

The morpho-syntax of *-mǒ* in Izón.

Kekai Celestina Predia

Abstract

It is established in most natural languages and in particular, African languages that stable verbal bases rely on their verbal extensions (VE) to reflect appropriate derivational argument structures. Hence, the inherent features of a verb in isolation may not mirror all its semantic arguments. In Izón, for instance, in addition to reflecting derivational argument structures, a VE such as *-mǒ* which this study investigates, manifests varied argument structures. The semantic imports of *-mǒ* and roles played by its co-occurring argument(s) are dependent not only on the verb to which it is attached but also on the co-occurring arguments. A challenge is apparent in pedagogy for non-native speakers/learners of Izón on how to isolate the finite set of argument switches dictated by a compact verb to which *-mǒ*, identified herein as homophonous is attached. It is informative to examine the various morpho-syntactic idiosyncrasies of *-mǒ* in Izón clauses in order to reveal its heterogeneous manifestations. This is the crux which this study elucidates. The study is based on a bottom-up analysis of data drawn from spontaneous utterances of native speakers. It employs the theoretical orientation of Theta Theory (θ -theory) and posits that the semantic import of *-mǒ* and derivational argument structure(s) are dictated by the inherent features of verbs and the associative features of arguments.

Keywords: verbal extension, pedagogy, verbal base, argument, Izón

1.0. Preliminaries

Studies on the inherent features of verbs reveal that they and their arguments exhibit mutual expectations in the lexicon of competent speakers. Thus, any semantically relevant facets of morphological unit that should participate in a verbal event but is structurally underspecified in a clause is envisaged (Levin, 1993; McRea et al'1997; Hare et al (2009); Yuka, 2008b and Kekai, 2017). A verb is predisposed to dictate the qualities of the argument(s) that should participate in its event. Just like verbs, a verbal extension (VE) dictates the types and capabilities of arguments that participate in the event(s) expressed in its clause. This accounts for why the conceptual structure of a compact verbal unit (a verb and an affix) modifies and dictates the clausal and argument structures of a verb. Kekai (2012), following Yuka (2008b) asserts that a stable verbal base relies on its verbal extension to reflect the appropriate derivational

argument structure of a verb. Each argument selected by a verb is thus associated in a unique way not only to that verb but also to the particular VE attached to it.

While all of the foregoing is true, it is informative to note that certain VEs which fall under the purview of homophonous bound morphemes like *-mḥin* *Izḥn*, constitute a great challenge for learners and teachers of natural languages. This is because of the difficulty in isolating the role alterations resulting from attaching the morpheme to stable verbal bases. Three postulations on compact verbs, based on data from relevant literature spontaneous speech of competent *Izḥn* speakers are presented:

- 1a. that a verbal element dictates the number of arguments and empty slots into which its associative arguments may be inserted;
- b. that the semantic import of VEs such as *-mḥ* is dictated by the semantic class of verb and qualities of the argument selected by it;
- c. that the inherent features of a verb determines the semantic import of VEs such as *-mḥ*.

This study proceeds to prove that there is a bidirectional relationship between *-mḥ*, the object of study and the argument(s) of its clause on one hand and between the verb and *-mḥin* on the other hand. The conceptual structure of a compact verb composed of *-mḥ* may therefore be construed of as Jakendoff, (1991) posits, a compact semantic unit with zero or more open slots. For Kekai (2017), such open slots in *Izḥn* must be filled by not just any element but arguments with corresponding features to serve as *specific* roles players in executing the verbal event(s). An argument voids the semantic conceptual facts about a verb if it lacks the qualities required to execute the verbal event of its clause. There must therefore be an associative relationship between the verb and clausal arguments on one hand, and an extension and clausal arguments on the other hand.

A cursory look at the structure of *Izḥn* declarative and imperative constructions comprising of *-mḥ* may not show the intricate heterogeneous relationship between *-mḥ* and the arguments of its clause. This study therefore examines the features of *-mḥin* in order to ascertain the inherent features it possesses that enables it to function as an event structure modifier and role assigner.

1.1. *Izḥn*

Izòń, sometimes wrongly referred to as Ijaw, is a generic nomenclature for the cluster of related languages neatly divided into four groups; 1. Eastern Ijo to which Kalabari, Okrika, Ibani and Nkoro belong; 2. Nembe and Akassa; 3. Buseni, Okodia and Oruama and 4. Izòń (Williamson, 1983 and Kekai, 2010). It is spoken in six states in the Federal republic of Nigeria namely; Delta, Bayelsa, Edo, Akwa-Ibom, Ondo and Rivers States. It has a total of twenty-eight dialects that are mutually intelligible (Agbegha, 1996). Mein, the dialect chosen for this study is spoken in Delta and parts of Bayelsa states.

Izòń operates a pitch accent system in which, the tone of the initial Tone Bearing Unit often controls all other tones that succeeds it in a construction. To avoid redundancy, clumsiness and for neatness therefore, the tone marking convention proposed for Izòń in Ndimele and Eferè's (2003) shall be employed. Izòń verbs are classified into three; simple, complex and compound. A simple verb is a base form without any affixe(s), while a complex is a base form with affixes attached. a compound verb is a combination of two or more elements which may be from any word category one of which must be a verb. A verb to which *-mó*, is attached is therefore a complex verb.

Few semantic types of extensions that are relevant for event specification and argument selection such as; the repetitive *báń*, inceptive *kóro*, terminative *péle*, reciprocal *zouzuu* etc. have been identified in Izòń (Kari, 2003 and Kekai, 2012). Comrie (1976) opines that situations are not described by verbs alone but by verbs together with their arguments. It is reported that compact verbslike the complexes examined in this study dictate argument selection and distribution. In particular, a verbal extension is inherently equipped with features that determine the selectional restrictions of the verb to which it is attached (Yuka, 2008; Kekai, 2012, 2017 and Kari, 2003).

Existing literature on Izòń verbs are often hinged on structuralist manifestations which neglect the inherent semantic relations between compact verbal units and their arguments. Often, the semantic imports of some extensions result in divergent interpretations which inadvertently pose challenges for learners of languages. For instance, it is difficult for non-native speakers and learners of Izòń to isolate the finite set of argument and role switches dictated by a

complex verb composed of *-mɔ̃*. It is observed that the conceptual structure of a verb to which *-mɔ̃* is attached gets modified and this inadvertently alters the number and θ -roles of the arguments. These changes constitute major objects of analyses in this study are difficult to identify in pedagogy.

1.1. Background to the study

Observation of spontaneous utterances of Izón competent speakers reveals that they conceptualize semantic dichotomies on structural representations that seem to be structurally similar due to the presence of the bound morpheme *-mɔ̃*. Several semantic interpretations are possible on event structures of verbs attached with *mɔ̃*. A challenge is often envisaged in determining the appropriate derivational structures and θ -roles of verb's arguments when *-mɔ̃* is attached. *-mɔ̃* is therefore posited as an event structure modifier and θ -role specifier with meaning potentials associated with arguments of its clause.

The motivation for grouping *-mɔ̃* as a VE stems from the diverse semantic interpretation that can be deduced from its use. Though phonetically similar, *-mɔ̃* can be interpreted as a conjunction (linker), as a modifier of verbal event structures and theta (θ) role specifier and as an object fronting marker. The constructions below illustrate the four semantic types of *-mɔ̃*:

2a. **Ebɪ arɪ kɔ̃n fɔ̃u yɔ̃u -mɔ̃-nɛ**

PN canoe take market paddle -DIR -PFV

‘Ebi has paddled the canoe towards the house’

b. **Ebɪ tɔ̃bou you -mɔ̃ -nɛ**

PN MASMK cry -CAUS -PFV

‘Ebi has caused the child (male) to cry’

c. **Tarɛ mɔ̃ Ebi mɔ̃ bo -mɛ**

PN CONJ PN COJ come -PST

‘Tare and Ebi came’

d. **buru mɪ a mɔ̃ fɪ -mɛ**

yam DET 2SG OBJ ALT eat -PST

‘the yam was eaten by her’

With diverse interpretations such as above, it is obvious that an arduous task is apparent for learners of Izòṅ especially since verbal extensions are only reported in the literature to dictate the number, syntactic slot and semantic roles of their arguments. The constrain therefore is how to conceptualize the relevant semantic interpretation and event specifications in syntactic frames with *-mṓ*. For example, all instances of the bound morpheme *-mṓ* in the construction below are semantically distinct.

3. a mṓ Tare mṓ tubouma dīna-mṓkoro-mṓ-mṓ

3SGCONJ PN CONJ **child** FEM MK **push** -DIR **fall** -CAUS -PST

‘Tare and her pushed the girl and caused her to fall down’

‘Tare and her pushed the girl towards the ground and caused her to drop’

As shown in datum (3), two distinct interpretations are given by competent speakers namely;directional for the initial verb *dīna-mṓ* and causative for the non-initial verb *koro-mṓ*. Both are bound morphemes, unlike the initial and the second *mṓ* in the construction that are conjunctions and free morphemes.

The challenge in pedagogy is apparent when the bound morpheme *-mṓ* is used in a construction as shown below.

4a. Tare a wṓni -mṓ -nṓ

PN 2SG **walk** -CAUS -PFV

‘Tare has caused her to walk’

b. Tare a wṓni -mṓ -nṓ

PN 2SG **walk** -DIR -PFV

‘Tare has accompanied her’

While in sentence (4a) *-mṓ* alters the event structure of the motion verb *wṓni* ‘walk’ to a causative one, that of sentence (4b) alters it to a directional one. Though structurally similar, the θ -roles played by the subjects *Tare* in both structures are different. In (4a) there is a causal/causee relation between the

arguments. This is in contrast with the agent/accompaniment relationship in (4b). Divergences such as these lead one to hypothesize that *mó* exhibits intricacies that needs elucidation for the benefit of learners of Izón. This being the case, the question that comes readily to mind and require response is:

5. how do competent speakers conceptualize the appropriate meaning of -*mó* and its relationship with the arguments selected by verbs to which it is attached?

Questions such as the above require cupious analyses for exposing the inherent features of *-mó* and its associative meanings with other components of its clause.

1.2. Statement of problem

While scholars, (Kari, 2003; Blench and Williamson, 2011); Kekai, 2012, 2016) assert that few verbal extensions which contribute to argument distribution, role specification and argument selection exist in Izón, there appears to be a huge gap in θ -role assignment especially for complex verbs with morphological endings such as those found in verbs attached with the bound morpheme *-mó*. This is especially so when the morphological status of the extension *-mó*, identified in this study as homophonous is critically examined. Though four types of *-mó* are identified, two have been isolated for analyses. The varied nature of the affix with dual interpretations constitutes a challenge for learners and teachers of Izón.

It is for example difficult for Izón learners to recognize and isolate the appropriate derivational argument structure and θ -roles of the arguments of a verb having been modified by *-mó'*. It is even more tasking if the universal hierarchy that determines grammatical relations (Babby, 2011), which is beyond the scope of this study are to be applied. Three basic problems therefore arise for non-native speakers and learners of Izón namely;

- 6a. how to determine the change in the event structure of verbs that are attached with -*mó'*;**
- b. how to capture the specific role alternation caused by attaching -*mó* to verbs in clauses and**

c. how to identify the argument selected by *-m̄φ* and the assigner of its θ -role.

These are the nubs which this study seeks to extricate. The analyses therefore seek to assess the semantic qualities borne by *-m̄φ* that enables it to alter the event structures of verbs and specify the θ -roles of the arguments it spots. These issues are examined by applying Theta Theory (TT) as judgment paradigm for linguistic well-formedness.

2.0. Theoretical orientation

To be able to capture the morpho-syntactic facts about the VE *-m̄φ*, the Theta Theory (TT) model of syntactic analyses proposed in Chomsky (1981) within Government and Binding (GB) theory is employed. GB is conceived of as comprising various autonomous sub-systems which interact at interface levels to produce well-formed and meaningful structures. Among the several modules that are postulated in GB, TT appears to be more relevant for the kind of morpho-syntactic modulations exhibited by *m̄φ*. This is so because; TT is concerned with the distribution and assignment of θ -roles to arguments which *-m̄φ* is observed to exhibit. The TT model can be traced back to the pioneering works of Gruber (1965) and Fillmore (1968). The tenets of the theory were later applied to syntactic analysis by others such as; Chomsky, (1981 and 1986); Koopman (1983); Sells (1985); Horrocks (1987) and Radford (1988).

The main thrust of the theory holds that, lexical categories have semantic attributes as assigners and assignees which are “written into the lexical entries of heads known as argument structure of the heads” (Sells, 1985:35). Specifically, the constraint on X-bar theory first proposed in Chomsky (1981:35) describes the specific match between arguments and θ -roles as θ -criterion. The latter holds that; “each argument of a verb bears one and only one θ -role and each θ -role is assigned to one and only one argument”. Thus, where the number of arguments in a syntactic frame does not meet or is above the assigner’s requirement, the frame is adjudged ungrammatical (Carnie, 2007). Since verbs are assigners of θ -roles and the event structure of a verb attached with *-m̄φ* as we shall see, is altered to assign specific roles distinct from those of the core predicate, then *-m̄φ* should be categorized as a modifier of event structures and by extension, assigner of roles. While a verb assigns θ -roles to the argument(s) that is capable of performing the events expressed by it, the complex nature of *-m̄φ* enables it to change the event structure of the verb, and assign specific roles to the argument(s). Following Sells (1985), Radford (1997), and Ndimele (1996) and for the purpose of this study, *-m̄φ* is construed of as capable of altering the

θ -roles of arguments of verbs to which it is attached, provided the arguments possess the capabilities to function as role players in the events specified by the verbs.

The explanatory power of TT as the mechanism for describing the morpho-syntactic variations manifested by *-mó* as conceptualized by Izón competent speakers can be exemplified with the verb *γου* ‘paddle’. Though this verb in isolation requires the co-occurrence of a subject and an object specified for agent and patient roles respectively, attaching the extension *-mó* to it does not only increase the valence feature of the verb but also alters the θ -roles chosen from finite sets of universal constraints spotted by it. Consider the illustrative constructions below that illustrate the alterations in the roles of *-mó*;

7a. *Taréariyou -mε*

PN canoe paddle -PST

‘Tare paddled a canoe’

b. *Taréarikonwariyou-mó -mε*

PN canoe INST house paddle-DIR -PST

‘Tare paddled the canoe towards the house’

c. **Taré, wariyou -mε*

PN house paddle -PST

‘Tare, paddled the house’

Semantic distinction can be observed in the structures in (7) indicating that *-mó* increases the valence feature of the verb *γου* ‘paddle’. This accounts for why sentence (7c) is ill-formed as the argument *wari* ‘house’ does not complement the nominal features of orientation required by *γου* ‘paddle’. Sentence (5b) is well-formed and meaningful because as a compact motion verb, *γου-mé* ‘paddled’ selects and assigns agent role to *Tare* and patient role to *ari* ‘canoe’ as (fig2) shows, while a goal role is assigned to *wari* ‘house’ by the VE *-mó*. Attaching *-mó* to the verb in (7b) inadvertently changes the event structure of *γου* ‘paddle’ to ‘paddle towards’ something with a goal θ -role as which in this case is *wari* ‘house’. This completes the event structure of the compact verb. The implication of the foregoing is that, *-mó* functions as an assigner of θ -roles and has semantic

relations with arguments that it selects. It therefore forms the mechanism for analyzing and elucidating the native speakers' intuitive knowledge of the intricate features of *-mǝ*.

3.0. *-mǝ* and its variables

Though verbs have often been treated as single components with little or no alteration in their conceptual structure when a bound morpheme is attached, it is observed that an affix such as *-mǝ*, imposes constraint on verbs thereby modifying and altering their event and semantic specification. *-mǝ* is therefore grouped as a VE. A VE is a bound morpheme (affix) that is capable of modifying the meaning of a verb to which it is attached. *-mǝ* as a suffix is grouped as such because of its inherent qualities to modify the event structure of verbs and alters their subcategorisation frames. The morpheme has the qualities to specify the semantic roles of the arguments that participate in its clause.

Two variants are isolated for analyses in this study; those that specify spatial orientation of a verbal event and those that add causative meaning to the verbs to which they are attached. Like tense and aspect markers in Izǝn, it occupies the post verbal slot and precedes tense and aspect markers in constructions but unlike the latter, *-mǝ* participates in extending the meanings of verbs to which it is attached as well as contribute to θ -role specifications. This accounts for why *-mǝ* is isolated as a VE rather than simply a verbal affix in this study.

A verb may be bound by its inherent features to select an argument that is capable of executing its event but attaching *-mǝ* restricts the conceptual structure of that verb to satisfy its requirements. Hence, depending on the event structure of a verb, the extension modifies it to either a causative or a directional one. The implication of this is that the VE selects and dictates the qualities of the argument that must co-participate with it.

For clear elucidation of the diverse morpho-semantic manifestations and syntactic slot *-mǝ* occupies, it is essential to first of all highlight some basic affixes which occupy the same syntactic slot with *-mǝ* and contribute to tense and aspect distinctions in Izǝn. An identical interpretation similar to the English present and past tenses as well as the perfective aspect are conceptualized in

Izón. In each of the illustrations below, the relevant tense or aspect affix is separated with hyphen.

- | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 8. | Base | PST | PRS | PFV |
| | a. <i>ḥi</i> ‘buy’ | <i>ḥi-mé</i> ‘bought’ | <i>ḥi-míní</i> ‘buying’ | <i>ḥi-dé</i> ‘has bought’ |
| | b. <i>Fúru</i> ‘steal’ | <i>furu-mé</i> | ‘stole’ <i>furu+míní</i> ‘stealing’ | <i>furu-dé</i> ‘has stolen’ |

Now consider the structures below;

9a. *Taré fun fei-mé*

_{PN}book buy -PST

‘Tare bought a book’

b. *Tarefunfei -mini*

_{PN}bookbuy -PROG

‘Tare is buying a book’

c. *Taréokubo furu -dé*

_{PN}moneysteal -PFV

‘Tare stole money’

It is obvious from the data in (8) through (9c), that Izón morphologises tense and aspect distinctions which overtly manifest as suffixes. *-mó* structurally occupies the post-verbal slot with tense and aspect markers succeeding it in clauses. While the suffixes above only show the time and internal temporal distinctions in structures, the verbs composed of *-mó* in (10) and (11) below do not, rather, *-mó* has distinct semantic interpretations in terms of event specification. The nomenclatures, directional and causative denote the modified event types derived by attaching the VE.

10. V(erb) + *mó* → direction)

- | | | | | |
|----|-------------|----------|----------------|------------------|
| a. | <i>wəni</i> | ‘walk’ | <i>wəni-mó</i> | ‘walk towards’ |
| b. | <i>yəu</i> | ‘paddle’ | <i>yəu-mó</i> | ‘paddle towards’ |
| c. | <i>din</i> | ‘weed’ | <i>din-mó</i> | ‘weed towards’ |

- d. *yeri* 'sell' *yeri-mó* 'sell towards'

11. V(erb) + *mó* → causative

- a. *ṭe* 'stop/stand' *ṭe-mó* 'cause to stop/stand'

- b. *zizi* 'reprimand' *zizi-mó* 'cause to reprimand'

- c. *paḷi* 'stick' *paḷi -mó* 'cause to stick to'

- d. *sani* 'melt' *sani-mó* 'cause to melt'

In (11), by attaching *-mó*, each verb translates as an event with directional gravitation towards a goal. The events preempt source/goal relationships as can be deduced from their conceptual structures. On the other hand, those in (11) diverge by anticipating causal/causee relationship for their semantic arguments. The implication of these is that, each set of V + *mó* requires participants with distinctly specific features to function as role players in particular ways that the other set does not. *-mó* therefore, alters the semantic conceptual structure and inherent features of verbs they co-occur with. The constructions in (12) and (13), though structurally similar, are distinct and vary semantically in event structure and θ -roles played by their arguments.

12. *Taré, ayapɪdewèni-mó-me*

PN_{infant} walk-DIR -PST

'Tare walked towards the infant'

13. *Taré ayapɪdewèni-mó-mɛ*

PN_{infant} walk-CAUS-PST

'Tare caused the infant to walk'

Though the extension *-mó* surfaces in (12) and (13), they diverge with respect to their activity structures and θ -roles played by their co-arguments. Hence, the subjects of the clauses namely, *Tare* in both clauses is semantically specified for

theme and causal roles respectively. Their syntactic objects namely; *ayapide* ‘infant’ in both clauses is specified for goal and causee roles respectively. *-mó* therefore, designates events and inadvertently specifies the θ -roles of the arguments of its clauses as:

14a. directional: thus, causing situations to orient towards a goal, or

b. causative: thus, causing a situation to be borne by a causal argument to affect a causee argument.

The position held in the current study therefore is that, though verbs such as *aswéni* ‘walk’ may belong to a specific semantic class e.g. motion verb, *-mó* alters its event specification to correspond with the specific semantic features of the arguments selected by it. Based on evidence from data therefore, two interpretations that are syntactically and semantically determined as is typical of inflectional paradigms are postulated and analyzed for *-mó*;

15a. those that specify the direction or kineme involved in an Event, as such designate source/goal relationship and

b. those that designate causative meaning as such specify causal/causee relations.

A bottom-up approach to text analyses which isolates morphemes and combines them with other morphemes to derive syntactically and semantically well-formed structures is in place.

3.1. The directional *mó*

The directional *-mó* in this study is a VE which attaches to a verb to instantiate its spatial orientation. This implies that the valence features of a verb together with the θ -roles of its arguments are altered from their canonical forms. In the constructions below, the directional verbs in the structures in set (b) select additional arguments and assign goal/place roles to them. Consider the structures below

16a. *Taré wèni -ni*

PN walk -PFV

b. *Taré fowèni -mó -ni*

PN market walk -DIR -PFV

	THV	-VE		TH	GL	V	-VE	-VE
	‘Tare, has walked’			‘Tare, has walked towards the market				
17a.	<i>warékaj</i>	<i>-wẹrimì</i>	b.	<i>a</i>	<i>kọ̀nwarekaj</i>	<i>-mọ</i>	<i>-wẹrimì</i>	
	house	lock		3SG	take	house	lock	-DIR
-FAC	PATVVE	-FAC		PATPLVV	-VE-VE			
	‘The house is locked’			‘She is locked up inside the house’				
18a.	<i>Ebidesi</i>	<i>-mẹ</i>	b.	<i>Ebitùunkịdesi</i>	<i>-mọ</i>	<i>-mẹ</i>		
	Ebi	jumped		PNback	FOCMKjump	-DIR	-PST	
	AG	V			AGGL			
	‘Ebi jumped’			‘Ebi jumped backwards’				
19a.	<i>arú</i>	<i>yọ̀u</i>	b.	<i>arú</i>	<i>kọ̀ntẹ̀inyọ̀u</i>	<i>-mọ</i>		
	canoe	paddle		canoe	take	upstream	paddle	
	-DIR							
	TH			THGL				
	‘Paddle the canoe’			‘Paddle the canoe towards				
	upstream’			upstream’				

The (a) structures in(16)– (19) select sole subjects with each associated with the events specified by their verbs. the verbs assign distinct θ -roles to the sole subjects of their clauses. The (b)structures are composed of compact verbs with V +-mọ thatselect additional arguments. This is made possible by the presence of -mọ which assign specific θ -roles to them. Thus, the compact verb *wẹ̀ni-mọ̀* in (16b)selects *fọ̀u* ‘market’ and assigns to it a goal θ -role In (17b) *kai-mọ̀* selects *waré* ‘house’ and assigns a place θ -role and so on. From the foregoing, it can be summarized that the functions of -mọ includes:

- 19a. to modify the event structure of the verb;
- b. to alter the θ -roles of the arguments of a clause;
- c. to modify the semantic sub-class of the verb to which it is attached and
- d. to select additional arguments with events orienting towards another argument

The VE *-mó* also translates as a causative extension. In which case, the compact verb is construed of as requiring an additional argument that bears the action denoted by it. The next section is devoted to elucidating the causative -*mó*.

3.2. The causative *mó*

The causative *-mó* extension is that which when attached to a verb derives a causative verb as such adds the additional semantic import of causation to the conceptual structure of the verb. Causative verbs that are derived this way also require arguments with causal-causee relations in their clauses. By virtue of being a modifying element therefore, *-mó* changes the θ -roles of the sole arguments of their clauses when attached to verbal bases in clauses. The causative verbs below are derived by affixing *-mó* to them.

- | | | | | |
|------|--------------|----------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 20a. | <i>viiin</i> | ‘quench’ | <i>viiin-mó</i> | ‘quench-cause to be’ |
| b. | <i>diba</i> | ‘big’ | <i>diba-mó</i> | ‘big-cause to be’ |
| c. | <i>owónu</i> | ‘raise’ | <i>owon-mó</i> | ‘raise- cause to’ |
| d. | <i>sára</i> | ‘quick’ | <i>sára-mó</i> | ‘fast-cause to be’ |

As the data show, all verbs translate as causative verbs by affixing *-mó*. This implies that all the hitherto base forms (stative and dynamic) verbs have been made causative verbs. as such; anticipate causee/causals are participants in their clauses. This conforms with Levin and Rappaport (2005); Levin (1993); Davis (2001) and Grimshaw’s (1990) assertion that not only is structural meaning relevant to argument realization but also the root which bears the idiosyncratic properties that are relevant to argument selection and distribution. A structure with *-mó* that is void of a causal argument is adjudged ill-formed as (24) illustrates.

- | | | | | |
|------|------------------------|--|----|------------------------------|
| 21a. | <i>ṭɛniviin-ne</i> | | b. | <i>Taré ṭɛniviin-mo-né</i> |
| | fire quench -PFV | | | PN fire quench -CAUS - |
| | PFV | | | |
| | ‘The fire has quenched | | | ‘Tare has quenched the fire’ |
| 22a. | <i>Taré deṛi-me</i> | | | <i>Taré edeṛi-mo-me</i> |
| | PN laugh -PST | | | PN 1SG laugh -CAUS-PST |

‘Tare laughed’

‘Tare caused me to laugh’

23a. eremá d̩̀ba emi

eremá è d̩̀ba-m̩̀- m̩̀

woman big_{FAC}woman_{1SG} big_{CAUS PST}

‘The woman is big’

‘The woman made me big’

24. Taré viin-m̩̀-ŋ̩̀

PN quench -CAUS -PFV

*‘Tare has quenched’

In (21a) the verb *viin* ‘quench’ selects a sole argument with theme θ -role but when *-m̩̀* is attached to the verb to derive *viin-m̩̀* in (21b), the compact verb, now a causative verb selects an additional argument to function as a subject causal in the event expressed. The hitherto θ -role of theme of the sole subject is now modified to function as causee as the event expressed is borne by it. Like the directional *-m̩̀*, the functions of the causative counterpart are summarized as follows:

25a. to modify the event structure of the verb;

- e. to alter the θ -roles of the arguments of a clause;
- f. to modify the semantic sub-class of the verb to which it is attached and
- g. to select additional arguments with effect borne by a causee

4.0. Conclusion

This paper sought to examine the morpho-syntactic features of *-m̩̀* having observed that a challenge occurs for teachers and learners of Iz̩̀n especially as regards VE such as *-m̩̀* which has diverse semantic interpretations. It proceeded to isolate the morpho-syntactic facts and idiosyncratic features of *-m̩̀* using a bottom-up analysis by employing the theta theory of Chomsky (1981). Two semantic classes of *-m̩̀* that have close association with their arguments and verbs were identified and isolated having been attached to base forms of verbs; a directional *-m̩̀*, which shows the kinemes of a situation as such requires an additional argument that the event gravitates towards and

causative-*mó* which modifies a base verb to a causative one and specifies the obligatory co-occurrence of causal/causee arguments. This confirmed the proposal made in this study that, *-mó* is homophonous.

Analyses revealed that *-mó* has the inherent capacity to dictate the number of arguments that should obligatorily participate in its clause as well as dictate the θ -roles of the arguments that it spots. Thus, if a directional verb is derived, an argument with goal role is specified with the theta role of a sole argument in a control structure altered. Similarly, if a causative verb is derived, the theta role of a sole argument in a control construction is altered with the argument selected by the VE satisfying its semantic requirement. The distinction to make therefore, is to identify the semantic class of verb to which the VE *-mó* is attached and the features of the argument(s) selected by the verb. Motion verbs seem to derive directional verbs while generally, dynamic verbs may derive both directional and causative verbs.

This study thus, concludes that since *-mó* dictates the event structure, θ -roles of the arguments of its clause and alters the Θ -role of the subjects of control constructions, *-mó* should be regarded as a verbal extension and an assigner of theta role. It is hoped that this study will lead this and other linguist to examine other intricate morpho-syntactic elements which instantiate diverse meanings in the derivational argument structure of Izón and indeed other natural languages.

References

- Agbegha, M. (1996). *Izón English Dictionary*. Port-Harcourt: Riverside Communications.
- Babby, L. H. (2011). *The Syntax of Argument Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blench, R. and Williamson, K. (2011). *Verbal Extensions in Izón*. (Draft Circulated for Comment). United Kingdom: Cambridge CBI 2AL
- Carnie, A. (2007). *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*. Oxford, MA: Blackwell.
- Chomsky, N. (1957). *Syntactic Structure*. Mouton
- Chomsky, N. (1981). *Lectures on Government and Binding*. (Studies in Generative Grammar 9.) Foris, Dordrecht.

- Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin and Use*. Praeger: New York.
- Comrie, B. (1976). *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Comrie, B. (1985). *Tense*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Davis, A. R. (2001). *Linking by Types in the Hierarchical Lexicon*. CSLI Publications. Center for the Study of Language and Information. Stanford University: Stanford CA.
- Fillmore, C. J. (1968). Case for Case. In E. Bach and R. T. Harms, eds, *Universals in Linguistic Theory*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York. 1-88.
- Grimshaw, J. (1990) *Argument Structure*. MIT Press: Cambridge MA
- Gruber, J. S. (1965). Studies in Lexical Relations. Doctoral dissertation. MIT: Cambridge, MA. (Reprinted in Gruber, 1976: 1-210).
- Hare, M., Michael, J Thomson, Kelly, S and McRae, K. (2009). Activating Event Knowledge. *Cognition*, 111, 2: 151-167.
- Horrocks, G. (1987). *Generative Grammar*. New York: London Group.
- Jackendoff, R. S. (1991). Parts and Boundaries. In Levin, Beth; Pinker, Steven, eds. *Lexical and Conceptual Semantics*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell. 244. ISBN 1-55786354-7
- Kari, E. E. (1995). Extensional Suffixes in Degema. *Africanische Arbeitspapiere*, 44: 149-168.
- Kari, E. (2003). "Serial Verb Constructions in Degema, Nigeria". African Study Monograph. *Research Institute for Language and Cultures of Asia and Africa*. Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. 24 (4), 271-289.
- Kekai, C. P. (2010). The Internal Structure of the Izon Verb Phrase. Unpublished MA Thesis. Department of Linguistics and African Languages. University of Benin: Benin City.
- Kekai, C. P. (2011). The Socio-Linguistic Phenomena of Tag Switching and Code-Switching in Izón Language. *International Journal of Arts*,

Humanities, Social Sciences and Cultural Studies (IJAHSS), 1. Warri: Cuba Communications and Publishing Company.

Kekai, C. P. (2012). "The Internal Structure of Izõn Juxtaposed Verb Phrases" In Ozo-Mekuri Ndimele, ed. *Kiabarà` Supplement on Language*. Port-Harcourt: University of Port-harcourt Press. 3,287-306.

Kekai, C.P. (2016). The Product of the Synergy between Vowel Elision and Tonal Re-Association in Izõn. Ozo-MekuriNdimele (ed). In *Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to the Study of African Linguistics. A Festschrift for Ahmed H. Amfani*. M&J Grand Orbit: Port-Harcourt-Nigeria

Kekai, C. P. (2016b). "The Argument Structure of the Izõn Verb" Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. Department of Linguistics Studies. University of Benin: Benin City.

Kekai, C.P. (2017). The Semantics of Inherent Body-Parts in the Illocution of Derived

Compound Verbs in Izõn. Oye Taiwo (ed). In *Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria (JOLAN)*. Vol. 20. No. 2. LAN: Nigeria.

Koopman, H. (1983). *The Syntax of Verbs*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

Levin, B. (1993). *English Verb Classes & Alternations: A Preliminary Investigation*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

Levin, B. and M. Rappaport H. (2005). *Argument Realization*. Cambridge: CUP.

Levin, B. and M. Rappaport H. (2004). The semantic determinant of argument expression. A view from the English resultative construction. In Jacqueline Gueron and Jacqueline Lecarme (eds). *The Syntax of Time*. 478-494. Cambridge/London: MIT Press

McRae, K., Ferretti, T. R. and Amyote, L. (1997). Thematic Roles as Verb-Specific Concepts. *Language and Cognitive Processes*. 12 (2), 137-176.

Ndimele, O (1996). On the 'Kwaness?'. Insights from Verb Serialization. In *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 52. 125-136.

Ndimele, O and Efere, E. (2003). "On WH-Question in Izon". In Ndimele, Ozo-Mekuri, ed. in *The Linguistic Paradise: A Festschrift for Emenanjo, E Nolue*. Aba: National Institute for Nigerian Languages.526-540

- Radford, A. (1988). *Transformational Grammar*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: CUP
- Radford, A. (1997). *Syntax: A Minimalist Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sells, P. (1985). *Lectures on Contemporary Syntactic Theory*. U.S: Center for the study of Language and Information.
- Williamson, K. (1983). Orthographies of Nigerian Languages. *Manual 11*. Lagos: National Language Center.
- Yuka, L. C. (2008b) Lamnso' Verbal Extensions: An Overview. In Iranian Journal of Language Studies (IJLS). The Department of English, University of Zanjan, Iran in Collaboration with the American Lulu Inc. 2, (2) 147-72.