

Beyond connectives in Ngwa

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Abstract

Connectives are a grammatical category in many languages of the world which serve to link constituent structures together. Connectives exhibit varied morphological forms and are used to perform different functions in the languages. The goal of this paper is to describe the forms, functions, and general characteristics of connectives in Ngwa dialect of Igbo. The primary and secondary data were collected through elicitation and written materials, respectively. The X' model of syntactic analysis was used in the discussion because it helps to establish the structural link between the heads of a construction and their dependants. The study identified more than eight words used to conjoin structures in the dialect. All the conjoining elements have basic CV syllable structure, with an initial consonant (or a syllabic nasal) followed by either a low tone open vowel /à/ or a high tone back vowel /ú/. Connectives cannot appear in sentence final positions where they introduce no clause, and the coordinating conjunction, *là* 'and' cannot be used in sentence initial position. Some conjoining words like *là* 'and', *mà* 'or', perform overlapping functions based on the type of structures they conjoin hence each can be used as coordinating and subordinating conjunction. This study is relevant in contributing to the body of literature in Ngwa dialect.

Keywords: Conjunction, Coordinating, Conjunct, Subordinating, Syntax.

Abstract in Ngwa-Igbo

Njikọ bụ akụkụ utoasụsụ nọ n'ọtụtụ asụsụ mbaụwa nke na-ejikọ otu mkpuruokwu, nkebiahiri, maọbụ ahiriokwu na ibe ya. Ha na-aputa ihe n'odidi di iche iche na-arukwa oru di iche iche n'asusu. Ihe odide a lebara anya ikowaputa odidi, oru, na ejirimara njiko n'olu Ngwa. Akara mmuta e jiri mee nke a bu nke a kporo X-bar Syntax, n'ihi o na-enye aka ikowaputa ka otu akuku asusu na ibe ya siri nwee mmekorita n'ahiriokwu ha no. Ihe mmuta a choputara na njiko niile nwere odidi mgbochume-udaume (CV); njiko enweghi ike ino na ngwucha ahiriokwu; oru ufodu dika la na ma na-amako nke nwere ike bute mgbagwoju

anya. Ma a ga-achoputa ndiiche n'oru ha site n'ileba anya n'otu e si were nke obula jikoo okwu. Ihe omumu a bara uru n'ihi o tinyekwuru aka n'ihe omumu e merela n'amumamu olu Ngwa.

Introduction

Words exist separately in language. However, separate words can be joined or merged together to form longer stretches like clauses, phrases, and sentences. The items used in achieving this linking function are called conjunctions. A conjunction can coordinate, correlate, or subordinate one part of a construction to another. The lexical categories are grouped into two basic classes: the open and closed classes. Conjunctions belong to the closed class. The closed class of words do not admit further elements. The open class of words, on the other hand, permits the addition of elements. There are different types of conjunctions such as coordinating, subordinating, correlating, adversative, copulative and disjunctive conjunctions. However, the two classes most commonly recognised and discussed in the literature are the coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.

Coordinating conjunctions, also called coordinators, are used to join expressions of equal status or equivalent structures. They link two or more words, clauses, phrases or sentences of equal importance, function or structure. Thus, they conjoin members of the same subclass. Subordinating conjunctions, also called subordinators, on the other hand, are used to link dependent structures to the independent constituents. This paper will discuss coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in Ngwa Igbo by describing their types, forms, and functions.

Literature review

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is the X' model of Chomsky (1970). The X'-syntax has the ability to provide a universal format of Universal Grammar (UG), instead of particular language rules. It represents the structure of phrases and sentences using a hierarchical tree diagram. Its aim is to account for structural configuration of phrases in language. Thus, it makes statements about the phrase structure that are true for all phrases, rather than those of a particular type.

The X' theory is an improvement on former models of grammatical analysis like PSG. According to Ndimele (1992), PSG "is a model of grammatical analysis whose major goal is to identify the constituents of a construction and how they are related to one another". The X' syntactic model recognises three levels of analysis: lexical, intermediate, and maximal levels. The lexical category is the head, while the phrasal category is the maximal projection of the head. The intermediate category is the projection between the head and

its maximal projection. Thus, in X', the maximal projection is linked to its head via a middle or intermediate category. This is referred to as the principle of maximality in X'-syntax. The X'-syntax is used in this study to describe the structure of phrases, clauses, and sentences. It is adopted in analysing conjoined constructions here by first, determining the connecting word, followed by identifying its category then, drawing the X' structure, and finally examining the relationship between the connective and its dependents.

Conceptual considerations

The word “conjunction” is derived from two Latin words: *con* ‘together’ and *jungere* ‘to join’, which literally means ‘to join together’. Conjunctions perform the grammatical function of joining and expanding conjoined elements. They also indicate the structural relationship between members of the conjoined constituents. According to Mbah (2011, p. 40), “a conjunction is both a linking word as well as the process of joining or synthesising sentence-structures in grammar”.

Carnie (2007, p. 90) recognises two types of conjunctions as: “the coordinate and the subordinate conjunctions.” Coordinate conjunctions connect two or more phrases together on an equal basis. He provides the following as examples of conjunctions in English: “and, or, nor, neither...nor, either...or” (Carnie, 2007, p. 47). Coordinate conjunction gives equal importance to the words or sentences that it connects. Consider the following example in (1) below.

1. [Joe] and [the boy] went to the Church.

Accordingly, only constituents of the same syntactic category can be conjoined. It therefore shows that the elements a coordinating conjunction links are similar in importance or structure, as the data above indicates. According to Dik (1968, p. 25), a coordinator is a construction in which “two or more members which are equivalent as to grammatical function are bound together at the same level of structural hierarchy by means of a linking device”.

Subordinate conjunctions, on the other hand, are used when the element near the subordinator do not have equal semantic value. Carnie (2007, p. 47) refers to subordinators as “complementiser,” and they include: “that, for, if, and whether.” He notes that this class of conjunctions “also connect structures together, but they embed one clause inside of another instead of keeping them on an equal level.” That is to say that a subordinator introduces a subordinate clause. A subordinate clause is syntactically dependent on the matrix clause. The following sentence in (2) below contains a subordinate clause.

2. He thinks [*that* he will agree].

Kirkpatrick (2010, pp. 217-221) provides the following words in English as examples of coordinate conjunctions: “and, but, or, yet;” words in pair are often for emphasis such as “both...and, either...or, neither...nor.” For subordinators, he lists the following: “as soon as, because, although, as if, while” and so on. In general, conjunctions show varied morphological forms, different semantic functions in different languages. While coordinators (most often) join syntactically equivalent constructions, subordinators join one clause (a subordinate clause) into the matrix clause.

Empirical review

As already noted, conjunction is an element that is seen in most languages of the world. Thus, Kambon (2012, p. 1) carried out a research on Yoruba language. In the study, he described conjunctions as “words that join parts of a sentence together to create a perfect semantics.” He identified three types of conjunctions as: the coordinate which include: “and, or, and, but;” the correlate: “either ...or, neither...nor, and both...and,” and the subordinate conjunctions: “although, because, since, whether, while, however, in order to, and instead of.”

In Igbo language, conjunctions are called *ñjiko*, meaning ‘connectors’, ‘connectives’, or ‘binders’. Ume et al (1989) and Ofomata (2005, pp. 68-83) agree that the Igbo language has a number of words that function as conjunctions. These words are grouped into two, namely: coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. The coordinating conjunctions include: *nà* ‘and’, *mà/mànà* ‘but’, *mà...mà* ‘both...and’. The subordinating conjunctions are: *nà* ‘that’, *mà* ‘if/whether’, *kà* ‘when/as/so that’, *kàmà* ‘instead of’, *kémgbé* ‘since’, *tumà* ‘instead of’, *tùtù/túpú* ‘before’, *tùtùù* ‘until’, *hà* ‘instead of/then.’

Emenanjo (1978, p. 86) classifies conjunctions in Igbo under the closed word-class and notes that they function as linking words. He goes further to say that Igbo conjunctions have initial consonants and are never found in utterance final position. He identifies two types of conjunctions. The first is coordinating conjunctions, which join equivalent structures and they include: *nà* ‘and’, *mà...mà* ‘so...as’, *kà...kà/kwà...kwà* ‘both...and’. The second one is the subordinating conjunctions which are used for linking dependent and independent structures. The following are some examples: *kà* ‘when’, *mà* ‘if/whether’, *nà* ‘that’, *kàmà* ‘instead of’, *túpú* ‘before’.

Justification for the study

Some works have been done peripherally on conjunctions in Standard Igbo and other dialects of Igbo, like Emenanjo (1978); Ezeomeke (2004); Ndimele (2003); Kammelu (2002), etc. However, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no detailed work has been done on connectives in Ngwa dialect of Igbo. This underscores the need and relevance of the present study, which aims at investigating how conjunction as a grammatical category

functions to link one part of a construction to another in Ngwa. The next section is the methodology adopted in the work.

Methodology

The elicitation method of data collection was used to gather information from four competent native speakers. This was complemented by the researcher’s intuitive knowledge as a native speaker. The researcher compiled some simple words, phrases and short sentences and asked the informants to join them together. Afterwards, the informants were asked to determine which structures depend on the other. In this way, the researcher was able to identify and differentiate coordinating from subordinating conjunctions. The tonal marking convention adopted here is that all tone bearing units – the high, low and down-step tones – are marked. The next section looks at the different forms conjoining words take in Ngwa dialect.

Forms of conjunctions in Ngwa Igbo

There are three forms conjunctions can take in Ngwa dialect. There is the CV form whereby a consonant appears as the initial sound then followed by a vowel.

Table 1

	CV group	Gloss
i.	là	‘and/that’
ii.	mà	‘if’
iii.	tà	‘or/so that’

The next is the CV-CV whereby there is the initial consonant sound which is followed by a vowel sound, then another consonant and vowel sound.

Table 2

	CV-CV	Gloss
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i.	kámà	‘instead’
ii.	sítá	‘because of’
iii.	túmà	‘instead of’
iv.	tutu	‘before’
v.	màlà	‘but’
vi.	mà...mà	‘both’, ‘neither...nor’
vii.	mà...mà	‘both...and’

The final one is the CV-N-CV. What is observed here is not a sequence of consonants as such feature does not exist in Igbo word syllabification or structure. Instead, the N-CV structure is a situation whereby the first sound in the chain is a syllabic nasal (N) then followed as usual by a vowel sound. It has to be pointed out that Igbo language operates an open system word structure. Hence, there is no consonant cluster in the language.

Table 3

	CV-N-CV	Gloss
i.	dúmgbè	‘until’
ii.	kémgbè	‘since’
iii.	lágbànyèghì	‘although’
iv.	maóbù	‘or’

As would be observed from the data, some conjunctions in Ngwa Igbo can be used to perform more than one conjoining function.

Data presentation

The data presented here are extracted from the speech pattern of the informants. It is observed that Ngwa has rich varieties of conjoining words. These conjunctions are categorised into different groups.

The Conjunction *là* ‘and’

Là ‘and’ as a coordinator

Là functions as a coordinating conjunction in Ngwa. The English equivalent is ‘and’. It is used to conjoin two structures of equivalent grammatical status. The conjunction *là* is a monosyllabic word with a simple CV syllable structure. The consonant element /l/ in the conjunct is a lateral alveolar sound, while the vowel /à/ is an open vowel with a low tone. The following example in 3(a) shows where *là* ‘and’ is functioning as coordinating conjunction.

- 3(a) *m̀m̀à* *là* *ógù*.
 knife and hoe.
 ‘A knife’ and ‘a hoe.’

The example in 3(a) is a simple conjunction of two separate lexical items: the nouns *m̀m̀à* *là ógù* ‘knife and hoe’. The conjunction has two arguments (NP, NP) called the conjuncts, as schematised in 3(b).

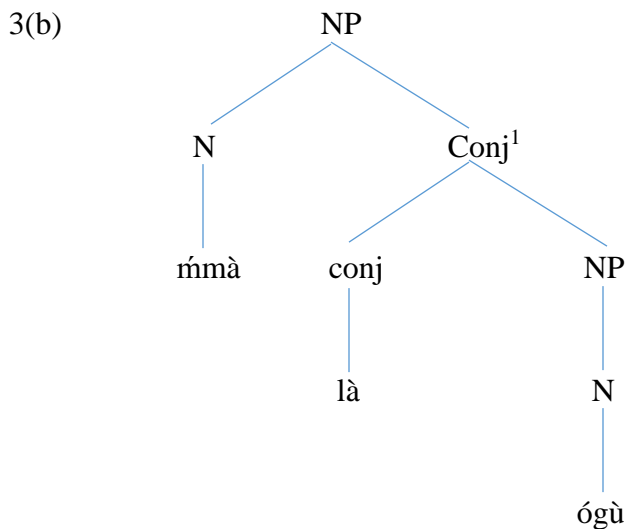


Fig. 1 Showing a sample of a simple coordinate conjunction.

- 4(a) *ì-gū* *ákwúkwó* *là* *í-dē* *hwé* *m̀m̀à* *m̀m̀á*.

prf-read book conj. prf-write thing good BCN.

‘To read books and to write are good.’

‘Reading and writing are good.’

(b) Jí là édè m-bú hwé órírí.

Yam conj. cocoyam prf-be thing eating.

‘Yam and cocoyam are edibles.’

The conjoined elements in 4(a) are both Verb Phrases: *igū ákwúkwó là idē hwé* ‘to read’ and ‘to write.’ The verb root, *-gú* ‘read’ and *-dé* ‘write’ in each case, has a simple CV structure, i.e. a combination of the consonant and the high tone vowel. With the addition of the infinitive marker <i> it is realised as *igū* ‘to read’ and *idē* ‘to write’, respectively, with a change in the root vowel from a high tone to a down-step. The situation in 4(b) is similar to that in 4(a) above, but with Noun + Noun construction: *Jí là édè* ‘yam’ and ‘cocoyam’. The phrase structure is represented in 5(a) as:

5(a) [S [NP [NP Jí] [COMP là] [NP édè]] [VP [V' [V bú] [PN]]]

The sentence is schematised in a tree diagram presented in 5(b) below.

5(b)

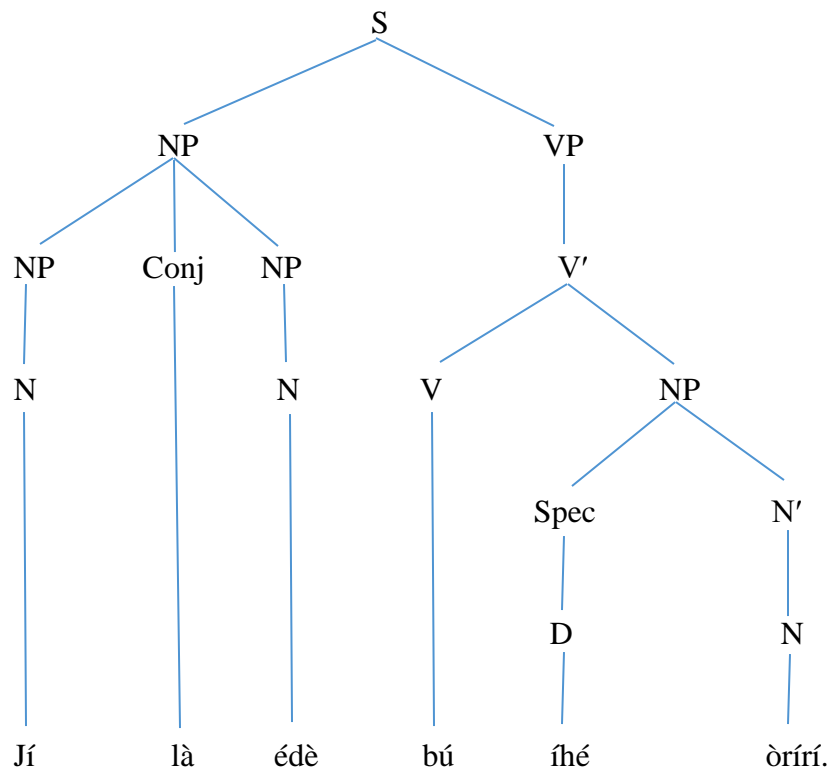


Fig. 2 Showing a schema of a simple coordinate conjunction.

The coordinating conjunction, *là* ‘and,’ in the sentence in 4(b), links two Noun Phrases (NPs) namely: *Jí* ‘yam’ and *édè* ‘cocoyam’ of equal status. The sentence in 4(b) is structured in terms of its phrase structure, with the coordinated NP ‘*Jí là édè*’ functioning as the subject. In the predicate position is the main verb (V) *bú* ‘are’ of the sentence, specifically a copula (linking verb). *ihé oriri* ‘edibles’ is the predicate nominative (PN) that functions as the complement of the copula *bú* ‘are.’

It is important to note that in 5(b) above, the conjoined constituents have equal status and that makes the constructions grammatical. An attempt to conjoin unlike conjuncts results in ungrammaticality. The reason for the ill-formedness is because in a coordinating conjunction, there should be syntactic and semantic agreement (Hudson 1987). In other words, there should be agreement feature between the conjoined words or conjuncts.

6. *I-gu ákwúkwó là jí mmà rímá.
 prf-read book conj. Yam good BCN.

‘To read and water are good.’

it is obvious that there is no agreement between the conjuncts in the construction in (6) above. Thus, the datum in (6) is an example of zeugmatic construction where two unequal constructs, a VP *ígú ákwúkwó* ‘reading book’ and a NP *jí* ‘yam’ are conjoined. Again, there is no semantic agreement between the first clause and the second one in this construction and, for this reason, the construction crashed and, consequently, becomes unacceptable.

Là ‘that’ as a subordinator

A subordinate or embedded clause depends on a higher construction called the main, matrix, or independent clause. In Ngwa Igbo, *là* ‘that’ conjunction is a subordinator used to introduce a dependent clause. *Là* ‘that’ is monosyllabic, with a CV structure; a consonant and a low tone open vowel. It is homonymous with *là* ‘and’ as a coordinator, in which case, they present a problem of ambiguity in some situations. However, this ambiguity is resolved by looking at the type of constituents each conjunction introduces. The data below are instances where *là* ‘that’ functions as a subordinating conjunction to introduce an embedded construction.

7(a) Úhàrà m-kpá-rá ányì là ó fé-rè l’úlé.
 Joy prf-rise-pst 3pl compl. Ipro pass-pst prep.exam.

‘We are happy that he passed the examination.’

(b) Là ó fé-rè l'úlé m-kpá-rá ányì úhàrà.
 Compl Ipro pass-pst prep.exam prf-rise-pst 3pl joy.

‘That he passed the examination gladdened our hearts.’

(c) *Ó kpárá ányì úhàràó fé-rè l'úlé là.
 It cause 3pl joy Ipro pass-pst prep.exam compl.

‘It gave us joy he passed the examination that.’

The constructions in 7(a-b) are examples where *là* ‘that’ functions as a subordinator. In 7(a), the complementiser *là* ‘that’ appears in sentence medial position, while in 7(b) it is at sentence initial position. Both constructions are grammatical and therefore acceptable in Ngwa dialect. In 7(c), however, the complementiser appears in sentence final position and it renders the construction ungrammatical and unacceptable. The implication of the above is that the conjunction, *là* ‘that’ can only appear in sentence initial and medial positions to derive grammatical and acceptable sentences in the dialect.

Further observations in 7(a) show that the matrix clause: *úhàrà mkpárá ányì* ‘we were happy’, exhibits a superior rank to the embedded clause: *ó fé-rè l'úlé* ‘he passed the examination’. This supports the idea that in a subordinate clause construction, the second clause is subsumed into the first. The first part is the independent clause, while the second is the dependent clause. Again, 7(b) is an instance of focus construction, whereby the embedded sentence is promoted to a higher position in the matrix clause. Thus, 7(b) has stronger reading, an indication that the foregrounding of the conjunction suggests communicative prominence.

A final and another interesting observation to be emphasised is the different functions *là* performs in a construction. When *là* functions as a coordinating conjunction, it cannot be fronted to the sentence initial position. However, when its role is subordinating, it can be focalised as the data in 7(c) indicates.

The conjunction *tà* ‘or’

***Tà* ‘or’ as a Coordinator**

Tà ‘or’ is a distributive coordinating conjunction. A distributive construction is concerned with distribution between a pair of objects. The words in a distributive construction cannot be used to refer to a group of three or more elements. They also cannot be used to refer to a group of indefinite size. They can only refer to countable nouns.

Tà ‘or’ is a monosyllabic low tone coordinator with a CV segmental structure. It is used in Ngwa dialect when asking questions that require the hearer to say or choose specifically his answer from available options. Examples are given in the data below:

8(a) Ò guru úrí **tà** ò gbárańkwà?
 2sg sing.rV.pst song conj. 2sg dance.rV.pst dance?
 ‘Did he sing or did he dance?’
 Did he sing or dance?

(b) Ị gà írí jí **tà** ì gà irí éde?
 2sg go prf.eat yam conj. 2sg go prf.eat cocoyam?
 ‘Will you eat yam or will you eat cocoyam?’

In 8(a), the conjunction *tà* ‘or’ is used to ask a question that requires the hearer to make a choice between two options presented before him for consideration.

The coordinator, *tà* ‘or’ cannot be used as a correlative conjunction because it results in ungrammaticality. Consider the following example in (9) below.

(9) ***Tà** ògbèdè **tà** ókényè mbiàrà?
 Conj. young or elder prf.come.rV.pst?
 ‘Or young or old came?’

The data in (9) above, *tà* ‘or’, is used in a correlative manner and this results in ungrammaticality. The reason is that elements linked by correlative constructions must have parallel grammatical structures. The data in (9) did not meet up with the above requirement hence it is marked as ill-formed or imprecise.

Correlative conjunctions work together and relate one sentence element to another. They resemble coordinating conjunctions more than the subordinating conjunctions. Hence, the sentence fragments they connect have fairly equal value. This is to say that correlative conjunctions connect words and phrases that carry equal weight in the sentence.

In (10) *tà* ‘or’ is used as a distributive coordinator to link two nouns. However, the result is unacceptable in the Ngwa dialect. The implication is that *tà* ‘or’ is used as a distributive coordinator between two clauses of equal status. It is also used in a question constructions.

10. *Ézè **tà** Ólà ñgà ígā àwòm.
 Ézè conj. Ólà prf.go prf.go bush.

‘Ézè or Ólà would go to the farm.’

Tà ‘that’/‘so that’ as a Subordinator

The conjunction, *tà* introduces a clausal complement to a matrix sentence. *Tà* in this case translates as ‘that’, showing that the complement clause gives the reason or the expected behaviour foreshadowed in the matrix sentence. The following examples in 11(a-) are drawn from data on Ngwa dialect collected for this study.

11(a) Ó kpòtàrà nwá yá **tà** ányí rímátá ónyé ó
bú.
2sg call.ext.rV child pro compl. 3pl prf.know.ext who pro
be.

‘She brought her child that we could know him’.

(b) **Tà** ó kpòtàrà nwá yá ányí rímátá ónyé ó bú?
Compl. 2sg call.ext.rV child pro 3pl prf.know.ext who he be?
‘Did she bring her child that we could know him?’

(c) *Ó kpòtàrà nwá yá ányí rímátá ónyé ó bú **tà**?
‘She call.ext.rV child pro 3pl prf.know.ext who he be compl?’
‘Did she bring her child we could know him that?’

The subordinator, *tà* ‘that’ in 11(a), is used to introduce an assertive dependent clause. It complements its matrix by giving the reason for the action expressed in the matrix clause. Here, the complementiser, *tà* ‘that’ sits in sentence medial position and the construction is acceptable in Ngwa dialect. The data in 11(b) involves focussing. The complementiser *tà* ‘that’ is moved to the initial position of the sentence. This results in a question construction, making the sentence both grammatical and acceptable.

However, one encounters a different scenario with the data in 5(c), where the complementiser *tà* ‘so that’ is moved to the sentence final position. In this position, the sentence is considered ungrammatical and unacceptable at the same time. It is, thus, possible to conclude, from the data, that the positions where *tà* ‘so that’ can occur in a construction in Ngwa dialect as a subordinator are the sentence initial and medial positions.

The Conjunction *mà/màlà* ‘but’

Mà/Màlà ‘but/or/but that’ as a Coordinator

Màlà ‘but’ is a low tone disyllabic contrastive coordinator with CV-CV syllable pattern. It is used as alternative to *mà* ‘but’. The datum presented in (12) below is an example of how it functions in Ngwa dialect.

12. *Ányì* *̀n-ché-ré* *yá* ***màlà*** *ó* *bíá-fú-ghú*.
3pl prf-wait-pst pro conj. 2sg come-suf-neg.

‘We waited for him, but he did not come’.

Both *màlà* and *mà* denote the sense or idea of proffering a reason for the occurrence of the event expressed in the preceding construction. They can be used interchangeably in interpersonal communication.

On the other hand, it is possible to use the conjunction *mà...mà* ‘both...and...’ to join words or phrases. *Mà...mà* is a low tone monosyllabic contrastive coordinator, with a CV structural pattern. The following example in (13) shows how this conjunction is used in the dialect.

13. *Mà* *nwókē* *mà* *nwáányì* *m-bià-rà*.
Conj. man conj. woman prf-come-pst.

‘Both men and women came.’

A reduplication of the conjunction *mà* presents a different scenario as could be seen from the example in (13) above. In example (12), *mà* ‘but’ appears as a contrastive coordinator. However, in (13), it is used as a correlative coordinator where the conjunction appears twice, at the sentence initial and medial positions, and each introducing a nominal complement.

14. **Ányì* *̀n-ché-ré* *yá* *ó* *bíà-fú-ghú* ***mà***
3pl prf-wait-pst pro pro come-suf-neg conj.

‘We waited for him he did not come but’.

The construction in (14) is ungrammatical because the coordinator *mà* ‘but’ is in the sentence final position. In this position, *mà* ‘but’ cannot be used to derive any grammatical construction because it does not introduce a complement clause, therefore, it is rejected.

Mà ‘if/whether’ as a Subordinator

The subordinator, *mà*, ‘if’ or ‘whether’ is used in the following examples in 15(a-c) to relate one part of a construction (the second or dependent clause) to another part (the preceding or matrix clause) to complete the idea expressed in the preceding sentence. Examples are presented below:

15(a) *Ányì ògà í-bíá mà é kwé wè*
 3pl prf.Aux prf.go compl. IMPr agree them
 ‘We will come if they agree’.

(b) *Á-chò-rò m í-má mà ò nò l’úlò*
 prf.find.rV.pst 1sg prf.know compl. 2sg stay prep.house
 ‘I want to find out if/whether he is in the house’.

The constructions in 15(a-c) are instances where *mà* ‘if/whether’ functions as subordinating conjunction. It introduces a conditional complement sentence in 15(a). In 15(b), the speaker employs it to inquire about or find out the true situation or position of something.

(c) **Mà** ò bìà-rà mà ó bíá-fú-ghú ányí ò-gà í-bíá.
 Compl. pro come.rV compl. pro come.suf.neg. 3pl prf.will prf.come.
 ‘Whether he comes or not we will come.’

(d) **Ányì ògà í-gá é kwé wè mà.*
 3pl prf.Aux prf.go prf.agree them compl.
 ‘We would go they agree if.’

The example in 15(c) has the same function as 15(a), while the construction in 15(d) is ungrammatical because the complement *mà* ‘if/whether’ appears in sentence final position.

The conjunction sītā ‘because of’

Sītā is a subordinate conjunction which translates to mean ‘so that’, ‘because of’ or ‘due to’ in the English language. It has a high tone syllable pattern in the first vowel and a down-

step tone in the second. *Sitā* ‘so that’ or ‘because of’ is a disyllabic subordinate conjunction with a CV-CV pattern. Examples are presented in 16(a-d) below.

16(a) Úmō á-gwúlá m **sītā** íjè m gà-rà.
 Breath prf.finish.suf 1sg compl. walk 1sg go.rV.pst.
 ‘I am tired because of the trekking I did.’

(b) Ézè ò-lòtàrà **sītā** íhú ònà yá.
 Ézè prf.return.ext.rV.pst conj. prf.see father his.
 ‘Ézè came back so that he will see his father’.

In 16(a-b), the subordinator **sītā** ‘because’ or ‘so that’ appears in the medial position of the sentence. Here, it introduces a complement sentence that gives reason for the event expressed in the main clause.

(c) **Sītā** íjè m gàrà, úmō á-gwú-lá m.
 Compl. walk 1sg go.rV.pst breath prf.finish.suf 1sg.
 ‘Because of the trekking I did, I am tired.’

In 16(c), the conjunction *sītā* ‘because’ occurs at sentence initial position. It places a stress on the reading of the sentence by fronting or focusing the reason for the action at the initial position of the sentence.

(d) *Úmō ágwúlá m íjè m gàrà **sītā**.
 Breath prf.finish.suf pro walk pro go.rV.pst compl.
 ‘Strength has finished me walk me went because.’

In 16(d), the subordinator is used in sentence final position. In this position, the construction is rendered ungrammatical and, therefore, unacceptable in the dialect.

The conjunction **kémbè** ‘since’

The conjunction **kémbè** is translated as ‘since’ in English language. It is used to conjoin two parts of a sentence (or actions) which express time duration. **Kémbè** ‘since’ is a trisyllabic subordinator and has a CV-N-CV structure. Examples of its use in a construction are presented in 17(a-d) below.

17(a) Ézè ò-dì í-hí úrá **kémbè** m lò-tà-rà.
 Ézè prf.be prf.sleep sleep conj. 1sg return.ext.rVpst.

‘Ézè has been sleeping since I came back.’

In 17(a), the subordinator *kémgbè* ‘since’ occurs in the sentence medial position where it introduces the subordinate clause. However, the conjunction *kémgbè* can equally be fronted in order to achieve higher degree of communicative prominence through focalisation. The following example is a possible and acceptable construction in the dialect.

(b) **Kémgbè** m lò-tà-rà Ézè ò-dì í-hí úrá.

Conj. 1sg return.ext.rVpst Ézè prf.be prf.sleep sleep.

‘Since I returned, Ézè has been sleeping.’

In the data in 17(b), *kémgbè* ‘since’ moves to the sentence initial position with the independent clause that it introduces. Both operations and structures in 17(a-b) are grammatical and therefore acceptable in the grammar of Ngwa Igbo.

The constructions in 17(c-d) present something different from the foregoing scenarios. The subordinating conjunction is in sentence initial position before the matrix clause, and the structure derived is ungrammatical in this case.

(c) ***Kémgbè** Ézè ònò l’úlò útútú.

Conj. Ézè prf.be prep.house morning.

‘Since Ézè in the house morning.’

The information here indicates that the fronting of *kémgbè*, before an independent or main clause as seen in the 9(c), is not allowed in the grammar of Ngwa Igbo. The same ungrammaticality is playing out also in 9(d) below.

(d) *Ézè ònò l’úlò útútú **kémgbè.**

Ézè prf.be prep.house morning conj.

‘Ézè has been in the house morning since.’

In 17(d), ‘*kémgbè*’ is located at sentence final position where it introduced no clause and the construction generated is faulty.

From every indication, the data and observations show that the subordinating conjunction *kémgbè* ‘since’ functions only to introduce a subordinate clause and not a matrix clause. The tree diagram for 17(a-b) below is shown as 10(a-b). 10(a) is the unmarked structure, while 10(b) is the marked structure. 10(b) shows the movement of the conjunction (complementiser), *kémgbè* ‘since’ into the complementiser node at sentence initial position. Hence, it gains communicative prominence. Consequently, it leaves behind an

empty trace of itself with which it is co-indexed. The arrows from Spec-VP to Spec-IP in 10(a-b), indicate the origin of the subjects *Ézè* and *m* from the predicate and its movement to Spec IP. The *rV* suffix is lowered from T^1 to the verb *lòtá* ‘return’ because it is a verbal suffix which marks the past tense form of the verb.

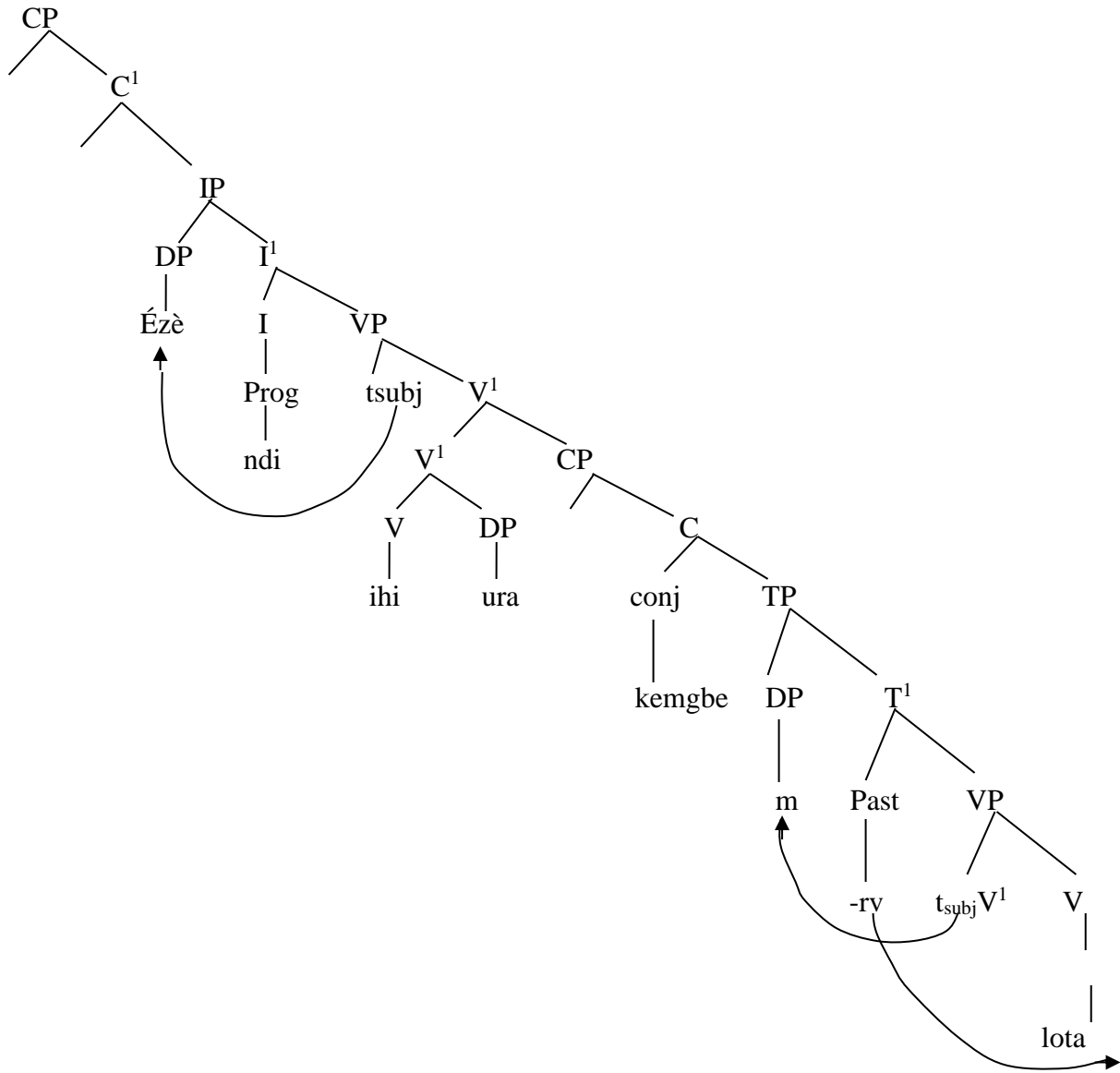
Discussion

This study looked at connectives as syntactic category with data drawn from Ngwa dialect. It observed that the general function of connectives in the dialect is to link words, phrases, or sentences. Characteristically, they facilitate the addition of verbs in a sentence. Some connectives help in the expression of an inter-verb meaning. For instance, *tà* in 5(a) indicates an earlier event, *sítá* in 8(a-c) indicates reason or consequence, and *kémgbè* in 9(a-b) indicates an earlier or simultaneous event. Connectives are useful in facilitating grammatical variation. Some connectives functioning as coordinators have overlapping functions in their use. For instance, *là* ‘and’ and *mà* ‘but’, could be used either as coordinating or subordinating conjunctions. Both also have simple CV segmental structure with low tone vowel. Due to this overlapping feature, the reader could be swayed or thrown into some confusion in determining the true meaning of a sentence. However, such confusion can be resolved by making recourse to the context of use in each case.

The conjunction *tà* ‘or’ used in a construction specifies the structural relationship between conjuncts in a sentence. However, it is used as distributive coordinating conjunction only in question constructions. For the subordinating conjunction, *kémgbè* ‘since’ to occupy the sentence initial position, it must move with its clause. Otherwise, the derived construction would be ungrammatical. In terms of categories that connectives link, the data show that they conjoin NPs of equal status as in 1(a) and 2(a), equivalent VPs as in 2(a), question constructions as in 4(a-b). Others are adjectival phrase (AdjP) as in 3(a) and clausal constructions as in 5(a). Thus, almost all parts of grammar can be conjoined in Ngwa dialect.

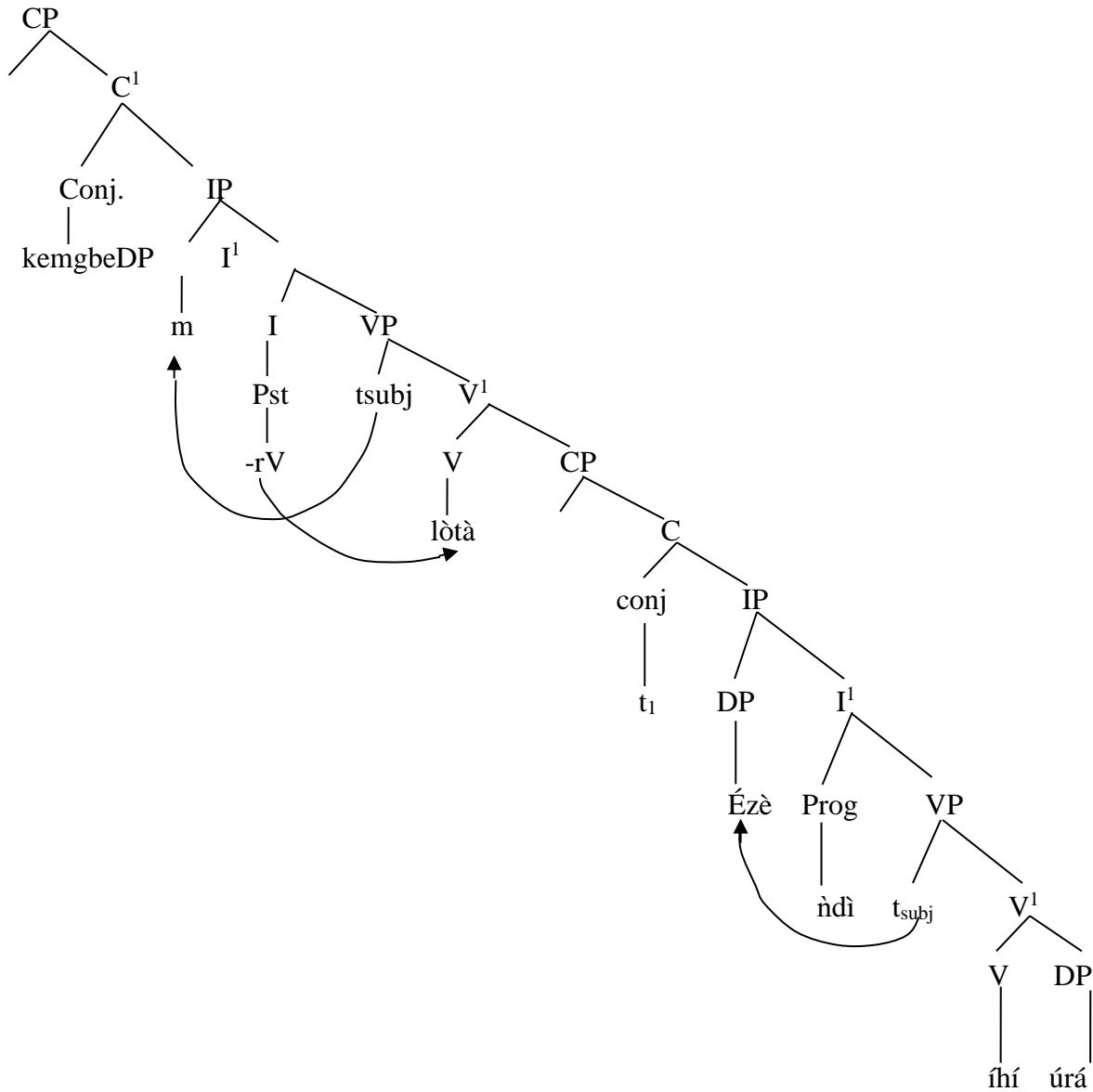
Further observations indicate that connectives in Ngwa cannot appear in sentence final positions. Therefore, the only places of occurrence of connectives to be able to derive grammatical sentences are either at sentence medial or initial positions, as the case may be. The study shows that subordinate conjunctions assume greater communicative prominence in Ngwa dialect when it appears in sentence initial position. Again, subordinate conjunctions cannot be used at sentence final positions where they do not introduce any clause. It was discovered that the connective, *mà* ‘but/or’, can function as a distributive, contrastive or correlative conjunction depending on the type of construction. Finally, *màlà* ‘but’, which functions as an alternative to *mà* ‘but’, cannot be used as a correlative conjunction in Ngwa dialect.

10(a)



Ézèndì íhí úrákémgbèm lòtàrà
 'Ézè has been sleeping since I came bac

10(b)



Kémgbèrín lètàràÉzèndì íhí úrá

‘Since I returned, Ézè has been sleeping’

Conclusion

Connectives in Ngwa dialect are a productive syntactic category that is used to link together two parts of a construction. They can either function as coordinate or subordinate coordinators. In some cases, one conjunct could have an overlapping function. The basic form a connective assumes in the dialect is monosyllabic CV or disyllabic CV-N. Sometimes, connectives could be fronted where they serve to give communicative effect to a construction. Nevertheless, the usual position is the sentence medial or initial position.

Abbreviations: 1sg = first person singular, 2sg = second person singular, 3sg = third person singular, 3pl = third person plural, BCN = bound complement noun, Conj. = conjunction; Compl. = complementiser, Ext. = extensional suffix, Neg. = negation, prep. = preposition, prf = prefix, Pst = past, rV = root verb, Aux. = auxiliary verb, Suf. = suffix.

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