On inherent complement verbs in Kwa

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Abstract

Several analyses have been proposed for the "inherent complement verbs" (ICVs) of the Kwa languages. In this paper, I propose that given the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of both the verb and its complement, it makes sense to treat such verbs like light verbs (Butt 2010), with a more functional role. Following Langer (2005), I argue that the verb only c-selects its "inherent complement"(IC). The IC is thus only a syntactic argument but not a semantic argument of its verb. Accordingly, I base-generate the ICV in Little *v* (Hale and Keyser 1993), different from lexical verbs which are base-generated in (Big) V. This structural representation is not only conceptually motivated, in the sense that the verb is semantically weak, but also, that empirically, the focus properties of an ICV construction suggest that the IC incorporates into a phonetically empty V.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of *inherent complement verbs* (ICVs). ICVs are described as "...verbs the citation form of which includes a nominal element which may or may not be cognate with the verb." (Nwachukwu 1984: 109). This description is a common characteristic of many verbs in a number of Kwa (Niger-Congo) languages. The following are examples from Ga, Igbo and Ewe and Akan. Note that in these citations, the verbs are in **bold** and their complements, conventionally referred to as the "inherent complement" (IC) are in *italics* with their meaning in brackets.

(1) *Ga* (Korsah 2011)

  a. **wo** *h´ɔ* (pregnancy) 'to impregnate'
  b. **wo** *ŋaa* (advice) 'to advise'

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    c.   **jo** *foi* (speed) 'to run'

(2)   *Igbo*   (Nwachukwu 1985)

    a.   **tụ** *ụjo* (fear) 'to be afraid'
    b.   **tụ** *ntụ* (lie) 'to tell a lie'
    c.   **fụ** *ụfụ* (pain) 'be painful'

(3)   *Ewe*   (Essegbey 1999)

    a.   **ƒú** *tsi* (water) 'to swim'
    b.   **ƒú** *kɔ́* (fist) 'to knock'
    c.   **ƒú** *du* (race) 'to run' [1]

(4)   *Akan*

    a.   **hy**ɛ *ebufúw* (anger) 'to make angry'
    b.   **hy**ɛ *nkɔ́m* (prophecy) 'to prophesy'
    c.   **tu** *amriká* (speed) 'to run'

In all the examples above, the verbs need to be cited with their ICs lest they might be meaningless, vague or have a meaning that is totally different from what they mean when they combine with a particular IC (for example in Akan, *hy*ɛ (4b), when cited without an IC, means 'to wear'). Thus discussing such verbs in Igbo, Nwachukwu remarks that "...the root (i.e. the verb) and its nominal complement form one semantic unit, and any dictionary entry which excludes the complement is so ambiguous as to be meaningless." (1987: 40). I would thus gloss the verbs as "ICV" to avert the challenge of glossing just the verb.[2]

    (1-4) also suggest that the meaning of the [verb+noun] combination is non-compositional or at best semi-compositional, and seems to largely depend on the IC. This situation is clearer and more interesting when ICVs occur in constructions. Consider *jo foi* 'to run' in (5a) and *wo ŋaa* 'to advise' in (5b) for instance, and compare (5) with (6).

(5)   a.   Kwei **jo**   foi.
            K.   ICV   race.IC
            'Kwei ran.'

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[1] Essegbey prefers the gloss "course" for this IC

[2] See also Essegbey (1999). But Anyanwu (2012) prefers to gloss the verbs same as their complements. This may be due to the fact that when the two units are put together, their meaning seems to derive from the complement.

    b.   Kwei **wo**   awulá l´ɛ   ŋaa.
             K.   ICV lady   DEF advice.IC
             'Kwei advised the lady.'   (Ga)

(6)   a.   Kwei ŋ**ma** wolo.
             K.   write book
             'Kwei authored a book.'

    b.   Kwei **há** awulá lɛ́   saa.
             K.   give lady   DEF mat
             'Kwei gave the lady a mat.'   (Ga)

I will refer to non-ICVs like (6) as "Full Lexical Verbs" (FLVs), and refer to constructions like (5) i.e. those in which ICVs occur, as *ICV constructions*. Unlike those that involve ICVs, constructions that involve FLVs, tend to be compositional i.e. there is usually a one-to-one matching up between the syntax and the semantics. This is more obvious when one tries to literally translate constructions with an FLV and those with ICVs into other languages. For instance, while the lexical constituents of (6b) are literally present in the English glossing, the situation is different with (5b) where the verb *wo* does not seem to show in the English equivalent.

    Quite a number of researchers have looked at ICVs or made reference to them in various Kwa languages. These include, among others, Nwachukwu (1985), Anyanwu (2012) for Igbo, Avolonto (1995) for Fongbe, Osam (1996) for Akan[3], Essegbey (1999) for Ewe, Aboh and Dyakonova (2009) for Gungbe, and Korsah (2011) for Ga. The main issues discussed in these works include: (i) whether the verb has any meaning contribution in the [Verb-Noun] complex (like FLVs do given the fact that their composite meaning seems to come from the complement, (ii) whether the inherent complement is an argument of the verb (like the arguments of FLVs), and (iii) what is the right argument structure analysis of ICV constructions? Related to the last question is how to represent them structurally given the syntax-semantics mismatches they exhibit.

    In this paper, I will argue that ICVs need to be given an analysis similar to *light verbs* (LV) in other languages (see Wittenberg et al. 2014, Butt 2010, Folli et al. 2004, Langer 2004, Grimshaw and Mester 1988)[4]. (7b) exemplifies a construction in which a light verb has been used.

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[3] Osam (1996) uses the term "discontinuous verb"

[4] There are also terms like *support verbs*, *Funktionsverb* (function verb), *operator verbs* etc. which refer to a very similar phenomenon (Langer 2004).

(7) a. Government **gave** a loan to young businesses.
     b. Government **gave** priority to young businesses.

In (7b), it can be argued that *gave* and *priority*function together as a single predicate i.e. *gave priority*, unlike (7a) where only *gave* is the predicate.

I argue that ICVs behave more like functional heads than lexical heads and therefore contrary to Anyanwu (2012), they ought to be base-generated in Little *v*. This is possible because of four main reasons: (i) they tend to have vague meanings (Essegbey 1999) or are possibly meaningless without their ICs, (ii) they are unable to solely assign theta roles to their nominal complements, and (iii) their ICs do not behave like internal arguments of FLVs; whenever they are focused, they behave like nouns that have been incorporated into verbs. In terms of their argument structure, I will argue that the ICV does not select their ICs as semantic arguments, it only select the syntactic category within which its IC occur. This is possible if we assume a two-layer approach to dealing with argument structure of constructions (following Hale and Keyser 1993, Langer 2005): the c(ategorial)-selection layer and the s(emantic)-selection layer. I will argue that in the case of FLV, there is correspondence between the two layers. However, for the verbs in ICV constructions, there exists only the c-selection layer. I will also show that the IC does not allow certain syntactic operations that are typically possible for arguments of FLVs such as Wh-questioning. Most of the examples in this paper will be based largely on data from Ga and occasionally, from Igbo (Anyanwu 2012, Nwachukwu 1987), and Ewe (Essegbey 1999).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: In section 2, I will describe the kind of verbs and nominals that occur in ICV constructions. In section 3, I will discuss some morphosyntactic properties that are typical of such constructions. Section 4 will focus on issues related to the argument structure of ICV constructions and propose how they are to be understood and represented. Section 5 gives a summary and the conclusion.

2. The nature of ICVs and ICs

As the examples in (1-4) show, though an ICV and its IC are usually cited together, they are composed of two morphological unit, and exhibit separate semantic properties.

2.1. The verb

There have been debates in the literature, as to whether the verbs in ICV constructions contribute any meaning. This is legitimate, given the fact that it appears to be vacuous. Thus Anyanwu (2012) for instance would gloss the verb same as a semantic cognate of its IC (as in (8)).

(8) a. Eze **mgbara**   ama
         Eze PR.betray.past betrayal.IC
         'Eze betrayed (someone).'   (Igbo)

However, Essegbey (1999) argues that the verb is meaningful except that it is vague. According to him, the behaviour of ICV is characteristic of verbs in the languages in which they occur. With specific reference to Ewe, he concludes that the verbs are in a cline, with some verbs having more specified meaning and others, less specified meaning. This correlates to whether a verb can occur with a more or less specific-meaning complement: the less specific the meaning of the verb, the more likely it is to co-occur with a more specific-meaning complement (as in (9)).[5]

(9) *FLVs*:
     More specific meaning ⟶ *Less specific complement*
     ICVs:
     Less specific meaning ⟶ **More specific complement**

By more/less specific-meaning complements, he refers to instances like (10) where a FLV may occur with a complement meaning "person" or "thing" (10c) which is quite generic as compared to the complements of ICVs which tend to be more specific to a particular verb. In (10), because of the nature of the verb and its complement, the complement may be replaced by other other complements, e.g. (10b). Interestingly, ICVs do not occur with such generic-meaning complements (see (11)).

(10) a. Atríidií **gbe** abifáo lé.
          Malaria kill baby DEF.
          'Malaria killed the baby (The child died of malaria).'

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[5]This is my adaptation of Essegbey's representation.

    b.   Atríidií **gbe** nuu lɛ́.
        Malaria kill man DEF.
        'Malaria killed the man (The man died of malaria).'

    c.   Atríidií **gbe**-ɔ   mɔ
        Malaria kill-HAB man
        'Malaria is a killer.'   (Ga)

(11)   *Kwei **jo** níí.
       K.   ICV thing

                                                 (Ga)

Another evidence for the fact that the ICV may not be totally meaningless comes from the [ICV+IC] meaning of ICVs with similar ICs. If the verbs were semantically empty, we would expect that such ICVs would not have varied meanings i.e. all the meaning would come from the "meaningful" IC. However, this is not the case in (12) and (13).

(12)   a.   ŋ**mɛ** *gbɛ* (way) 'to allow'
       b.   **kpá** *gbɛ* (way) 'to expect'

(13)   a.   **kpá** *naa* (outer part/ mouth) 'count (to know quantity)'
       b.   **to** *naa* (outer part/ mouth) 'to arrange (in an orderly manner)'

Interestingly, most ICVs have homophonous FLV counterparts.[6] Thus for *wo* in (14), there is a FLV homophone i.e. *wo* "to wear" (15).

(14)

                      mlá (law) "legislate"

                      mɔ́ŋ (prison) "to imprison"

                      gbɛ́**í** (name) "to name"

wo   **ékaa**ŋ (encouragement) "to encourage"

                      ŋ**aa** (advice) "to advise"

                      hɔ́ (pregnancy) "to impregnate"

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[6] At least for Ga, the only exception I am aware of is *shé* in *shé gbéyei* 'to be afraid'.

The main difference is that the FLV homophones can occur with different complements and keep their core meanings (15a-b) whereas ICVs usually occur with particular complements in order to arrive at a particular meaning (14). The consequence is that whenever such homophonous verbs occur in constructions "without" a complement as in (15c) (where the complement *aspáatré* has been pronominalized), they tend to be interpreted as FLV.

(15)　　a.　　Dede **wo**　 abifáó lέ　 　atadé.
　　　　　　　　Dede wear baby　 DEF dress
　　　　　　　　'Dede dressed the baby.'

　　　　　b.　　Dede **wo**　 abifáó lέ　 　aspáatré.
　　　　　　　　Dede wear baby　 DEF shoe
　　　　　　　　'Dede caused the baby to wear a pair of shoes.'

　　　　　c.　　Dede kε-ø　　 **wo**　　　 abifáó lέ.
　　　　　　　　Dede take-3SG wear/*ICV baby　 DEF
　　　　　　　　'Dede caused the baby to wear it.'

　　　　　d.　　Kwei **wo**　　　Dede hɔ́.
　　　　　　　　Kwei ICV(*wear) Dede pregnancy.IC
　　　　　　　　'Kwei impregnated Dede.'　　　　　　　　　　　　(Ga)

Also related to the issue of the meaning of the verb but more linked to its morphological properties, is the view in the literature e.g. Avolonto (1995), that the verb may be a verbalizer like *-ize* in (16), suggesting that it is because the IC lacks the features to function as a verb, that is why the ICV may be useful. This view suggests that the verb is semantically empty. But as has been shown above (12), this may not be entirely factual. What is factual however is that the verb carries the inflections that are associated with FLVs in these languages. (17) shows the marking of tense, aspect and negation inflections respectively on ICVs.

(16)　　item— item-*ize*

(17)　　a.　　Kwei baá-**jo**　 foi.
　　　　　　　　K.　 FUT-ICV race.IC
　　　　　　　　'Kwei will run (away).'

　　　　　b.　　Kwei é-**wo**　　 awulá lέ　 ŋaa.
　　　　　　　　K.　 PERF-ICV lady　 DEF advice.IC
　　　　　　　　'Kwei has advised the lady.'

    c.   Kwei **shé**-éé   awulá lɛ́   gbéyei.
           K.   ICV-NEG lady   DEF fear.IC
           'Kwei is not afraid of the lady.'   (Ga)

2.2.   The inherent complement

The inherent complement also exhibits some interesting properties that ulti-mately affect its status when compared with complements of FLV as possible arguments of their respective verbs. It is usually a nominal element.[7] The ICs tend to refer to abstract/non-tangible concepts. In Ga, just as in many other languages, such nominals are usually non-count nouns (18b), even when they occur with FLV. The IC also does not usually occur with determiners (18a).

(18)   a.   ?Kwei baá-**jo**   foi   lɛ́.
           K.   FUT-ICV race.IC DEF
           'Kwei will run (away).'
    b.   ?Kwei é-**wo**   awulá lɛ́   ŋaa-í.
           K.   PERF-ICV lady   DEF advice.IC-PL
           'Kwei has advised the lady.'   (Ga)

There are other properties of the IC which are more relevant for the debate on its status in the argument structure of the ICV constructions. These include word order, nominalization/compound formation, pronominalization, question formation and focus properties. Some of these properties have been claimed to make the ICV even more similar in form and structure to FLVs. I discuss these in the next section.

2.3.   Summary

We have noticed the following about the ICV and its IC in this section: (i) The verb does not have any meaning independent of the IC. (ii) The IC is usually a nominal that denotes non-concrete nouns, and structurally non-complex.

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[7]There are a number of ICs that may be described as postposition e.g. *shishi* 'beneath' in *je shishi* 'to start' (see Korsah 2011) but following Osam et al. (2011), I assume that they are nominal elements.

3. Other morphosyntactic features of ICV constructions

3.1. Word order

Let us compare the word order of the constructions in (19) which contain FLVs with the ICV constructions in (20).

(19) a. Dede **ye** omɔ́.
          Dede eat rice
          'Dede ate rice.'
      b. Dede **ke** Kwei shiká.
          Dede gift Kwei money
          'Dede gifted Kwei money.'   (Ga)

(20) a. Kwei baá-**jo**   foi.
          K.   FUT-ICV race.IC
          'Kwei will run (away).'
      b. Kwei **shé** awulá lɛ́   gbéyei.
          K.   ICV lady   DEF fear.IC
          'Kwei feared (is afraid of) the lady.'   (Ga)

In either example, there seems to be the linear order: SVO for the (a) examples or SVO_IO_D for the (b) ones. Examples like (20b) show that an ICV and its complement are not a frozen morphological unit in the language; they can be separted by other morphological units in at least the syntax.

Essegbey (1999) argues that the nominal complement in the (a) examples i.e. *omɔ́* and *foi*, and the second nominal complement in the (b) examples i.e. *shiká* and *gbéyei* are equally arguments of their respective verbs. According to him, this is supported by the fact that when the verbs (whether lCVs or FLVs) are nominalized[8], what appears to be argument of the verb is easily preposed to the verb (21). Accordingly, if the complement of the ICV in (20a) is subject to the same morphosyntactic process and leading to a similar result as the complement of an FLV (19a), then either constituent must have the same status i.e. they arguments of their respective verbs.

(21) a. Dede sumɔ-ɔ   **omɔ́-yé-lí**.
          Dede like-HAB rice-eat-NOM
          'Dede likes rice-eating.'

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[8]I gloss the nominalizer as NOM

b.   Dede sumɔ-ɔ   **foi-je-e**
Dede like-HAB race.IC-ICV-NOM
'Dede likes running.'   (Ga)

However, it is important to mention that while either complement may undergo similar morphosyntactic processes, it does not necessarily mean that they are of equal status in argument structure. The "nominalized" forms in (21a-b) may as well be instances of synthetic compound formation. For the constructions involving ICVs in particular, as (22b) shows, the IC may be non-referential as compared to the complement of FLV in (22a).

(22)   a.   Dede sumɔ-ɔ   **omɔ$_i$-yé-lí**   shi ŋmɛnɛ lɛ   e-yé-ko
Dede like-HAB rice-eat-NOM but today   TOP 3SG-eat-NEG
éko$_i$.
one
'Dede likes rice$_i$-eating but as for today, she's not had any$_i$ to eat.'
b.   ?Dede sumɔ-ɔ   **foi$_i$-je-e**   shi ŋmɛnɛ lɛ
Dede like-HAB race-ICV-NOM but today   TOP
é-jó-ko   **éko$_i$**.
3SG-ICV-NEG one
'Dede likes running but as for today, she hasn't run (any).'   (Ga)

Given (22), one may argue that the seemingly nominalized [ICV+IC] is more of a compound than a phrase and thus the relationship between the two constituents as in (22b), is not that of a predicate *jo* and its argument *foi*.

3.2.   Pronominalization of the IC

Another property of the IC which borders on its argumenthood can be observed with pronominalization. In many Kwa languages, the IC cannot be pronominalized like the internal arguments of FLVs. Take Ga for instance where an inanimate argument of a verb in general is not realized as overt pronoun (24b). However, for some nominal arguments pronominalization is possible (see e.g. (23)).[9]

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[9]This is a common characteristics of many Kwa languages. (Usually, such arguments are "affected" by what the predicate expresses. Verbs like *break, tear, destroy* behave this way (see Nwachukwu 1987: 64).

(23) a. Dede **ku**   tso lέ.
          D.   break stick DEF
          'Dede broke the stick.'
      b. Dede **ku**   *(lɛ).
          D.   break 3SG.Acc
          'Dede broke it.'   (Ga)

(24) a. Dede **télé** tso lέ.
          D.   carry stick DEF
          'Dede carried the stick.'
      b. Dede **télé** (*lɛ).
          D.   carry 3SG.Acc
          'Dede carried it.'   (Ga)

As far as Ga is concerned, the IC cannot be realized as an overt pronoun. We can compare (25) and (26) which show homophonous verbs: one FLV *fa* and the other, an ICV *fa gbɛ*.

(25) a. Dede **fa**   tso lέ.
          D.   uproot stick DEF
          'Dede uprooted the stick.'
      b. Dede **fa**   (lɛ).
          D.   uproot 3SG.Acc
          'Dede uprooted it.'   (Ga)

(26) a. Dede **fa** gbɛ.
          D.   ICV way
          'Dede traveled.'
      b. *Dede **fa**.
          D.   ICV
          'Dede traveled.'   (Ga)

This behaviour of the ICV may be due to two main reasons i.e. either because it is abstract/inanimate (as we observed in section 2.2) or it is because the it is not actually an argument of its verb, in the same sense as arguments of FLV. There is evidence to support either view. First, apparently, the IC in Igbo cannot be pronominalized either (27) though other inanimate complements (of FLV) may be realized as pronouns (28) (Anyanwu 2012).

(27) a.   Obí **nvuru** ónú
　　　　　O. PR.fast mouth.IC
　　　　　'Obi fasted.'

　　　b.   Obí **nvuru** (*yá).
　　　　　O. PR.fast 3SG
　　　　　'Obi fasted.'　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Igbo)

(28) a.   Adhá **nvuru** eketé
　　　　　A. PR.carry basket
　　　　　'Adha carried a basket.'

　　　b.   Adhá **nvuru** yá
　　　　　A. PR.carry it
　　　　　'Adha carried it.'　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Igbo)

Contrary to what obtains with ICs in Ga and Igbo (and Akan), is the data from Ewe as reported by Essegbey (1999) (29). In Ewe, the IC can have a pronominal form, just as nominal complements of FLVs. In fact, according to (Essegbey 2002: 79), the pronoun form of the IC is the preferred option when an ICV is repeated in a subordinate clause as shown in (30b).

(29) a.   Kofi ƒú   du.
　　　　　K. ICV course
　　　　　'Kofi ran.'

　　　b.   Kofi ƒú-i.
　　　　　K. ICV-3SG.Acc
　　　　　'Kofi ran it.'　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Ewe)

(30) a.   ?Núfíá lá **n**ɔ anyí háfí suku-ví-á-wó   **n**ɔ
　　　　　teacher DEF sit ground before school-child-DEF-PL ICV
　　　　　anyí.
　　　　　ground.IC
　　　　　'The teacher sat down before the school children sat down.'

　　　b.   Núfíá lá **n**ɔ anyí$_i$ háfí suku-ví-á-wó   **n**ɔ-e$_i$.
　　　　　teacher DEF sit ground.IV before school-child-DEF-PL sit-3SG
　　　　　'The teacher sat down before the school children did.'　　(Ewe)

This observation of mixed pronominal properties with respect to the IC will be crucial for the argument structure analysis that will be proposed in the next section. Note from the Ewe examples that the pronoun form is also an indication

of the case and *phi* features of the pronominalized constituent. According to Essegbey (1999), this is an indication that the IC is an argument of its verb. However, given the fact that there is generally not a one-to-one mapping between case features (which may be due to the structure) and semantic/theta roles (which is typically assigned to arguments by a predicate), it may not straightforwardly hold that that the IC is an argument of its verb.

(31)   a.   Expletives: **It** is raining.
       b.   Unaccusatives: **The door** is broken.
       c.   Passives: **The boy** was bitten (by the dog).

In (31), the structural positions of the subjects enable them to bear nominative case. However, by (standard) assumption, the expletive *It* bears no theta role. And while the subjects of passives and unaccusative constructions tend to have nominative case, different from the case they bear in their base-generated positions, both the underlying and surface realizations show that they are assigned Theme theta roles by their respective verbs. We thus could not tie theta role assignment to case features.

3.3.   Focus in ICV constructions

The verb of an ICV construction cannot be focused. Interestingly,when its IC is focused, it does not behave like a focused nominal complement [(like that of an FLV). It behaves like a focused predicate. Consider (32).

(32)   a.   **Tso l**ɛ́   ni   Dede **télé**.
            stick DEF FOC D.   carry
            'Dede carried the stick (as opposed to say, *the bucket*).'
       b.   **Télé-m**ɔ   ni   Dede **télé** tso lɛ́
            carry-NOM FOC D.   carry stick DEF
            'Dede carried the stick (as opposed to say, *breaking it*).'   (Ga)

In Ga, typically, any constituent in any given construction may be focused. A focused constituent is moved to the left periphery of the clause followed by the focus particle *ni* as in (32). We observe in (32b) that verb focus leads to predicate doubling, with the higher copy being nominalized (see also Aboh and Dyakonova 2009). Now let us consider how focusing works in

ICV constructions. Here we are particularly interested in verb focus and object/nominal complement focus.

(33)   a.   Kwei **jo**   foi.
            K.   ICV race.IC
            'Kwei ran.'
       b.   */?Je-e   ni   Kwei **jo**   foi
            ICV-NOM FOC K.   ICV race.IC
            'Kwei ran (as opposed to say, he *sat*).'
       c.   Foi   ni   Kwei **je**
            race.IC FOC K.   ICV
            'Kwei RAN (as opposed to say, he *sat*).'   (Ga)

We observe in (33b-c) that there is significant disparity between syntactic focus and semantic focus as far ICVs are concerned. While it is infelicitous to focus the ICV, unlike a FLV e.g. (32b), focusing its IC results in a predicate focus instead. This suggests the existence of a closer relationship between the IC and its verb. Based on this, we would assume that the IC incorporates (in terms of Baker 1988) into into a verb before the movement operation takes place. However, this verb in question will be assumed to be an empty V head, not the ICV.

3.4.   The IC and question formation

Another feature that sets ICVs apart from lexical verbs is the inability for their complements to be marked with a question feature.

(34)   a.   Dede **télé**   tso   lέ.
            D.   carry stick DEF
            'Dede carried the stick.'
       b.   Dede **télé**   mέni?
            D.   carry what
            'Dede carried what?'
       c.   Mέni ni   Dede **télé**?
            what FOC D.   carry
            'What did Dede carry?'   (Ga)

Unlike the objects of FLVs (34), the IC can neither be marked with a question feature in-situ nor be extracted to the left periphery for focus wh-question formation. Compare (34) with (35) where ICVs are involved.

(35) a. Kwei **jo**   foi.
          K.   ICV race.IC
          'Kwei ran (away).'
      b. *Kwei **jo**   mɛ́ni?
          K.   ICV what
      c. *Mɛ́ni ni   Kwei **jo**?
          what FOC K.   ICV

                                                                    (Ga)

Korsah (2011) shows that in order to derive a question from such ICVs, an interrogative expression with a more generic-meaning such as (36) may be used. This is applicable to any ICV construction. Thus while (35a) may be used to answer the questions in (36) in particular, (36) may also be used as an appropriate questions for all other forms of VP including those headed by FLVs such as ...*tele* 'carry' in (34).

(36) a. Kwei **feé** mɛ́ni?
          K.   do what
          'Kwei did what?'
      b. Mɛ́ni ni   Kwei **feé**?
          what FOC Kwei do
          'What did Kwei do?'   (Ga)

Now what does this mean? Given (36), that verbs with a more generic meaning can replace ICVs, is an indication that ICVs may be as vague/less specified as reported by Essegbey (1999), and for the purposes of the present discussion, most likely semantically light. As far as the IC is concerned, its inability to be marked with a question feature may be an indication that it is not an argument of its verb assuming that the question feature is marked on complements of the verb which are arguments.

3.5.   Summary

The discussion in this section has shown that: (i) ICV constructions and those involving FLV tend to show similar basic word order pattern i.e. SVO and SVOO. (ii) The IC may be realized as an overt pronoun as in Ewe, or possibly not realized at all. (iii) Unlike FLVs, the ICV cannot be focused. However, when the IC is focused, it behaves like a focused VP. (iv) The IC cannot be marked with a question feature, be it in-situ or ex-situ. These observations have consequences for the argument structure analysis of the ICV constructions which we discuss in the next section.

4.   Argument structure of ICV constructions: The analysis

In this section, I will put forward two main proposals: (i) that argument structure of constructions that involve ICVs should handled like that of *Light verbs* (following Hale and Keyser 1993, Langer 2005) and (ii) that accordingly, the IC should be base-generated in *little v* in the syntax and not in (Big) V.

## 4.1.   The argument structure of ICV constructions

The debate about the right argument structure analysis for ICVs has been raging on for over two and a half decades now. One of the earliest attempts was by Nwachukwu (1987) who analyzed the IC as an adjunct, given the fact that it is easily displaced when the ICV licenses an internal argument (37).[10]

(37)   a.   Ọ **ba-lá**   uru   abá.
           it V-Perf useful(IC) BVC
           'It has certainly become useful.'
       b.   Ọ **bal-á**   ányi uru   abá.
           it V-Perf us   useful(IC) BVC
           'It has certainly become useful to us.'   (Igbo)

He treats this displacement as movement (*Move IC* he calls it) of the IC rightward as represented (38). According to Nwachukwu, this behaviour of the IC explains why it does not bear thematic role i.e. it of the same syntactic status as adjuncts.

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[10] In Igbo linguistics, the BVC (37) refers to a verbal particle that usually accompanies a verb Nwachukwu (see 1987: 40)

(38)
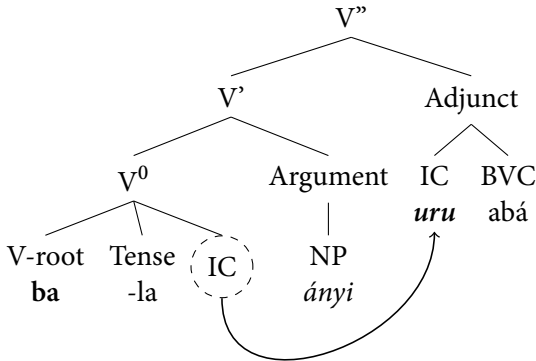
We may liken Igbo data (37) to (39) where the IC in (39a) is displaced at the instance of another nominal complement (39b).

(39) a. Kwei **shé** gbéyei.
          K.   ICV fear.IC
          'Kwei feared (Kwei became afraid).'
      b. Kwei **shé** awulá lέ   gbéyei.
          K.   ICV lady   DEF fear.IC
          'Kwei feared (is afraid of) the lady.'   (Ga)

Nwachukwu's view is problematic for one fundamental reason; some adjuncts might have theta roles e.g. the agentive argument of a passive construction introduced with a *by-phrase* (40). However, the issue with the non-theta role assignment to the IC per se may be plausible.

(40)   John was bitten by **the dog**.
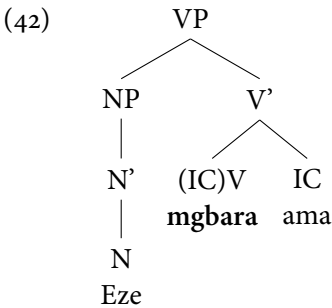
On Nwachukwu's representation in particular, (Anyanwu 2012: 1564) remarks that:

> Contrary to Nwachukwu's (1987) view, we want to state here that an inherent complement and its inherent complement verb do not form an X^0 category. The inherent complement and its inherent complement verb constitute a single semantic unit, not a syntactic one. Thus, an inherent complement is not licensed as a constituent under a V-node, but as a constituent within a VP. As a constituent within a VP, its obligatoriness is not of syntactic relevance but of semantic relevance to the inherent complement verb which functions as its head within a VP. More evidence that the inherent complement is only of semantic relevance to

the inherent complement verb comes from the fact that the inherent complement cannot be case checked; neither can it be theta-marked.

Anyanwu's claim about case assignment may not be factual given the Ewe data. Also, though he does not make any categorical statement about the representation of the verb in the structure, his representation (42) (Anyanwu 2012: 1567) of the ICV suggests a structural treatment that may be likened to FLVs . This might be a misrepresentation of the structural relations expressed by an ICV and its IC.

(41)   Eze   **mgbara**   Obi ama.
      Eze.pr betray.past Obi betrayal.IC
      'Eze betrayed Obi.'   (Igbo)

(42)

```
                VP
              /    \
          NP          V'
          |          /  \
          N'    (IC)V    IC
          |    mgbara    ama
          N
         Eze
```

As exemplified in (42), Anyanwu does not also represent the IC with any standard syntactic category either. I would treat the IC as an NP, given the fact that it usually does not appear to be complex e.g. it does not occur with a determiner in Ga.

4.2.   A brief detour to *Light Verbs*

Given the relationship between the verb and its complement in an ICV constructions, I propose that such constructions be treated like *Light Verbs*(LVs). (43a-b) show how LVs may occur in Urdu (Butt 2010), and Persian (Folli et al. 2004).

(43)   a.   naadyaa=ne   kahaanii yaad   **k-ii**.
          Nadya.F.SG=ERG story.F.SG memory.F do-PERF.F.SG
          'Nadya remembered the story.'   (Urdu)

b. tim-e   mâ unâ-ro shekast **dâd**.
    team-EZ we they-râ defeat   gave
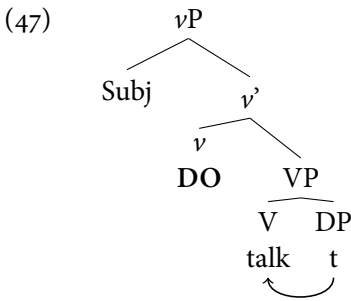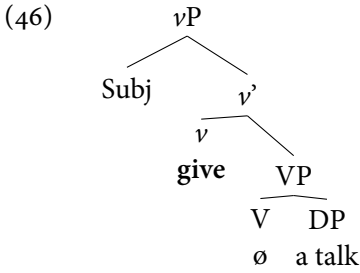   'Our team defeated them.'   (Persian)

In (43), the noun *yaad*, and the verb *kii* seem to combine to function as the single predicative element of the construction. We see also that the verb carries the inflection while the meaning of what the predicate expresses is closest to the noun. For English, we can cite the following verbs as LVs, when they take any of the DPs in boldface as complements:

(44)   a.   **have**: *a rest, a read, a think*
       b.   **take**: *a drive, a guess, a walk, a plunge, a tour, a break*
       c.   **give**: *a sigh, a shout, a shiver, a pull, a kiss, a lecture*
       d.   **make**: *a decision*

In many languages, LVs tend to be functional. For instance in Persian, the LV determines the agentivity, the duration and whether a construction is an event or a state (Folli et al. 2004). The verb also indicates the tense, FLVs do. Yet the verb is usually semantically vacuous, leaving the burden of meaning in a given construction to its complement. An interesting observation about the structure of an LV constructions for the present discussion, is the fact that LVs tend to have FLV counterparts as in (45c) . Also, the nominal complement is usually a non-concrete deverbal noun (45b).

(45)   a.   John *gave* a talk this morning.
       b.   Jonn *talked* this morning.
       c.   John *gave* Tom a pencil.

Data like (45) provide evidence in support of Hale and Keyser's (1993) approach to analyzing how denominal verbs may be derived. According to them, even instances where FLVs are used, a light verb like *DO* (47) may be present except that it may not be phonetically realized.

(46)

```
              vP
           ／    ＼
      Subj         v'
                ／    ＼
              v
            give      VP
                   ／   ＼
                  V      DP
                  ø    a talk
```

(47)

```
              vP
           ／    ＼
      Subj         v'
                ／    ＼
              v
            DO        VP
                   ／   ＼
                  V      DP
                talk     t
                   ‿‿‿‿
```

It is apparent that LVs and ICVs may have many characteristics in common, at least based on the semantics of either verb.

Accordingly, I assume that their behaviour shows an instance of a complex lexical entry for the verb.

4.3. Argument structure of ICV constructions

In order to understand the argument structure of ICV constructions, I assume the notions of c(ategorial)-selection and s(emantic)-selection e.g. Pesetsky (1982), (see also Langer 2005). But I will designate these properties about predicates as *Syn*=c-selection and *Sem*=s-selection.

1. There is a two-level lexical entry for every verb (whether it is an FLV or an ICV): one level deals with the syntax (*Syn*) and the other deals with the semantics (*Sem*).

2. There is full match up between the syntax of a construction and its semantics when *Syn* and *Sem* are both accessible to the elements in the argument structure (in this case, the verb and its complement) (48).

(48)   *Sem*

        verb   Complement

        Syn
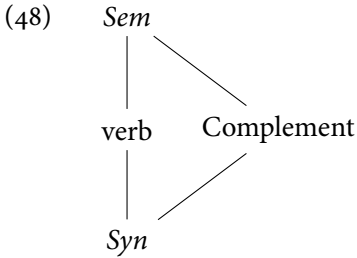
Given the above assumptions, I would claim that what typically happens in ICV constructions is that, there is only a *partial* match between the verb and *Sem*. I have indicated this in (49ii) with a dotted line. The verb though is syntactically represented and morphologically spelled-out, lacks the needed semantics. In such cases therefore, only the meaning of the IC is realized in the argument structure. This explains why the meaning of what the predicate expresses is always closest to the IC. Accordingly, the ICV cannot assign theta role to its nominal complement since theta roles are assigned to semantic arguments (which would be found in *Sem*).

(49)   (i) Sem   (ii) Sem

        FLV   Compl.   ICV - - - - IC

        Syn   Syn
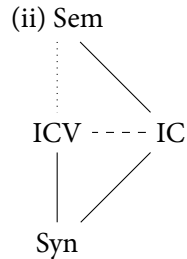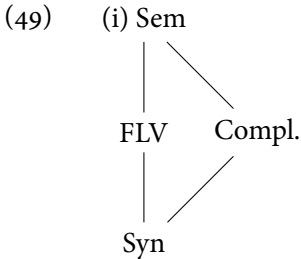
The IC is a non-semantic argument of the verb though its case and phi features can be fully checked in *Syn*. Note also that it would be problematic to assert that the verb is totally delinked from *Sem* since as we saw in not all the meaning of the predicate in an ICV construction might be from the IC.
The dashed line linking the ICV and the IC in (49ii) is a way of indicating the verb phrase reflexes on the (nominal) IC in certain syntactic operations such as focus constructions where focused ICs behave like focused predicates.

    With (49ii), we are able to explain the following: First, why the verb is almost always semantically vacuous. Second, why the meaning of the [ICV+IC] usually depends of the IC. Third, why the IC is not an argument of its verb in the same

sense as the argument of FLVs. Fourth, why the IC does not permit certain syntactic processes that are typical of arguments. Fifth, why the IC might show case and phi features. Accordingly, I assume the structure in (51) for ICVs.

(50)   Kwei **jo**   foi.
    K.   ICV race.IC
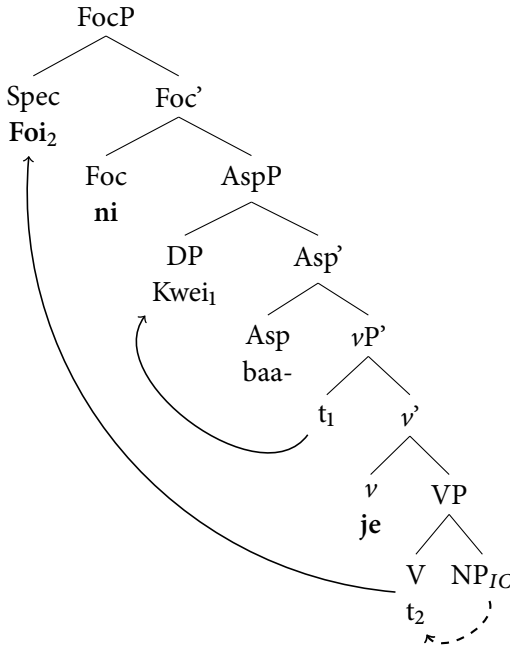   'Kwei ran (away).'   (Ga)

(51)   Structure for ICVs:

            *v*P
        ╱╲
    Kwei   *v*′
           ╱╲
        v   VP
        jo ╱╲
            V NP_{IC}
            ø   foi
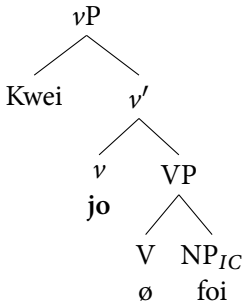
In (51), *jo* is mainly relevant in order to license VP in which the IC occurs, and checking case and phi features on NP (as evident in Ewe). Generating the verb in *v* as opposed to V has a number of conceptual and empirical advantages. First, the verb can still check the case on NP (as in Ewe) without needing to be in V. Thus there is no need to postulate a movement from V to *v* (as in the case of intransitive verbs). Second, a phonetically empty V is necessary whenever the IC needs to be focused (52).

(52)   Foi ni   Kwei baa-**je**.
    race FOC K.   FUT-ICV
    'Kwei will RUN (as apposed to say, *sit*).'   (Ga)

(53)   Incorporation and subsequent movement to SpecFoc:

FocP
- Spec **Foi$_2$**
- Foc'
  - Foc **ni**
  - AspP
    - DP Kwei$_1$
    - Asp'
      - Asp baa-
      - *v*P'
        - t$_1$
        - *v*'
          - *v* **je**
          - VP
            - V t$_2$
            - NP$_{IC}$

In (53), the IC incorporates (Baker 1988) into the empty V before moving to SpecFoc. The main evidence of this comes from the fact that focused ICs behave like focused VPs.

5.   Summary and Conclusion

In this paper, we have looked at inherent complement verbs in Kwa, the syntax-semantic equivalent of light verbs in Indo-European languages. We have seen that the ICV does not seem to have any meaning that is independent of its IC though they do not form one morphological unit. In addition, the IC, though nominal and shows case and phi features, is usually not complex. In order to account for these observations, we assumed, (in terms of Pesetsky 1982, Langer 2005), that ICV constructions seem to indicate a two-level complex entry for verbs in the language: c-selectional component, and s-selectional component. It is when the two levels converge i-e. c-selectional properties match with s-selectional properties, that we get a direct mapping between

structure and the semantics. This works perfectly for FLVs. For ICVs however, only the c-selectional component is fully available. The s-selection component in only *partially* available. This means that the verb gets a meaning that is highly deficient, making it incapable of assigning theta roles to its otherwise nominal arguments. In terms of its representation in the syntax, we proposed that the ICV be base-generated at *Little v*. The strongest evidence comes from the focus properties of the IC. As far as this paper is concerned, *inherent complement verbs* and *light verbs* and associated terms, are just different labels for similar phenomena in language.

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