URHOBO VERB PHRASE LAYER

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ABSTRACT

The verb phrase (VP) layer is the domain of clausal event and the argument structure of the verb. Extant works on Urhobo, an Edoid language, have listed lexical and phrasal categories and types of sentences in the language with little attention given to the verbs and VPs, which are germane to the understanding of Urhobo sentences. This study was, therefore, designed to investigate the Urhobo verb phrase layer, with a view to identifying the types of Urhobo verbs, their properties, and the derivation of Urhobo VPs.

The split VP hypothesis of Noam Chomsky's Minimalist Program was adopted as framework. The ethnographic design was used. Ughelli North Local Government Area, where Agbarho, the standard form of Urhobo is predominantly spoken**,** was purposively selected. Ten resident native speakers, one each from Uvwiamuge, Oviri, Oghara, Orhokpokpo, Ohrerhe, Ophori, Ekrerhavwe, Ikweghwu, Ughwrughelli and Okan were selected. They were selected based on their proficiency in the language. Primary data were elicited through the Ibadan 400 Wordlist and 10 structured interviews, while secondary data were gathered from existing texts in the language such as the Urhobo Bible and two Urhobo dictionaries. Data were subjected to interlinear glossing and qualitative analyses.

Syntactic, semantic and morphological criteria were deployed in identifying Urhobo verbs. The syntactic criteria produced seven types of verbs: symmetrical, serial, transitive, intransitive, Inherent Complement Verbs (ICVs), causative and double object verbs. The semantic criteria yielded two types of verbs: echo and ICVs. Complex, causative and splitting verbs were the three types identified using morphological criteria. In symmetrical verbs, it is possible to swap subjects and objects without a change in meaning; serial verbs share subject and object determiner phrases (DPs); transitive verbs obligatorily take object DPs, while intransitive verbs do not. Double object verbs must take two object DPs, whereas causative verbs have a causer and a causee in a construction. Echo verbs, which are verbs that occur twice in a sentence, are also evident in Urhobo. The ICVs obligatorily select specific complements which determine their semantic interpretation. A complex verb has an obligatory internal structure that combines a verb and a noun, while a splitting verb shares object in intermediate position. In the derivation of the Urhobo verb phrase layer, the lexical verb merges with a DP to form a VP, the VP merges with a light verb to form a light verb bar (v^{I}), and the light verb probes its complement domain in search of DPs with matching interpretable phi features to value the unvalued features. The case feature of the DP is valued as a reflex. Thereafter, the subject DP is externally merged with v^{I} to form light verb phrase in order to satisfy the edge feature of the light verb thus yielding the light verb phrase.

The Urhobo verb types, differentiated by syntactic, semantic and morphological criteria, revealed how these verb phrases are arranged.

Keywords: Urhobo verb phrase, Verb phrase layer, Edoid syntax
Word count: 483

DEDICATION

DEDICATED TO GOD

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research was carried out by Eseoghene ALEH with Matric. No.: 140835 in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, under my supervision.

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Appendix

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

1st	-	First person
2nd	-	Second person
3rd	-	Third person
Acc	-	Accusative
Adj	-	Adjective
Adv	-	Adverb
Agr	-	Agree
AgrP	-	Agree phrase
A-P	-	Articulatory perceptual
A-P	-	Articulatory perceptual
Asp	-	Aspect
ATR	-	Advanced Tongue Root
C-	-	constituent command
C	-	Complementiser
CHL	-	Computation System
C-I	-	Conceptual Intentional
CP	-	Complementiser Phrase
D	-	Deep
Det	-	Determiner
Dem	-	Demonstrative
DemP	-	Demonstrative Phrase
DP	-	Determiner Phrase
EPP	-	Extended Projection Principle
F	-	features
fin	-	finite
Foc.	-	Focus
Fut	-	future
Fut	-	Future tense
G	-	Goal
GB	-	Government and Binding Theory

Hab - Habitual Aspect

Hab - habitual

HTS - High Tone Syllable

I/ INFL I - inflection

ICV - Inherent Complement Verb

IMP - Imperfective

Int. - interrogative

IP - Inflectioal Phrase

LF - Logical Form

MP - Minimalist Program

N - Noun

Neg - Negative/Negation

Nom - Norminative

NP - Noun Phrase

Num - Number

NumP - Numeral Phrase

Obj - Object

P - Probe

P - Preposition

Perf - Perfective Aspect

PERF. - Perfective

PF - Phonetic Form

Pl. - Plural

Poss - Possessive

PP - Preposition Phrase

PPT - Principles and Parameters Theory

Pred - Predicate

PredP - Predicate Phrase

Pres - Present tense

Prog - Progressive aspect

Pst - Past tense

Q - Quantifier

QP - Quantifier Phrase

S - Surface

Sg. - Singular

SO - Syntactic Object

Spec. - Specifier

Subj - Subject

SVC - Serial Verbal Construction

T - Tense

TP - Tense Phrase

U - Uninterpretable

UG - Universal Grammar

v - Light verb

V - Verb

vP - light verb phrase

VP - Verb Phrase

x^I - X bar

Symbols

ɸ - Phi

ɵ - Theta

' - Downstep