

The applicative marker in Eleme locative progressive constructions

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1. Introduction

1.1 Eleme (Ogonoid, Benue-Congo, Niger-Congo)

Population: 58,000 (UBS 1990), 51,228 (Nigerian Congress Online 2005).

Location: Eleme Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Word Order: SVO.

Morphosyntax: Extensive aspectual system: verbal reduplication, affixation, auxiliary verb constructions. 6 way distinction in participant reference between person (1/2/3) and number (SG/PL).

Tone: 3 tones: high [á], mid (unmarked) and low [à].

1.2 Overview

- i. In Eleme an applicative marker =*rú* (henceforth referred to as the LOCATIVE-APPLICATIVE) either increases the grammatical valency of a clause or signals a change in the semantic role of arguments of a clause. It is primarily found in constructions of a locative nature.
- ii. The locative-applicative attaches at the phrase level and may exhibit phonological effects on the host to which it appends. It may consequently be described as a CLITIC or PHRASAL AFFIX.
- iii. The locative applicative forms a necessary component in a pair of periphrastic constructions expressing progressive aspect, referred to here as LOCATIVE PROGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS.
- iv. The behaviour of the locative-applicative goes against observed tendencies that valence-changing morphology is usually found closer to the verb stem than other types of derivational or inflectional morphology (Bybee 1985).

2. Applicative morphology

APPLICATIVES are a type of VALENCE-CHANGING MORPHOLOGY.

Changes in VALENCY concern adjustments in the number or semantic role of syntactic arguments in a given clause and are characterised by changes in transitivity.

2.1 Grammatical valence vs. semantic valence:

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|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) a. He ate the food. | 2 participants, BIVALENT |
| b. He ate. | 2 participants, MONOVALENT |
| c. The food was eaten. | 2 participants, MONOVALENT |

2.2 Semantico-syntactic roles/grammatical relations

- Comrie (1978) **S, A and P**
- Croft (2003) **T**: ditransitive direct object participant role cluster
G: ditransitive indirect object participant role cluster

2.3 Transitivity: intransitive, transitive, ditransitive

Hopper and Thompson (1980): transitivity is a continuum.

‘Transitivity is traditionally understood as a global property of an entire clause, such that an activity is ‘carried over’ or ‘transferred’ from an agent to a patient.’ (Hopper and Thompson 1980:251)

Table 1. Parameters of transitivity (Hopper and Thompson 1980:252)¹

	HIGH TRANSITIVITY	LOW TRANSITIVITY
A. PARTICIPANTS	2 or more participants	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	O non-individuated

¹ Hopper and Thompson (1980) use O in a similar way to Comrie’s P.

3. The locative-applicative in Eleme

Increase in transitivity, grammatical valence and semantic valence:

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|---|---|
| (2) a. òsáro ʔà
Osaro leave
'Osaro left.' | b. òsáro ʔà ñtʃíá
Osaro leave Nchia
'Osaro left Nchia.' |
| (3) a. òsáro ʔà=rú òsíla
Osaro leave=APPL Osila
'Osaro left Osila.' | b. òsáro ʔà=rú òsíla ala ñtʃíá
Osaro leave=APPL Osila in Nchia
'Osaro left Osila in Nchia.' |

In (3a) and (3b) *òsíla* 'Osila' is encoded as a P argument.

4. The locative-applicative as a phrasal affix

- AFFIX: a bound morpheme attached to a LEXICAL ROOT or STEM.
- CLITIC: a form that resembles a word, but is phonologically dependent on a neighbouring word or HOST (cf. INDEPENDENT WORD (Zwicky 1985)).
- Klavans (1985) proposes that clitics attach at the phrase level and are best analysed as PHRASAL AFFIXES.
- Lexical affixes are more selective about the host to which they are attached than phrasal affixes, i.e. clitics (Zwicky and Pullum 1983, Zwicky 1985, Klavans 1985).
- The locative-applicative attaches at the right edge of the constituent containing the verb stem and its arguments.

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| (4) a. òsáro n ^{wè} ñna oso m̀baló
Osaro put meat in soup
'Osaro put meat into the soup.' | b. òsáro n ^{wè} ñló=rú oso m̀baló
Osaro put salt=APPL in soup
'Osaro added salt to the soup.' |
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| (5) w-ò-kpárá n ^{wè} -ra èmáŋgi=yó=rú
CONJ-2-want put-also maggi=2SG.POSS=APPL
'And (if) you want add your Maggi to it too.' |
|---|

- In (4a), *ñna* 'meat' [P] is put in a PERIPHERAL location cf. *ñdʒírà* 'fish'
- In (4b) *ñló* 'salt' [T] is added to an object [G] cf. *ñnɔ* 'oil', *m̀mu* 'water'.

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| (6) a. òsáro be re ke n ^{wè} ñna oso m̀baló
Osaro COP REL PRTL put meat into soup
'Osaro is the one that put meat in the soup.' |
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b. *òsáro be re ke n^{wè} ñna m̀baló

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| (7) òsáro be re ke n ^{wè} ñló=rú m̀baló
Osaro COP REL PRTL put salt=APPL soup
'Osaro is the one that added salt to the soup.' |
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These changes in valency are determined by a change in transitivity: higher affectedness of the soup (cf. Table 1.)

- A pause is not possible between the locative-applicative and its host.
- No comparable TONIC form.
- No lexical item has [r] in onset position in Eleme (cf. bound morphology).
- High vowels are neutral (non-harmonic) in Eleme. Limited evidence for phonological integration between =rú and host.

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| (8) a. nārā dū-mi
snake bite-1SG
'The snake bit me.' | b. òsáro ʔà-mu=rú
Osaro leave-1SG=APPL
'Osaro left me.' |
|--|---|

5. Locative progressive constructions

All progressives may ultimately derive from constructions with some form of locative meaning (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:129-133, cf. Heine 1994):

- Postural verbs: 'sit', 'stand', 'lie'.
- More general locative verbs: 'be at', 'stay', 'live'.

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| (9) a. búsí do eke èwe
cat LOC under bed
'The cat is under the bed.' | b. ñ-do ekpá ñsá
1SG-LOC near fire
'I am near the fire.' |
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| (10) èbai ne-do=rú e-dʒɔ òdʒɔ
IPL IPL-LOC-APPL DEP-swim swim
'We are in the process of swimming a swim.' |
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| (11) Elements of meaning in the origins of progressives (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:136) |
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- an agent
- is located spatially
- in the midst of
- an activity
- at reference time

- (12) a. ñ-do-rú e-tere ñdzirá
 1SG-LOC-APPL DEP-cook fish
 'I am in the process of cooking fish.'
- b. ñ-do-r-é-tere ñdzirá
 1SG-LOC-APPL-DEP-cook fish
 'I am in the process of cooking fish.'

The =*rú* morpheme no longer resembles a clitic, but rather a more integrated part of the morphology.

The Eleme locative progressive construction is relatively young:

- Comparable constructions not attested in the descriptions available of the other Ogonoid languages.
- Semantically transparent, periphrastic structure (Hopper and Traugott 2003)
- 85% of progressives are periphrastic, morphological progressives acquire more general imperfective meanings (Dahl 1985)
- All described Ogonoid languages have reflexes of *ka-*, a morphological progressive, including Eleme (Bond and Anderson, forthcoming). It is often used imperfectively for backgrounding of information in Eleme.

- (13) a. àkára do-r-é-dò-ε b. àkára ka-dò
 rain LOC=APPL-DEP-rain.fall-DEP rain PROG-rain.fall
 'Rain is in the process of falling,' 'Rain is falling.'

- Tense is not marked morphologically in Eleme.
- Eleme shows early signs of developing a grammaticalized (suppletive) system of tense within progressive constructions.

- (14) a. è-do-ri=r-é-fo-e ñsógū
 3-LOC-3PL=APPL-DEP-plant-DEP fluted.pumpkin
 'They are planting pumpkin.'
- b. è-tò-ri-r-é-fo-e ñsógū
 3-stay-3PL=APPL DEP-plant-DEP fluted.pumpkin
 'They were planting pumpkin.'

- (15) té-ʔù-ri òsòò òsílá do-rú e-kpèègbe
 when-die-3PL yesterday Osila LOC=APPL DEP-beat.drum
 'When they died yesterday, Osila was beating the drum.'

Compare structurally analogous construction expressing obligation:

- (16) a. m̀-bò=rú e-si-èta
 1SG-tie=APPL DEP-go-town
 'I should go to town'

6. Valency and derivational morphology

Bybee (1985): survey of verbal morphology in 50 languages.

Near universal tendency for valency to be expressed morphologically (90% of the grammars she consulted = 45 languages) (Bybee 1985:29).

- =*rú* is not syntactic expression: 'In syntactic expression the different semantic elements are expressed by totally separable and independent units, that is, in separate words.' (Bybee 1985:11)
- =*rú* is not inflection: Boundedness: Some evidence for boundedness
 Obligatoriness: Not obligatory
 Predictability of meaning: Not predictable

Valence-changing morphology is almost always best characterised as being derivational rather than inflectional: 'large meaning changes are characteristic of derivational processes that do not change syntactic categories.' (Bybee 1985:83)

BENEFACTIVE SUFFIX *-se* (17) and INSTRUMENTAL SUFFIX *-ma* occur closer to the verb root than suffixes marking subject and object suffixes (where present). Compare constructions containing =*rú* in (18).

- (17) àbà dʒa-se-ri-ye ðlùdʒa
 3PL buy-BEN-3PL-3SG orange
 'They bought him an orange.'

- (18) a. è-mò-rí-ε=r-ádē b. ò-wa-mò-na-i=r-ádē
 3-see-3PL-3SG=APPL-eye 2-AP-see-RECIP-2PL=APPL-eye
 'They loved her.' 'You love each other.'

Obele (2001:262) provides two contrasting positions for the applicative:

- (19) a. m̀o osila=rū adē b. m̀o=rū adē osila
 see Osila=APPL eye see=APPL eye Osila
 'Love Osila.' 'Love Osila.'
 CONSERVATIVE CONTEMPORARY

This may be representative of a general trend towards marking of valency on the stem.

- (20) wɛ n^wɛ̃=rú ñdžirá n^w-ègba
 and put=APPL fish put together
 ‘And add fish and put together.’

7. Summary

- The =rú morpheme an applicative.
- It is a phrasal affix.
- Commonly found with verbs expressing locative meaning.
- Necessary component in locative progressive constructions.
- Phonologically more integrated under vowel deletion rules.
- High degree of semantic relevance to host phrase, despite relative order of verbal morphology.
- Tentative evidence for changes in the type of host compatible with =rú.

Abbreviations

1	first-person	LOC	locative verb
2	second-person	PL	plural
3	third-person	POSS	possessive
APPL	applicative	PROG	progressive
BEN	benefactive	PRTCL	particle
CONJ	conjunction	REL	relative
COP	copula	SG	singular
DEP	dependent verb marker		

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