALITY      | volitional                      | non-volitional                |
| F. AFFIRMATION        | affirmative                     | negative                      |
| G. MODE               | realis                          | irrealis                      |
| H. AGENCY             | A high in potency               | A low in potency              |
| I. AFFECTEDNESS OF O  | O totally affected              | O not affected                |
| J. INDIVIDUATION OF O | O highly individuated           | non-individuated <sup>4</sup> |

HT explain that when the parameters are "taken together, they allow clauses to be characterized as MORE or LESS Transitive: the more features a clause has on the 'high' column... the more transitive it is—the closer it is to CARDINAL Transitivity" (p. 253).

An ideal Transitive clause then will have all the features on the HIGH column, while a least Transitive one will have all the features on the LOW column. The majority of clauses in any given language will fall between the two extremes. The question then arises as to how to determine the degree of Transitivity in given clauses. In order to achieve that purpose in this study, sentences will be characterized in terms of Causativity. Admittedly, causativity is an extremely complex topic, and its ramifications will not be discussed in this study. Instead, it will be shown that Nupe and Yoruba use syntactic rather than morphological mechanisms for causative expressions.

It is generally agreed that Causativity involves at least two participants (NP's) in a sentence, in which one participant, often designated the Agent, does something, intentionally or otherwise, and the other participant (the Ob-

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<sup>4</sup>In their terminology, A and O refer to Agent and Object respectively. They explain that Actions are transferable. Aspect-wise they may be telic (completed) or atelic; they may also be punctual, i.e. "with no obvious transitional phase between inception and completing", or non-punctual.

ject) is physically or emotionally affected by the activity of the Agent. It must, however, be emphasized that at times causative constructions are possible without Agents, in the narrow sense of the term. A causative verb then will express the activity of the instigating participant and its effect on the recipient participant. Syntactically, it will have at least one more participant than a corresponding non-causative verb.

It is important to note here that the salient features of Causativity, for example, Agency and Volitionality, are part of the defining parameters of Transitivity in (8) above. It is therefore expected that a clause which ranks high in Transitivity will also be highly causative, without implying that Transitivity and Causativity are understood to mean the same thing. We now examine various structures which will be characterized as follows:

- (9) a. Non-agentive non-causative  
 b. Agentive non-causative  
 c. Non-agentive causative  
 d. Agentive causative

Accordingly, how various sub-groups of complex verbs in Nupe and Yoruba function in (9a-d) will be examined.

As can be seen from the Parameters in (8), A, E, H, I, J relate closely to nouns; B, C, and D are closely associated with verbs; and F and G are more of a global nature. The first two sets are relevant for our consideration of complex verbs, but since the discussion will deal only with affirmative sentences, assumed to be possible in a real world, no further reference will be made to F and G.

2.1. Non-agentive non-causative constructions. The examples of (10) and (11) below illustrate this kind of construction:

- (10) Nupe      Bábá gbóká            'Baba is strong'  
                  Baba be-strong
- (11) Yoruba    Bábá sanra            'Baba is fat'  
                  Baba be-fat

The sentences in (10) and (11) are non-agentive non-causative, since they contain neither Agentive nouns nor causative verbs. They also lack specifiable



objects, despite the inclusion of the CNC's. In terms of Transitivity features, they are non-action, and therefore non-transferrable. They score extremely low, perhaps the lowest possible, on the Transitivity scale. In the familiar terminology they are stative constructions. More examples of non-Agentive non-Causative verbs include Nupe *lekpan* 'to be thick', *gopè* 'to be wide', and *wúnkpá* 'to be tall'; Yoruba *lera* 'to be strong in body' and *móra* 'to be light in complexion'.<sup>5</sup>

Although Nupe and Yoruba do not have derivational causatives, the same effect can be produced by embedding non-causative sentences into matrix sentences containing causative verbs such as *take*, *get*, and *make*, resulting in biclausal causative sentences of the type (12) and (13) directly below:

- (12) Nupe      *cinginni lá Bàbá gbóká*      'pounded-yam made Baba strong'  
                   pounded-yam made Baba strong
- (13) Yoruba *iyán mú Bàbá sanra*      'pounded-yam made Baba fat'  
                   pounded-yam made Baba fat

Even though (12) and (13) are causative constructions, we should observe that the CAUSE element 'pounded-yam' is not a volitional Agent. It, however, has Potency.

As far as I know, there are no instances of Non-agentive non-causative complex verbs occurring in a configuration of the type [CNC-VC-(NP)].

2.2. Agentive non-causative constructions. These are sentences of the type:

- (14) Nupe      *mí bici*      'I ran'  
                   I ran
- (15) Yoruba *mo sáré*      'I ran'  
                   I ran

The major characteristic features of an Agentive non-causative are as follows: first, the NP subject is, in general, Agentive endowed with Volitionality and Potency. Second, the verb expresses action. Third, the action is atelic and non-punctual, and fourth, there is no Object. The construction type therefore

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<sup>5</sup>There are, of course, monosyllabic stative verbs in both languages, e.g. Nupe *sà* 'to be beautiful', *ge* 'to be good' and Yoruba *ga* 'to be tall', *fè* 'to be broad'.

scores high in terms of the first two sets of features mentioned above but low in the last two.

Like non-agentive non-causative sentences, agentive non-causative structures can be embedded into causative matrix clauses:

(16) Nupe Makun jin mi bici 'Makun made me run'  
Makun made me run

(17) Yoruba Olu mu  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{mi} \\ \text{ki} \\ \text{n} \end{array} \right\}$  sáré<sup>6</sup> 'Olu made me run'  
Olu made me run

Since agentive non-causative express actions, naturally they often have adverbial phrases indicating the location, direction, etc. of the activities expressed by the verbs.

(18) Nupe a. u dazàn lo dzukó 'he/she walked to the market'  
he/she walked went market

b. u kóní yà yi<sup>7</sup> 'he/she sang for us'  
he/she sang gave us

(19) Yoruba a. o kòrin fún wa 'he/she sang for us'  
he/she sang gave us

b. o ránşé sí wa 'he/she sent (a message) to us'  
he/she sent to us

One other feature of this type of construction worth noting is the fact that in certain circumstances, specifically, in some kind of focus construction and in relativization the verbal components can be separated from each other, the CNC being fronted:

(20) Nupe a. eci gá mi bi o 'what I did was running'  
CNC it-be I ran Foc.

b. [eci na ni bi na] máfi etsu 'the race that I ran  
CNC ECM I ran ECM pleased chief  
pleased the chief'

(ECM = Embedded Clause Marker)

<sup>6</sup>In many cases the Yoruba form *ki* optionally introduces embedded clauses; when it occurs before *mi* 'me', the variant *n* is often used.

<sup>7</sup>In both languages certain verbs, e.g. *go*, *give*, are used like prepositions

- (21) Yoruba a. eré ní mo sá CNC Foc. I ran 'what I did was running'  
 b. [ere tí mo sá] dùnmó ọba CNC that I ran pleased chief 'the race that I ran pleased the chief'

The (a) sentences of (20) and (21) are focus constructions, while those of (b) are nominalizations.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, verbs such as *ask* and *answer*, which fall within this subgroup, sometimes appear as discontinuous elements:

- (22) Nupe a. Makun gbíngàn Makun asked 'Makun asked'  
 b. Makun gbíngàn etsu Makun asked chief 'Makun asked about the chief'  
 c. Makun gbín etsu gan Makun asked chief CNC 'Makun asked the chief (a question)'
- (23) Yoruba a. Olú béèrè Olu asked 'Olu asked'  
 b. Olú béèrè ọba Olu asked chief 'Olu asked about the chief'  
 c. Olú bí ọba l éèrè<sup>9</sup> Olu asked chief part. CNC 'Olu asked the chief (a question)'

The (a) sentences of (22) and (23) express the fact that someone asked a question, but the locutionary target is not included. The (b) versions state that someone asked about the chief, but in the (c) constructions the chief is the locutionary target to whom the question was directed. It is a definite and hu-

<sup>8</sup>In Nupe the form *na...na* is used to set off certain types of embedded clauses, e.g.

- (i) mi si efin na nú na 'I bought a razor that is sharp'  
 (relative clause)  
 (ii) u ge na mi a si efin na 'it is necessary that I should buy a razor'  
 (sentential complement)  
 (iii) efin gá ù yì o na mi sí na 'it is razor that I bought'  
 (focus)

<sup>9</sup>The Yoruba particle *ní* (underlyingly /lĩ/) has a variant *lí*, which may appear as *l*, depending on the phonological environment.

man noun, functioning as an Indirect Object. Meanwhile the CNC is demoted to the syntactic position after the IO. In the case of Yoruba, the particle *lí* is inserted before the CNC. This is a syntactic operation similar to the well-known Dative Movement. We should notice, however, that in both languages the structures of (b) and (c) have different semantic interpretations. The demotion phenomenon will be further discussed in section 3.

2.3. Non-agentive causative constructions. Though few in number, non-agentive causative verbs, the type of which is exemplified by sentences (1) and (2) (repeated below for convenience), are by far the most interesting subset of complex verbs.

- |     |        |    |       |             |                 |
|-----|--------|----|-------|-------------|-----------------|
| (1) | Nupe   | a. | mi è  | dínyé       | 'I am hurrying' |
|     |        |    | I     | Prog. hurry |                 |
|     |        | b. | eyé è | dín mi      | 'I am hurrying' |
| (2) | Yoruba | a. | mo ñ  | kánjú       | 'I am hurrying' |
|     |        |    | I     | Prog. hurry |                 |
|     |        | b. | ojú ñ | kán mi      | 'I am hurrying' |

For ease of reference, structures like (1a) and (2a) will be labelled A and those of (1b) and (2b) as B. More examples of such verbs are given in (24), showing their typology:<sup>10</sup>

| (24) | <u>A and B</u> |                    | <u>A Only</u> |                  | <u>B Only</u> |
|------|----------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| Nupe | sundan         | 'to be<br>afraid'  | mánín         | 'to be<br>happy' |               |
|      | funín          | 'to be full'       |               |                  |               |
|      | sunzunyé       | 'to be<br>ashamed' | gansun        | 'to worry'       |               |
|      | sáwàńkó        | 'to be<br>anxious' | dansàn        | 'to care'        |               |

<sup>10</sup>Although the Yoruba complex verb *dájú* 'to be sure' is non-agentive causative, it cannot be labelled as A or B since its subject is invariably a non-referent *ó* 'it' as in *ó dájú pé...* 'it is sure that...' and in Agentive Causative Constructions (see 2.4) it appears in a split form as in *ó dá mi lójú pé...* 'I am sure that...'

|        | <u>A and B</u>      | <u>A Only</u>       | <u>B Only</u>                   |
|--------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Yoruba | bèrù 'to be afraid' | rántí 'to remember' | pónjú 'to agonize'              |
|        | jìyà 'to suffer'    |                     | rojú 'to miss a person'         |
|        | bínú 'to be angry'  |                     | (these are citation forms only) |
|        | tijú 'to be shy'    |                     |                                 |
|        | dàmú 'to worry'     |                     |                                 |
|        | jáyà 'to be afraid' |                     |                                 |

It is important to observe that structures containing these verbs relate strictly to animate nouns, most often human, and they express conditions which have arisen from the effect of activities of causative Agents or situations, though missing from the structures. Concerning their Transitivity features, they are non-action. There are no Agents, though personal pronouns occur in the subject position of the A structures. In fact, human nouns in these examples are Experiencer Nouns (EN).

One obvious peculiarity of the non-agentive causative complex verbs is the fact that some of them allow both structures A and B, which means that the syntactic positions of the EN and the CNC are interchangeable. It is thus the case that if the former is in the subject position the latter functions as the Object and vice versa, causing no difference in semantic interpretation. What is responsible for the alternation, and which of the two structures is basic synchronically? That is, given A and B, which one has been least (or has not been) disrupted by syntactic transformation?

Discussing causative constructions in English, Noriko McCawley [1976:197] observes that a non-agentive causative "involves one and the same human experiencer both in the subject and in the object of CAUSE. That is, someone's learning through his senses or perceiving something inevitably evokes in him a certain emotional reaction expressed by a variety of emotive adjectives such as *happy, sad, surprised, amazed, shocked, etc.*" One example is *It made Dale sad that Sue might marry Bill.*

If this is correct, a human experiencer both as the subject and object of CAUSE is capable of having structures like A and B respectively. And precisely, this is what obtains in the case of the verbs which permit both A and B struc-

tures. In both construction A and B the human Experiencer is being affected (typically by his stomach, eye, heart, etc.). In the B type the body part is made the subject while the Experiencer is object ([CNC VC EN]). The EN is also the object in the structure of non-agentive causative sentences containing monosyllabic verbs in which nouns comparable to CNC's (but not incorporated into the verbs) function as subjects. Consider then the following:

- (25) Nupe    a. mi è        gun madan        'I am hungry' (=A)  
                   I Prog. VC hunger  
               b. madan è        gun mi            'I am hungry' (=B)  
                   hunger Prog. VC me
- (26) Yoruba a. mo ñ        pa ebi            'I am hungry' (=A)  
                   I Prog. feel hunger  
               b. ebi ñ        pa mi            'I am hungry' (=B)  
                   hunger Prog. feel me

The examples of (25) and (26) illustrate non-agentive causative constructions comparable to those of (1) and (2). The difference between the two sets resides in the fact that the noun 'hunger' is not incorporated into the verb and that it alone functions as the subject, as the EN is excluded from that position. Since affected individuals are more topic-worthy than body-parts or other non-human nouns, speakers may prefer to make an affected human the subject, thus giving rise to the A configuration [EN VC-CNC] as an alternative, a process which enhances the fusion of VC-CNC into a semantic unit.

It is possible then that the B structure is the earlier form historically, and the Yoruba complex verb occurring only in this structure could be seen as "Islands" unaffected by the innovation that brought about A. Conversely, those verbs whose occurrence is restricted to A have completely stopped being used in their earlier syntactic form.

It is appealing to consider B as the basic form synchronically, but this is ruled out by the fact that complex verbs in both languages, as was pointed out in section 1, have been lexicalized as single units. Apart from that CNC's generally lack the universal subject properties such as independent existence, autonomous reference, and high referentiality like pronominalization [Keenan 1976].

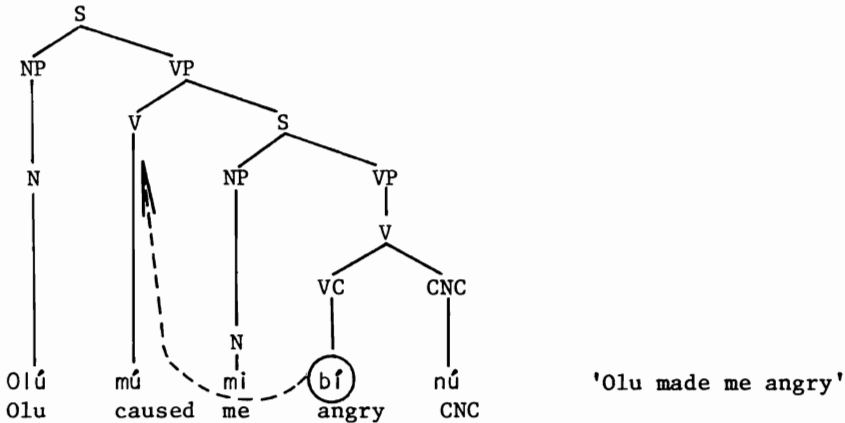


clausal constructions as schematized in (29a) onto (29b) below.

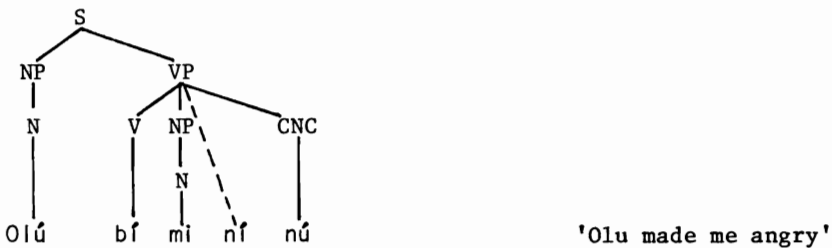
- (29) a.  $NP_1$  CAUSE  $S[NP_2 VP]_S$   
 b.  $S[NP_1$  cause-verb  $NP_2$   $NP_3$  ] $_S$

Details aside, rule (29a) will convert the following Yoruba (30) to (31).

(30)



(31)



The important syntactic processes include Predicate Raising, which attaches the embedded verb (VC) to the cause verb (leading to the fusion of the two), and the eventual disappearance of the cause verb of the matrix clause with subsequent Pruning. Finally, the particle *ní* is inserted before the CNC. The emerging structure (31) is a compressed form of (30), though an elaborate simplex sentence in itself, as it contains two nouns (the CNC inclusive) and a particle in the predicate phrase.

The productivity of the Causative Clause Union rule in Yoruba is quite limited, and the trend is clearly that the mode represented by (31) is emerging as



a terse, syntacticized form. This is easily supported by the fact that sometimes there are structures like (31) without corresponding biclausal sentences of the type (30). Thus example (32b) below is unlikely to be derived from the ungrammatical (32a):

- (32) a. \*òrò náà mú mí yanu 'the matter surprised me'  
           matter the caused me surprised  
       b. òrò náà yà mí | ẹnu 'the matter surprised me'

In (32) the syntacticized form (32b) has become rather rigid, and there is no oscillation between biclausal and uniclausal Causatives in such cases.

Another piece of support for the position that Causative Clause Union has a limited productivity in Yoruba comes from the fact that occasionally certain uniclausal Causatives superficially appear to be derivable from corresponding biclausal Causatives, but in reality this is not the case. Consider, then, the following:

- (33) Yoruba a. Ayò mú mí rántí ilé 'Ayò made me remember home'  
           Ayò caused me remember home  
       b. Ayò ràn mí | ẹ́fí ilé 'Ayò reminded me of home'  
           Ayò reminded me part. CNC home

Clearly, the meaning of (33b) is sufficiently different from that of (33a) as to cast doubt on their derivational relationship.

We have seen that the operation of Causative Clause Union is weak in Yoruba and non-existent in Nupe. The situation is therefore that in Yoruba there is considerable amount of oscillation between the use of biclausal and uniclausal Causatives. But the oscillation is non-existent in Nupe, because the uniclausal construction has been firmly established as a syntactic mode.

This is significant, as it goes beyond a mere formulation of syntactic rules present in one language but absent in another, and illustrates a major diachronic process as proposed in Givón [1979:208], namely that "pragmatic discourse structures develop—over time—into tight, grammaticalized syntactic structures."<sup>12</sup> Further, Givón isolates two "extreme poles of *communicative*

<sup>12</sup>Diachronic processes, of course, occur in other aspects of language, in-

mode: the pragmatic mode and the *syntactic* mode", under which loose conjunction and tight subordination fall respectively (p. 223). Since our main concern is with a movement from tight subordination to complex uniclausal structures, we would like to propose that in fact tight subordination is an intermediary stage between the poles.

- |      |                       |                          |                       |
|------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| (34) | <u>Pragmatic Mode</u> | <u>Intermediary Mode</u> | <u>Syntactic Mode</u> |
|      | Loose conjunction     | Tight subordination      | Compressed unclause   |

In this regard, the biclausal causative construction, which constitutes input to Causative Clause Union, is a relatively loose structure, in the sense that it comprises two clauses put together by embedding rules, where the matrix clause explicitly expresses what the causing Agent or situation is and the embedded clause states the effect. It could then be said that it is cast in a near-pragmatic mode, because it is somewhat iconic by nature. Given time, it would develop into a tighter syntactic mode, and this is precisely what we have. In Nupe the process has been completed in this particular instance, and thus causative expressions involving complex verbs—the output of Causative Clause Union—are cast in uniclausal constructions containing two nominals in the predicate phrase. In Yoruba, however, the process is an on-going phenomenon.

We should note in passing that it seems also that in Yoruba the movement in the direction of Morphology has already been set in motion. Not only do we have a process of rigid syntacticization in Causativity, but the rigidity is being extended to the lexicon, such that some Causative verbs include in their citation forms the particle *ní* as in:

- |      |        |    |          |                    |                   |
|------|--------|----|----------|--------------------|-------------------|
| (35) | Yoruba | a. | ràn lówó | ( < ràn X lĩ ọwó ) | 'to help'         |
|      |        | b. | yà ẹnu   | ( < yà X lĩ ẹnu )  | 'to be surprised' |

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cluding morphology and morphophonemics. Givón schematically represents the "cyclic waves" as

Discourse → Syntax → Morphology →  
Morphophonemic → Zero (p. 209).

### 3. The Syntax of the Uniclausal Causative

In this section we discuss the syntax of uniclausal causatives, particularly in terms of their word order, Transitivity and in terms of their relation to other syntactic processes.

3.1. Uniclausal Causatives and Transitivity. The structure of the uniclausal causative sentence discussed in (2.4) above, given in (36a), as opposed to the non-occurring (36b), shows what the "real" Transitive Object is:

- (36) a. Agent - VC - EN - (Particle) - CNC  
 b. \*Agent - VC - CNC - EN

In concrete examples we have:

- (37) Nupe a. Bàbá è dín mi yé 'Baba is making me hurry'  
 Baba Prog. hurry me CNC  
 b. \*Bàbá è dín yé mi
- (38) Yoruba a. Bàbá n kán mi l ójú 'Baba is making me hurry'  
 Baba Prog. hurry me Par. CNC  
 b. \*Bàbá n kán jú mi

In (37a) and (38a) the word order of the nouns in the predicate phrase is EN-CNC, which means that the CNC has been separated from its VC and is now the rightmost constituent in the sentence. In a sense this is a kind of "demotion". The EN on the other hand is "promoted" to the position immediately after the verb, i.e. the VC.

The syntactic position of the EN is indicative of the fact that it has more Transitivity features than the CNC. This structural position has to be the case, since the only strategy for signalling Transitivity in both languages is syntax: the closer an object is to the verb the more Transitive it is.

The above observation that the EN has more Transitivity features than the CNC is in agreement with HT's argument that "Indirect Objects in fact should be Transitive Objects" (p. 259). The basis of their argument is that Indirect Objects tend to be definite and human, quite often reflecting a high degree of Transitivity. Evidence in support of this is found in many Bantu languages, and Sesotho (from Morolong and Hyman [1977:203]) is cited as an example: "When



- b. Bàbá fún ọba ní ẹ̀wù IO - DO  
 Baba gave chief part. gown  
 'Baba gave the chief a gown'
- (41) a. olè jí ẹ̀wù ọba DO - POSS  
 thief stole gown chief  
 'a thief stole the gown of the chief'
- b. olè jí ọba ní ẹ̀wù POSS-DO  
 thief stole chief part. gown  
 'a thief stole the chief's gown'
- (42) a. óúnjẹ náà mú ínú run ọmọ DO - EN  
 food the caused stomach constipate child  
 'the food constipated the child'
- b. óúnjẹ náà run ọmọ ní ínú EN - DO  
 food the constipated child part. stomach  
 'the food constipated the child'
- (43) a. olè fi ọ̀bẹ gún ọba INST. - DO  
 thief used knife stab chief  
 'a thief used a knife to stab the chief'
- b. olè gún ọba ní ọ̀bẹ DO - INST.  
 thief stabbed chief part. knife  
 'a thief stabbed the chief with a knife'
- Nupe also has structures which parallel those of (40) through (43), but without any particle:
- (44) a. Bàbá lá ẹ̀wò yà etsu DO - IO  
 Baba took gown gave chief  
 'Baba gave the gown to the chief'
- b. Bàbá yà etsu ẹ̀wò IO - DO  
 Baba gave chief gown  
 'Baba gave the chief a gown'
- (45) a. yígbèci yí ẹ̀wò (yán) etsu DO - POSS  
 thief stole gown (of) chief  
 'a thief stole the gown of the chief'

- b. yígbècí yí etsu èwò POSS - DO  
 thief stole chief gown  
 'a thief stole the chief's gown'
- (46) a. eyangíci lá gbàko tán egi DO - EN  
 food caused stomach pain child  
 'the food constipated the child'
- b. eyangíci tán egi gbàko EN - DO  
 food pained child stomach  
 'the food constipated the child'
- (47) a. yígbècí lá èbi tun etsu INST - DO  
 thief used knife stabbed chief  
 'a thief used a knife to stab the chief'
- b. yígbècí tun etsu èbi DO - INST  
 thief stabbed chief knife  
 'a thief stabbed the chief with a knife'

Viewed from the perspective of discourse pragmatics, Madugu [1982] groups nouns, mostly human, functioning in various environments as Indirect Object, Experiencer, Possessive, etc. as Goal Objects and accounts for the ní-OBJECT constructions in terms of information focus and relative topicality of NP's in the sentence, concluding that the Goal Object is more topical than the Direct Object (GO > DO); hence the Object Shift rule,

(48) DO - GO → GO - DO

obtains in the sentences of the type (40) through (43). The Nupe constructions (44-47) above can be equally accounted for in this manner.

In another study, Madugu [1981], mainly concerned with Transitive Complex Verbs in Nupe like dàgwa 'to push' as in

- (49) a. Musa dà mi gwa 'Musa pushed me'  
 Musa pushed me CNC
- b. Musa dà kpàko gwa 'Musa pushed the door'  
 door

the CNC is characterized as Fused Instrumental (FI), which undergoes the process of Demotion. Nouns in the predicate phrases in such constructions are therefore

accounted for in terms of the Topicality Hierarchy (50):

(50) Su > DO > FI

The emerging picture is extremely remarkable. First, we should note that the (a) sentences of (40-47), like the Yoruba biclausal causative constructions, are pragmatic structures. In fact, with the exception of the possessive sentences (41a) and (45a), they are serial verbal constructions, which are highly iconic in the sense that the order of verbs in a sentence corresponds to the order of the events they describe, e.g. X took Y gave Z. But their (b) counterparts, like the uniclausal causatives, are cast in a tight syntactic mode, where the number of the verbs is reduced, and the predicate phrase now contains two nouns. The syntactic processes that effect the Inverted Object Constructions must be similar to Causative Clause Union, at least in kind, having the force of compressing two clauses into one. These processes, we must note, are still operative in Nupe, including Agentive Causatives, e.g. (46) above, which do not involve complex verbs.

Second, just as Causative Clause Union is only weakly operative in Yoruba, so must be the rules of Inverted Object Constructions in both languages, for there are occasions where compressed structures exist without corresponding loose counterparts:

(51) Nupe      u    gí    mi    gbàtà                      'he owes me a debt'  
                  he owes me debt

(52) Yoruba    ó    jẹ    mí    ní      gbèsè                      'he owes me a debt'  
                  he owes me part. debt

It is obvious, then, that the trend of moving from loose pragmatic structures to tight syntacticized ones is a widespread phenomenon in the two languages.

As a matter of fact, the alternation between the pragmatic and compressed sentences involving *take* and *cause* has been attested in Ijọ as well. Givón [1975:95] cites the following examples (taken from Williamson [1965]):

(53) a. erí, opúru-mọ      àki    tọbọú    p|rí-mi                      'he gave the crayfish to  
                  he    crayfish-the    take    boy      give-Asp                      the boy'

          b. erí, opúru-mọ-nì    tọbọú    p|rí-mi                      'he gave the crayfish to  
                  he    crayfish-the    boy      give-Asp.                      the boy

- (54) a. erí, uru akí-nì u-míé-nì uru bou-mí  
 he wine take him Cause wine drink Asp.  
 'he made him drunk with wine' or 'he made him drink wine'
- b. erí, uru akí-nì u-bou-mó-mí<sup>13</sup>  
 he wine take him-drink-Cause-Asp.  
 'he made him drink wine'

Very likely, then, this kind of oscillation is common among the serializing languages of West Africa.

Third, in all instances of compressed sentences—Inverted Object Construction, unclausal causatives, and Nupe Transitive Clauses involving complex verbs—it is the Goal Object that functions as the Transitive Object and any other noun follows. Clearly, the processes are similar. What is needed now is a generalization which will account for them. This can be done in terms of the familiar Topicality Hierarchy.

- (55) Su > DO > IO > OBL > Others<sup>14</sup>

To arrive at the TH (55) Goal Objects are optionally promoted to the position of the DO, while the original DO is demoted. Similarly, in Causative constructions as well as some Transitive structures in Nupe, IO's are placed right after the verbs and the CNC's are demoted.

#### 4. Summary and Conclusion

Complex verbs in Nupe and Yoruba have been investigated and found to be heterogeneous. Those which occur in non-agentive non-causative constructions

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<sup>13</sup>Givón observes that in (54b) the lexical 'make/cause' is deleted, while the verb bou 'drink' acquires a causative suffix (-mó); but in some cases 'make' and -mó coexist, as in

- (i) erí, áry-bì mîé bilemó-mí 'he made the canoe sink'  
 he canoe-the make sink-Asp
- (ii) erí, áry-bì bilemó-mí 'he sank the canoe'  
 he canoe-the sink-Asp

<sup>14</sup>Cf. the generalization expressed by Keenan and Comrie [1977] concerning the accessibility to relative clause formation of NP's, given as:

SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OCOMP



as well as those which occur in agentive non-causative constructions fully allow sentence embedding, resulting in biclausal causative structures. In the case of non-agentive causatives, however, the picture is different. In Yoruba, occasionally, but not always, these verbs can be optionally embedded into causative matrix sentences, such that they constitute input to Causative Clause Union, which maps them onto uniclausal agentive causative constructions. The result is that the latter are highly syntacticized and alternate with biclausal agentive causative sentences. In Nupe, due to the fact that Causative Union is no longer operative, only uniclausal causative constructions are found.

The importance of Causative Clause Union is highlighted. It clearly demonstrates that, as a syntactic process, it is motivated by diachronic processes, and in the instance of Nupe, where a particular target has been hit, it is dropped from the grammar. We have noted that in Yoruba the trend is in that direction as well.

It has also been shown that the emerging, compact, uniclausal causative constructions, where Experiencer nouns are the real Transitive Objects, bear a close relationship to Inverted Object Constructions in both languages, all of which can be accounted for in terms of the generalization known as Topicality Hierarchy.

We would like to stress that in synchronic grammars certain formal rules are functionally motivated in the sense that they are a reflection of diachronic processes in languages, where there are movements from one mode of expression to another. We conclude therefore that syntactic rules in synchronic grammars are better understood with reference to diachronic processes. The study above is an attempt in that direction.

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