

SYNTACTIC PECULIARITIES OF IDÒMÀ RELATIVE CLAUSES

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ABSTRACT

The paper studies the syntax of Idòmà relative clause constructions. The motivation for the choice of the study was because of the central role relative clauses play as the nucleus of complex sentences in languages. The study examines relative clauses in Idòmà by describing the principles for realising them in the language. Both primary and secondary sources reveal that Idòmà relative clauses are introduced by the relative pronoun |n| ‘who’, ‘which’, ‘whom’, which is realised as a high nasal /n/ [+ pronoun] feature. The following sound is determined by the initial sound of the vowel of the succeeding word. Ónyè, which also means ‘who’ is used in situations where a relative clause introducer occurs at the beginning of the clause. In other words, /n/ and ónyè are in complementary distribution. As in other languages Idòmà relative clauses are adjectival modifiers subordinated to an NP. In Idòmà the pronoun is at the NP position as the head of the clause. That is, the relative pronoun is always the first member of a relative clause, no matter its position in the deep structure of the sentence in which it is found. Also, as in other languages, Idòmà relative clauses are embedded in the main clause, which, in effect, modifies the subject NP. Relative clauses in Idòmà are not sensitive to number distinction, as in Hausa and English, for example. They are however characterized by time adverbials. Idòmà relative clauses are sensitive to mood and aspect, post-nominal as well as benefactive and are amenable to adjunction, complementation and coordination. Idòmà relative clauses have the following accessibility hierarchy and structure: subject, direct object, indirect object, genitive and object of comparison.

Keywords: Syntax, Idòmà, Relative Clauses.

INTRODUCTION

The study focuses on the structure of Idòmà relative clauses because of the central role they play in languages. Idòmà is the language of the Idòmà people who are predominantly found in Benue state with clusters of them found among other ethnic groups, especially the Àfọ and Alágò, in Nasarawa state and Yálà, in Northern Ogoja, in Cross River state. The language is grouped along with Igede, Ukaan, Akweya, Yartye, and Etulo languages as belonging to the Idomoid group of West Benue Congo phylum of African languages. Other languages in this phylum include Igboid, Bantoid, Yoruboid, and so on (William, K. & Blench, R. 2000). Linguistically, the Idòmà of Benue State share a lot in common with their neighbours, but culturally, they differ to a large extent. Languages such as Alágò in Nasarawa State, Igala and Ebira in Kogi State, Akweya and Etulo in Benue State, as well as Jukun in Taraba State are sisters of Idòmà. These languages have a high level of mutual intelligibility, given their historical and genetic commonalities. As stated by Greenberg (1963), mutually intelligible languages usually are of close geographic origin to the other and display very similar grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

METHODOLOGY

The study is limited to the Otúkpò dialect, the central dialect of Idòmà in which the orthography is written and approved by the National Educational Research Council of Nigeria (NERDC). Otúkpò dialect is spoken in Ugbójù, Oglèwù and Otúkpò districts. The research is however, concentrated in the Otúkpò district where the standard Idòmà dialect is spoken.

The primary sources came from the field, which included those that were derived directly from the native speakers through interviews and observations. These involved writing out over one seventy complex sentences translated into Idòmà by educated respondents. The language assistants/ consultants were Idòmà - English bilinguals; whose competence in the chosen dialect and the data could be verified by any native speaker of Idòmà. The consultants were chosen because they were native speakers and have lived in Otúkpò for a long time. Secondary data are Idòmà language programmes such as *ókà* news translation in Idòmà, *ókà ónónè*, a magazine programme and *óchà* Idoma folktales from media houses such as Joy FM, Otúkpò, Radio Benue Idékpà Sub-Station, textual materials such as thesis, dissertations and projects, journal articles, chapters in books, encyclopaedia, textbooks, internet, and so on. The researcher's native speaker competence in the language was also very useful in the collection, collation, and elicitation of the data. This also helped to give direction to the work. The respondents were selected based on age, bilingual status, and length of time they had lived in the areas which were are Igbánònmájè, Odúdájè, Eúpì, Àhà as well as Otúkpíchò. Five respondents were selected from each of the villages, that is, three men and two women each from each village.

The researcher made use of five techniques for data collection, that is, the oral interviews, which involved one - on - one interaction between the researcher and the respondents, his own intuition as a native speaker, tape recording of interactions between the researcher and the respondents and subsequent translation of the data by the research assistants. Competent native speakers who were proficient in the dialect were also used to translate lesson series such as teaching English by radio, translation of English to Idòmà by Radio Benue Makurdi, Radio Benue Idékpà Sub-Station and Joy FM Otúkpò. This enabled the researcher to elicit actual translation of the English to Idòmà version and to analyse Idòmà relative clauses.

From the data, seventy sentences were generated, out of which fifty, representing over ninety percent, were found to contain relative clauses. Based on the method applied for the collection of data, it was possible to have enough data needed for the analysis of relative clauses in Idòmà. This research adopted the descriptive method. In the analysis of Idòmà relative clauses, we recorded the rules to which the members of the community actually conform to the rules or norms of correctness in Idòmà.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

A relative clause is a sentence formation higher than the simple sentence with one or more depending on the other to make meaning; it is also one of the options for post-modifying a noun phrase. The relationship between the relative clause and the noun it post-modifies, according to Lesley (2000), can vary according to the clause function played within the relative clause by the referent of the head noun. According to Kroeger (2005:89), 'a clause occurring within an NP as either a complement or a modifier, modifying the clause is a kind

of an adjunct referred to as relative clause. A relative clause is formed ‘when one clause is embedded into an NP of another clause’. When the NP that has the same referent occurs in two clauses, a relative clause can be formed by embedding one into another (Finegan, 2000).

Trask (1993:238) defines a relative clause as “a type of clause, most often a subordinate clause, which serves to modify a noun phrase”. Using relative clauses, instead of multiple short sentences ‘makes a text more concise and easier to process than complex attributive structures’ (Anderson, 2009:2). In English and many other languages, according to Anderson (2002), a relative clause is usually a constituent of the noun phrase whose head it modifies. To Lass (1987:184), a relative clause is ‘an adjective modifier subordinated to an NP – noun phrase, with a pronoun inside the NP (the head of the clause)’. He gives the following English example:

(1). *The man [who ate fruits] died a horrible death.*

In the example (1) above, the clause ‘**who ate fruits**’ is embedded in the main clause; ‘**the man-----died a horrible death**’. As a modifier of ‘**the man**’ and the relative pronoun ‘**who**’ is co-referent with ‘**the man**’ and it also happens to be the subject on its own. Related to this, the head and the relative pronoun do not have to possess the same grammatical functions in their classes because referential and grammatical identities are not the same (Lass, 1987). This is illustrated in the following example:

(2). The man **who (m) I saw** was big.

‘**The man**’ in the example (2) above is the subject of the main clause, while the co-referent ‘**who (m)**’ is the object of ‘**see**’ in the subordinate clause.

A relative clause can focus on the referent of the preceding noun in different ways, as the relative pronoun functions as adverbial (of place) subject, adverbial (of time) and direct object. For example, it is only the predicator and the complement function that cannot be performed by a relative pronoun (Lesley, 2000). This means that the speaker has the option of omitting the relative pronoun when it is followed by a subject of the subordinate predicator. When there is an omission of the relative pronoun in the construction, it is deliberate, since it could be recovered and such a situation is called **recoverable ellipsis**, a situation where both speaker and hearer are able to fill it in if asked to do so. Thus, a reader will know that a relative clause is indeed missing, even though no relative pronoun is physically present to test its status as a relative clause.

Generally, relative clauses combine two related sentences with one dependent clause introduced by a relative pronoun, (Anderson, 2009). English relative clauses are introduced by a special set of pronouns such as: *who, which, that, whom, whose, where, when, why and a zero* relative pronoun, which replace the head noun (the noun being modified) of the main clause.

Bagari (1987:14) agrees with Galadanci (1976) that relative clauses in Hausa are introduced by the word ‘**da**’, but added that **wandɓa, waɗɗa, wandɓandɓa**, are also used; these he refers to as complementizers (COMP) that are markers of syntactic subordination between the relative clause and the main clause. Galadanci (1976:89), further states that the Hausa relative clause can function as subject or as object of a whole sentence as well as a qualifier within the NP, as in the following examples:

(3)i. **Wanda suka kama** ya gudu (subject)
Rel they VP, it ran away.
‘Those they caught has ran away’

ii. Ali ya sami **wadanda** suka rubuta labarin (object)

NP AUX VB Rel wrote the story

‘Ali got those who had wrote the story’.

iii. Bala ya sayi littafin **da** Audu ya bashi Laraba.

NP AUX VERB NP REL Audu AUX say him story

‘Bala bought the book which Audu told him about.’

Bagari (1985) claims that time adverbial clauses are relative clauses in Hausa and that they are noun phrases that are modified restrictive relative clauses; the time clause is a full clause in the sense that it has an antecedent noun **locaci**- ‘time’ and the relative clause marker ‘**da**’. For instance:

(4). Yaran sun ga sarkin **lokacin da suka** shiga birni.

NP AUX NP time PRO enter the city

‘The children saw the king when they visit the city’.

In Hausa, according to Bagari (1987:103), the preposition ‘**sai**’ can introduce a relative (completive aspect) clause, but is translatable as ‘**until**’, and the subordinate clause it introduces is translated as a ‘temporal adverbial clause’. The antecedent of a relative clause may, or may not, be present on the surface, but whether the antecedent is there, or not, the adverbial clause is always interpreted as temporal clause, and there must be the presence of relative clause marker ‘**da**’. He gives the following example to make his point clearer thus:

(5). **bai yi aiki mba sai (lokacin) da suka zo.**

PRO NEG VERB, until PRO have arrived.

‘He didn’t work until (at the time) they came’

Rowland (1969) states that relative clauses in Yoruba are introduced by a word ‘**ti**’ which always follow the noun or pronoun it qualifies and serves for both singular and plural. If the relative clause qualifier is a noun it must be followed by the subject. Pronoun **o**-he/she/according to Rowland (1969) is the verb form, with which that pronoun can be used. He cites the following example:

(8). **Omodé t’ó ri i**

Child REL him

‘The child who saw him.’

The use of the pronoun **nwon** ‘they’ in relative clauses has the effect of emphasizing the idea of plurality, it shows that the speaker has in mind a number of single sets rather than a collective group. He gives the following example in (8).

(9). **Àwọ̀n aláaru tí wọ̀n gbé e wà.**

NP REL VP come

‘The load carriers that brought it.’

The plural **àwọ̀n**, he reports occurs more frequently with relative clauses than **òun** because, besides representing **àwa**- ‘we’ in indirect speech, it also functions as the plural of **emi** ‘I’.

Rowland mentions that, Yoruba has no special possessive relative word corresponding to English ‘whose’, it uses **ti** followed by appropriate possessive pronoun with the following examples:

(10). **Omode tí fílà rẹ̀ sonu**

child Rel cap poss lost
'The child whose cap is lost.'

According to Emenanjo (1978:199), there are no relative pronouns corresponding to English **who, that, which** in Igbo and that the relative clause is marked by tone pattern and the tonal relationship between the NPs and the following verb is the same as that between the nouns in the associative words. He classifies Igbo relative construction into two types:

Type A

- (11).i. *Ākwà ọzútàrà dí mmà* "the clothes he brought are good."
 ii. *Ākwà ányí zútàrà dímmà* "the clothes we bought are good".
 iii. *Ākwà únù zútàrà dí mmà* "the clothes you (pl) are good."

Type B

Tonal relationship between the NPs and the following verb is the same as that between the two nouns in the associative construction.

- (12) i. *Ākwà dí ébé à mǎrá mmà* 'the clothes here are good'.
 ii. *Nrí dí ébé à mǎrá mmà* 'the food here are good'.
 iii. *Nwáányí nwèrè ákwà mǎrà mmà* 'the woman who has the clothes is beautiful.'

Mbah (2006) reports that relative clauses are divided into two: Subject qualifying relative clauses and object qualifying relative clauses in Igbo. The subject qualifying relative clauses in Igbo provides additional information about the subject of the sentences. Mbah (2006) gives the following example:

- (13). *Ndí nǐlè byàrà n'ógè gà – àlà n'ógè*
 People all who come past in time will go in time
 'All who came in time shall go in time'.

The Syntax of Idómà Relative Clauses

Idómà relative clauses are introduced by the relative pronoun [n] 'who', 'which', 'whom', which is realised as a nasal sound /n/ which bears high tone [+ pronoun] feature. The sound following [n-] is determined by the initial sound of the vowel of the succeeding word such as; **né**, in nĒnēnchè, **na** in nÁléchénù, **ní as** in nígbánọ and **nọ as** in nọípè, **núm as** in nùm mà. This realisation is due to the fact that most Idómà NPs are vowel initial. Also, **onyé** 'who' is used in situation where the relative clause introducer is at the beginning of the relative clause structure. Idómà, does not operate different relative clause introducer for human and non-human entities. A relative clause in Idómà is an adjective modifier subordinated to noun phrase (NP), with a pronoun inside the NP (the head of the clause). Consider the data in (1):

- (14). *ọchẹ á [nó lé ikpóčí] kwú ikwú bọbí*
 man the [REL VERB NP] die death bad.
 'The man [who ate the fruits] died a horrible death'

In (14) above, the clause **nó lé ikpóčí** 'who ate the fruits' is embedded in the main clause; **ọchẹ a----- kwú ikwú bọbí** —'the man died a horrible death' as a modifier of **ọchẹ a** 'the man', and the relative pronoun **nó** —'who' is co- referent with **ọchẹ a**—'the man'. It also happens to be the subject of the relative clause **nó lé ikpóčí** 'who ate the fruits'. Related to this, the head and the relative pronoun do not have to have the same grammatical functions in their classes because referential and grammatical identities are not the same thing. See the following examples as expressed in Idómà:

- (14). ọchẹ́ á [núm má] gbẹ̀
man the [REL+I see] big
'The man who (m) I saw was tall'

ọchẹ́ á 'the man' in the above example (14) is the subject of the main clause, while the co-referent **núm** 'whom' is the object of **má** 'see', the subordinate clause. **Núm má** 'whom I saw' refers to ọchẹ́ á 'the man'. Here, relative pronoun **núm má** 'whom I saw' refers to the NP ọchẹ́ á 'the man.' The referent is ọchẹ́ á gbẹ̀ 'the tall man.'

Relative clauses in Idòmà are not sensitive to number distinction as the following example (15) shows:

- (15). áchẹ́ nó hí ígwùà gáẹ̀
people REL TENSE NP VERB
'Those whom he called have arrived.'

The subject of the matrix clause **áchẹ́** 'people' in (15) is plural, while the relative clause marker **nó** 'who' which refers to the plural subject does not change its form to mark plurality. Even if the subject is changed to singular the relative clause marker **nó** 'who' does not change its form. This is illustrated in the example (4) below:

- (16). ọnyà nó hí ígwùà gáẹ̀
NP RELTENSE NP VERB
'The woman whom he called has arrived.'

In the above example (16), the subject of the matrix sentence is ọnyà 'the woman' is singular. This singular subject maintains the same form of relative marker as in example (16) above.

Idòmà relative clauses are sensitive to tense. To mark tense in Idòmà, reference is usually made to the time of the action, which has indicators such as **éé**, **le**, **ya** and so on used to mark past tense. This is shown in the following examples:

- (17). Ochóhépò **nó kwú ényèà**, é lè nyí íchẹ́.
PN REL die yesterday, they have plant today
'Ochohepo who died was buried today.'

Example (17) above shows that **kwú** 'died' is post modified by the time of the action; **ényèà** 'yesterday.' To state the tense, mention must be made of the time the action took place. The verb **kwú** 'died' does not change its morphological structure, but retains its structure to either express the present or past time. Present tense in Idòmà is also indicated by the time of the action. This is illustrated in (18) below:

- (19). ọyì ọchényílò **nó yò nyá** wé ọí m
child male REL is this BE child my
'this boy is my child.'

In the above data (19), **nyá** 'this' indicates the present tense. This means that the relative clause **nó yò nyá** 'who is here' is stated in the present tense.

The future tense in Idòmà is formed by inserting the morpheme **gé** into the forms as given in (20) below:

- (20). ọípẹ́ óchényá **ná gé má ọchọchí óchí** a wé ọim
child female REL will VERB morning tomorrow the BE child my
'the whom you will see tomorrow morning is my child'.

Data (20) shows the expression of futurity in the relative clause of Idòmà. This is expressed by the use of future tense marker '**gé**'. It also indicates that the presence of the marker '**gé**' makes the whole sentence futuristic; that the action is yet to take place.

Aspect, a grammatical description of verbs referring primarily to the way the grammar marks the duration or type of temporal activity denoted by the verb is attested in Idòmà relative clauses. Consider the following data in (8):

- (21). N jé elikà lẹ ọchẹnyà **nó okáchè máà**
I PERF ring PP NP REL NP PERF
'I have given a ring to the lady whom Okache saw.'

In the above example (21), the action of the verb is perfective, even though the morpheme **máà** 'saw' indicates both the present and past tense simultaneously in the grammar of the language. The example shows that the ring was given to the recipient Okáchè saw earlier. In the progressive form of it, there would be additive morpheme such as **gé, yọ** and so on used before the verb. This is expressed in the following example:

- (22). N jé alíkà lẹ ọchẹnyà **nó okáchè yọ máà**.
I PERF ring PP NP REL NP PROG. see
'I gave a ring to the woman whom Okache is seeing'.

Data (22) above shows progressive aspect of the verb in the Idòmà relative clauses. The morpheme **yọ** 'is' indicates that the activity of the verb is progressive, with the progressive marker pre-modifying the verb **máà** 'see' which a member of the relative clause **nó okáchè yọ máà** 'whom Okache is seeing'. This, therefore, affirms the fact that, relative clause marker in Idòmà is sensitive to aspect.

Mood refers to the speaker's perspective on the event in particular, whether the event described is possibility, probability, a necessity, or an obligation, which is expressed through modal auxiliary verbs (Carnie, 2013). Major mood categories are declarative, imperative, and interrogative otherwise known as statement, command and question (Kroeger, 2000). Idòmà relative clauses are sensitive to mood. The following are some examples:

- (23). Ádọyì **nó wá á gé kwúchè nyọ fìà** (definitive)
NOM REL came TENSE MOOD return go soon
'Adayi who came will soon return back.'

- (24). Ádọyì **nó wẹ ádà kọyí á nó yágbè chíkà kó gáẹ** (obligation)
NOM REL BE NOM son the REL VERB MOOD have come
'Adayi who is the father of the injured girl should have come.'

- (25). Adámà **nò chíkà wá, gé wá gílà** (possibility)
NP REL MOOD VERBMOODVERB possible
'Adama who should have come will come.'

- (26). ọyí **nó yágbè à iyé kúnù ilóhí ẹ**
child REL injured DET body POSS good now
'the child who was injured is now well.'

In the data in (23) to (24), there are different moods of expression. Mood as expressed in (23) is signified by **gé** 'will' which indicates definiteness and expressed within relative clause which shows that the person in question will surely return back. In example (24), we have a stacked relative clause, the mood shows in the second construction **nó yágbè** 'who was injured' that relates to the first clause; that is **nó yágbè** 'who was injured' modifies the first clause, **nó wẹ ádà kọyí à** 'who is the father of the girl'. **Chíkà** 'should' expresses the mood of the action (obligation). In example (25), the expression is that of possibility. This is expressed in morphemes such as **chíkà** 'should' and **gé** 'will'. The relative clause expression here shows that the speaker is not quite sure the person will carry out the action. Both expressions of mood; **chíkà** 'should' and **gé** 'will' are necessary as both of them express possibility. Data

(26) is in perfective form as it tells that the action has been concluded. The use of è ‘now’ indicates the perfective form of the action. From the above examples therefore, tense, aspect, and mood are attested in Idòmà relative clauses.

Relative clauses in Idòmà are post-nominal, because they come immediately after the noun phrase they modified in the structure. The following are examples:

(27). *éká nádàm bijèá gékwú ènè*
monkey RELNP/POSS take grow die yesterday
‘The monkey my father trained, died yesterday.’

(28). *òkpà nó ònèm tá lè ónyè.*
book REL NPPOSS write BE sweet
‘The book which my brother wrote is interesting.’

From the data in (27) and (28), the relative clauses are post nominals as both of them occur after the noun phrases they describe. *Nadam bijè à* ‘(which) my father trained’ in (27) and *nó ònèm tá* ‘which my brother wrote’ (28) are post-nominal relative clauses. Both relative clauses describe the matrix clauses. Relative clauses in Idòmà therefore, are post-modifiers of the NP.

Also, Idòmà relative clauses are sensitive to benefactives. A benefactive is a thematic role that comprises some entity, which gains from the activity of the verb (Mbah, 2006). In other words, the one for whose benefit an event took place refers to beneficiary (Carnie, 2013). In a complex sentence, the relative clause within the construction could have elements that benefit from the action of the verb. This is shown in the following examples in Idòmà:

(29). *ònyá nó hì odúlè lèwà léà yò*
woman REL cook NP PP/NP eat here
‘The woman who cooks for the multitude is here.’

(30). *Òkpá nó chényì à lé wúlà.*
River REL flood EMP is reduce
‘The over flooded river has subsided.’

In the (29 and 30), the benefactors are *èwà* ‘multitude’ and *òkpà* ‘river’. In example (29), *èwà* ‘multitude’ benefit from the action of verb *hì* ‘cook’, while in example (30), *òkpà* ‘river’ is post modified by the relative clause introducer *no* ‘which’ benefits from the action of two verbs, which are: *chényì* ‘flooding’ and *wúlà* ‘subsided’. In (29), for instance, it is complemented by verb while in (30); it is complemented by an NP. Other syntactic structures of relative clauses identified in Idòmà are adjunction, complementation and coordination as well as accessibility hierarchy.

Adjunction is a syntactic operation referring to a rule which places certain elements of structure in adjacent position, with the aim of specifying how these structures fit together in larger units (Crystal: 2007, Cook and Newson: 2010). Adjunction is tenable in Idòmà relative clauses because the clauses are adjoined to the matrix NP by a relative clause marker. The data that follow are examples of adjunction in the language.

(31a). *ònyonyá nó lè ìlì omà lé mlányì ókpó nyínù*
child FEM REL has cloth that has forget pack inside room
‘The girl who has that cloth has forgotten to take them inside.’

- (b) ádám káhíní, ọ̀chẹ̀ nó yá ọ̀dà ọ̀má kó chẹ̀ péé
father POSS VERB NP REL Do thing that should admit
'My Father said, whoever did that, should admit frankly.'

From the data in (31a and b) above, the relative clause elements are placed adjacent the matrix NPs and the structure fit together in larger units of complex sentences. In (31a) the relative clause **nó lẹ̀ ilí ọ̀mà** 'who has that cloth' is adjacent the matrix NP **ọ̀inọ̀nyá** 'the girl'. Likewise, **nó yá ọ̀dà ọ̀má** 'whoever did that' is adjoined to the phrase **ádám káhíní** 'my father said'. Considering it from the above examples, the matrix NP dominates the relative clauses (the adjoined elements).

Complementation is the process used in grammar to refer to a major constituent of sentence or clause structure. It is a general notion, subsuming all obligatory features of the predicate other than verbs. In generative grammar, a complement is a sister constituent of a zero category. Categories other than the verb are also sometimes said to be complement (Crystal: 2007). Complementation is always attested to in Idòmà relative clauses. Relative clauses serve the function of complementing the matrix clause. The following are examples:

- (32a) ẹ̀kpà **nùm bí** **gójílà** gébì
bag REL VERB to meeting go missing
'The bag that I took to the meeting is missing.'

- (b). ọ̀gádà a **ná** **chíchè ẹ̀inù** lé chẹ̀
chair DET REL you sit on top has break
'The chair which you are sitting on is broken.'

In the above examples (32a & b), the NP's of the matrix clauses correspond to the head of the relative clauses, which also serve as complements of the noun phrase. In example (32a) **nùm bí gójílà** "that I took to the meeting" corresponds to the **ẹ̀kpà** 'the bag.' It also serves as the complement. The relationship between relative clause **nùm bí gójílà** 'that I took to the meeting' and **ẹ̀kpà** 'the bag' is complementary. It means that the relative clause could be used instead of the NP **ẹ̀kpà** 'the bag'. Also, in example (32b), **ná chíchè ẹ̀inù** "which you are sitting on" is a complement of the NP **ọ̀gádà a** 'the chair'. The relative clause corresponds to the noun phrase. The relative clause in (32b) however, modifies the noun phrase. Complementation in Idòmà relative clauses could either serve complementing or modifying functions.

Coordination, is a term used to refer to the process or result of linking linguistic units of equivalent syntactic status (Crystal: 2007). Relative clauses in Idòmà serve as links between the matrix NP and the rest of the sentences. The relative clause has a syntactic equivalence of noun phrase (NP) and therefore serves as the coordinator of elements in complex sentences. The following are examples:

- (33a). ọ̀í Achéínù **nó wá** **ámá ẹ̀néà** yọ̀ ípù
child NP REL Tns ADV yesterday is inside
'The daughter of Acheinu who came here yesterday is pregnant.'

There are two simple sentence structures in the above example (33) and these are:

- (34a). ọ̀í Achéínù yọ̀ ípù
child NP PROG pregnant
'The daughter of Acheinu is pregnant.'

- (b). ọ̀í Achéínù **wá** **ámá ẹ̀néà**
child NP come ADV yesterday
'The daughter of Acheinu came here yesterday.'

The application of relative clauses merges the two sentences and makes it a complex one. Again, the relative clause serves as coordinator of the two sentences (34a and b) respectively. In doing this, it modifies the structure; that is the relative clause tells us more about the noun phrase. In the above examples (34b), the relative clause *nó wá ámá ẹ̀nèà* ‘who come here yesterday’ refers to *Ọ́í Achéínù* ‘the daughter of Acheinu’ who visited them the previous day and not any other person. The NP and the relative clause share the same identity and therefore the relative clause and the NP have equivalent syntactic status.

The Accessibility Hierarchy is a “chain involving a set of absolute typological implications of the paradigmatic sort” (Moravcsic, 2006:223). According to Cook and Newson (2006:22) the Accessibility Hierarchy is represented “in terms of a series of positions for relativization. In many languages, especially rigidly left branching, dependent-marking languages with pronominal relative clauses, there are major restrictions on the role the antecedent may have in the relative clause. The roles relative clauses play can be ‘ranked cross-linguistically’ in order from most the accessible to the least as **subject, direct object, indirect object, genitive, and object of comparison**. The following is the accessibility hierarchy of relative clauses in Idòmà.

The subject of a sentence or a verb may be a single word (noun or pronoun) or group of words functioning as a nominal (Opega: 2005). According to Crystal (2007) the subject is an NP immediately dominated by S. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) mention that, the subject of a sentence has a close general relation to what is being discussed. In other words, the subject of a sentence is the person or the thing we talk about. This phenomenon is discussed in the following data.

- (35). *ọ́pẹ̀ ochẹ̀nyá a [nó wá fíyàn mà] wẹ̀ ọ́nẹ̀m*
 child woman the [who came late EMP] BE sister my
 ‘the girl[who came late]is my sister.’

The relative clause in (35), *nó wá fíyàn mà* –‘who came late’, is the part which something is being said. *ọ́pẹ̀ ochẹ̀nyá a* –‘the girl’, could be any girl, but the referent is *nó wá fíyàn mà* —‘the one who arrived late.’ Structurally the relative clause is the subject of the sentence. Both the matrix clause and the relative clause share the same status as co-heads of the sentence.

The direct object of a sentence is the person or thing that is directly affected by the action indicated by the verb (Opega: 2005). The direct object according to Achadu (2010), receives the action of the verb directly. Consider the following data.

- (36). *N lẹ̀ ẹ̀chọ́ á [náiuwìà bì fù Ajúmà ikpẹ̀i] piẹ̀.*
 I have NP DET [REL NP use hit Ajuma NP] find
 ‘I found the rock with which the robbers hit Ajuma on the head’

In example (36) above, the relative clause, *náiuwìà à bì fù Ajúmà ikpẹ̀i* ‘which the robbers hit Ajuma on the head’ is a direct object of *ẹ̀chọ́ á* ‘the rock’. This is because the relative clause is directly affected by the action is the matrix NP *ẹ̀chọ́ á* ‘the rock’.

The indirect object of the sentence is the person or thing that is not directly affected by the action of the verb (Opega: 2005). Sometimes the indirect object always precedes the direct object. It is characteristically (though by no means always) a noun referring to a person, and the semantic relationship is often such that it is appropriate to use the term ‘recipient’ (Quirk and Greenbaum: 1973). Idòmà relative clauses function as the indirect object of the verb. Consider the following examples.

- (37). *Aléchènú jẹ̀ ọ̀chẹ̀ [nùm tá ọ̀kpà á fọ̀]*

Alechenu VERB man [REL I VERB NP DET to]
'Alechenu knows the man whom I wrote a letter to.'

(38). N jè elíkà lẹ ọípẹ ọchénya [nó Okàché mà a]
I gave NP to child NP [REL Okache TENSE EMP]
'I gave a ring to the girl that Okache saw.'

The relative clause construction in the example (37) **nùm tá ọkpà á fọ** 'Whom I wrote a letter to', is not directly affected by the action of the verb; **je** 'knows'. While **ọchẹ á** – 'the man' is the direct object of the sentence, the relative clause serves as the indirect object of the verb **je** 'knows.' In example (38) above, the relative clause **nó Okàché mà** 'that Okache saw' is the object of the verb **jè** 'gave'; the action of the verb is felt by the relative clause. In (37) above, the relative pronoun shows that the referent is not strange to NP subject in the matrix clause. The relative pronoun therefore indicates the mutual relationship between the referent and the NP subject. In (38), the relative pronoun also appreciates an already existing relationship between the NP subject in the matrix clause and the NP in the object position.

The genitive relates to or constitutes a grammatical case expressing a possessive relationship (Crystal: 2007). Genitive relation is discussed in the following Idómà relative clauses:

(40). Ọípẹ ọchényílọ a [nádànú kwúà] ka gám kọtú kánọ ibiá
child NP DET [REL father TENSE] PST me mind his spoil
'The boy [whose father died] told me he was sad.'

The relative clause in example (40) **nádànú kwúà** – 'whose father died' shows a relationship with the noun phrase **ọípẹ ọchényílọ a** – 'the boy'. The noun phrase form is taken by the relative construction. The example shows a relationship between the noun phrase and the relative clause which explains what the referent did or his state of mind.

Object of comparison shows a relationship between the noun phrase in the subject position and the relative clause. The kind of relationship is that of comparison; a case where the relative clause which serves as the object is compared with the subject of the sentence. This is illustrated in (27) as follows:

(41). ọchẹ afúlẹyí [nùm gá kwínyà fiyọn] gé yàlẹ ẹkpá ẹhọ kijè
NP first [REL ADV run NEG]will win bag five of money

'The first person who I run faster than me will win one thousand naira.'

The above example (41) shows that the relative clause **nùm gá kwínyà fiyọn** 'whom I can't run faster than', is an object of the noun phrase **ọchẹ afúlẹyí** 'the first person', the subject of the sentence. The relative clause, **nùm gá kwínyà fiyọn** 'whom I can't run faster than', is in comparison with **ọchẹ afúlẹyí** – 'the first person'. Idómà is amenable to some accessibility hierarchy of relative clauses and relative clauses functioning as subject and subject complement are mostly nominal relative clauses. In headless relative clause however, the normal NP marker (case, determiners etc) are absent in Idómà. Also, oblique relative clauses are not attested in Idómà.

CONCLUSION

From the data analysed above, structurally, Idómà relative clauses are sensitive to mood and aspect. They are also post-nominal, that is, they come after the noun phrases they modify in the structure, as well as benefactive, as they benefit from the action of the verb. Relative clauses in Idómà are amenable to adjunction, because the clauses are adjoined to the matrix NP. Also, complementation, a process whereby the relative clauses serve the function of

complementing the matrix clause is found in the language and coordination as they modify the structure; that is the relative clauses tell us more about the noun phrases. Idòmà relative clauses have the following accessibility hierarchy and structure: subject, direct object, indirect object, genitive and object of comparison. The research shows that structurally Idòmà relative clauses exhibit a level of complex sentence. Hopefully the research will contribute to ongoing study on African languages which face with the danger of extinction. Researchers hopefully will find this work useful in their references.

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