

Emerging causative construction in Ikposo¹? (Kwa, Togo)

I. Presentation of the language and context of the study:

a. Figures on the language:

- “Akposso is a Kwa language spoken by about 100,000 people living in the Wawa and Amou Prefectures in the Plateau Region of Togo. Approximately 5,000 Akposso speakers also reside in the Volta Region of Ghana.” (Anderson, 1999)
- The present figures of the web version of Ethnologue are 155,000 for Akposo population in Togo and 7,500 in Ghana.
- The language includes 5 different dialects: Ikponu, Uwi, Litime, Logbo, Uma (Afolamey, 1995). See the map opposite.

b. Context of the study:

- The present study focuses on the Uwi variant from Doumé.
- First work in Lyon with an informant from Doumé (Master)
- Fieldwork in Doumé (~7500 inh.) in January and February 2008 with two main informants
- Data: audio records of wordlists and texts²

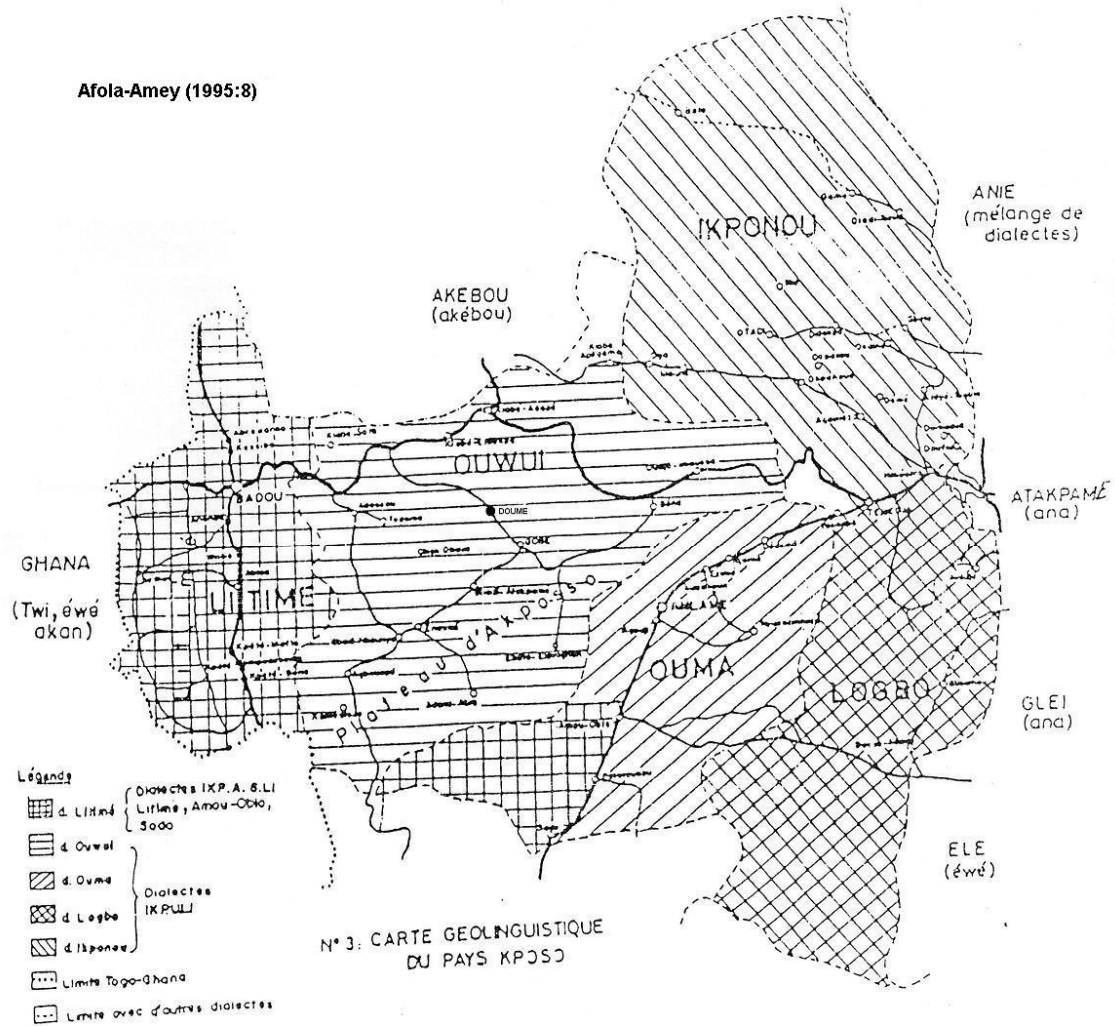
c. Some characteristics of the language:

- Tone language with 4 punctual tones – high, mid, lower-mid and low – and 2 modulated tones – falling and rising (Anderson, 1999; Soubrier, 2007). Anderson recognizes one more modulated tone from high to mid.
- Ten-vowels harmonic system (Anderson, 1999) based on the ATR feature.
- SVO language

¹ The alternate names for the language are Kposo, Akposo and Akposso. At present Ikposo prevails, as it is the name used for the language by the speakers while Akposo is the name used for the people.

² 1, 2, 3 = 1st, 2nd, 3rd person, ACP = perfective, APPL = applicative, CAUS = causative, COM = comitative, COMP = complementizer, DEF = definite, FUT = future, LOC = locative, O = object, P = plural, PART = particle, POSS = possessive, REL = relative, S = singular, SUBJ = subjunctive, X = oblique

The transcription uses the API's symbols. Tones: é = high, ē = mid, ê = lower-mid, è = low, ê = falling, ě = rising. In the morphological line, if no tones are indicated it means that I don't know the lexical tones of the term.



II. Two sets of pronouns: object and oblique

Table 1

object pronoun:		oblique pronoun:	
mú 'make drunk' (+ object)		mú 'greet' (+ comitative)	
ámú ósyé	'it made the woman drunk'	ámú nù ósyé	'he greeted the woman'
ámú nó	'it made me drunk'	ámú nò	'he greeted me'
ámú yé	'it made you (sg) drunk'	ámú yè	'he greeted you (sg)'
ámú yî	'it made him/her drunk'	ámú fâ	'he greeted him/her'
ámú wú	'it made us drunk'	ámú wù	'he greeted us'
ámú mí	'it made you (pl) drunk'	ámú mì	'he greeted you (pl)'
ámú mâ	'it made them drunk'	ámú nâfâ	'he greeted them'

The oblique pronoun can be used for different semantic roles.

It is very often governed by the verb, as in (1); here the corresponding NP would be a comitative prepositional phrase.

(1) làkú nāzó fā nū ázō nō nū Cécile

làkú nā-zó fā nū á-zō nō nū Cécile
after 1S:ACP-tell x3S COMP 3:ACP-call o1S COMP Cécile

‘and I told **her** that my name was Cécile [lit. that they call **me** Cécile]’ (Cécile, arrivée.11)

So far two occurrences of the oblique pronoun with a locative or an ablative meaning were found as illustrated in (2) and (3); here the corresponding NPs would be locative prepositional phrases. However non-human locative NPs will not be pronominalized with the oblique pronoun and will be referred to with the deictics nēmē ‘here’ or nēfē ‘there’.

(2) nū ólōdī nātí bā yō úwé bí fā

nū ólōdī nū á-tí bā yō úwú-ě bí fā
COMP someone COMP 3:ACP-do.again come take grindstone-DEF too x3S

‘[he said] that someone came again to steal the grindstone **from him**’ (Hilaire, génie.060)

(3) nāzótí fā ō : mlí nō, āzōtí nō

nū á-zōtí fā ō : mlí nō, ā-zōtí nō
COMP 3:ACP-be.sitting x3S PART get.up x1S 2:ACP-be.sitting x1S

‘(he said) that he was sitting **on him**: get up [from me]! You are sitting **on me**!’ (Yao, chef.31)

In (4) the comitative meaning is unambiguous; however, with movement verbs, the comitative meaning is most often ambiguous, and could be interpreted as a sociative causative (5). The latter characteristic will be developed in section IV.a.

(4) átí qī édínî nābwē mé ékwě bí éqī dú fā

á-tí qī édínî nā-bwē mé ékú-ě bí á-qī dú fā
3:ACP-run enter room NEG-be.well so thing-DEF too 3:ACP-enter be x3S

‘she ran into the room but the stick entered **with her**’ (Hilaire, génie.075)

(5) myā-lqē yì bwā (.) kōmé myābéqī fā nédínî

myā-lqē yì bwā kōmé myā-beqī fā nú édínî
2P:ACP-wash O3S TERM then 2P:ACP-arrive x3S LOC room

‘you wash her and then you take **her/go with her** into the room’ (Cécile, mariage.26)

III. Unexpected construction with the 3rd-person oblique pronoun ‘fà’

a. Examples:

(6) mé **myǎbá fà yì** nù ìdīsēnē (.) kámákūtū vù ētū

mé **myǎ-bá** **fà** **yì** nù ìdīsēnē ká-mā-kūtū vù ētū
so **2P:FUT-come** **X3S** **O3S** COM evening 3P:SUBJ-FUT-can shoot gun

‘so in the evening **you will take her** there so they can shoot the gun’ (Cécile, mariage.10)

(7) évlé kōmé **ámézi fà yì** nú óbê

évlé kōmé **á-mā-zì** **fà** **yì** nú óbê
now so **3P-FUT-descend** **X3S** **O3S** LOC river

‘so now **they will take her** to the river’ (Cécile, mariage.45)

(8) ítyé bwā kú **áyā fà yì** nóbênē (.) mé ólūkètʃwíwí nítí

ítí-ě bwākú **á-yā** **fà** **yì** nú óbênē
time-DEF REL **3:ACP-go** **X3S** **O3S** LOC way.of.the.river

mé ólūkà á-tʃwé íwí nú útí
so old.people 3:ACP-pour water LOC ground

‘when **they take her** to the river an old man makes the libation’ (Cécile, mariage.47)

(9) kú **ómátʃí tʃíkə fà yì kómáyā fà yì** lá Ūwōlōwù kótʃí kò áyívábú sétwé dʒí

kú **ó-mā-tʃí** **tʃíkə** **fà** **yì** **kó-mā-yā** **fà** **yì** lá Ūwōlōwù
and **3S-FUT-do.again** **turn** **X3S** **O3S** **3S:SUBJ-FUT-go** **X3S** **O3S** DISC God

kó-tʃí kò áyú ívábú sétū-ě dó yì
3S:SUBJ-do.again cover POSS3S wing be.hard-DEF put O3S

‘and on the way back [lit. **when he makes her turn to make her go**], may God take her under his hard wings [so that she will arrive in her village]’ (Cécile, arrivée.35)

b. Characteristics of this construction:

- sociative causative meaning (make someone do something by doing it with him)
- transitive while the involved verbs are normally used in intransitive constructions
- movement verbs only (come, descend, go, turn...)
- always with a 3rd-person object pronoun ‘yì’.

In elicited data however, the following sentence with 1st-person object pronoun (10) was accepted by younger speakers. This shows that the latter characteristic is in a process of evolution.

(10) % ézi fà nó nóbê

á-zì **fà** **nó** nú óbê
3:ACP-descend **X3S** **O1S** LOC river

‘They took me to the river’ (elicitation)

We can see that evolution in table 2:

Table 2³.

Speakers (age)	ézi fâ yì nóbê ‘they took her to the river’	ézi fâ nó nóbê ‘they took me to the river’
Cécile and Yao’s fathers (88-90)	*?	**
Pisi (~ 60)	?	*
Cécile (~ 50)	ok	*
Hilaire (44)	?	*
Yao (~ 40)	ok	*
Essimé (19) and Danyé (16)	ok	ok

IV. Hypothesis: ‘fâ’ is grammaticalizing to a voice marker

a. First stages of grammaticalization

- the 3rd-person oblique pronoun ‘fâ’ is used with movement verbs with a comitative meaning.
- there is a **semantic change** in these sentences from comitative to sociative causative. This would correspond to the ‘bridging contexts’ stage described by Heine (2002), where “while the target meaning is the one most likely to be inferred, it is still cancellable”.
- the sentences become transitive (with the object pronoun ‘yì’) and the 3rd-person oblique pronoun ‘fâ’ is reanalyzed as a voice marker – **syntactic change** of the construction and **semantic bleaching** of ‘fâ’.
- the construction can be used with non 3rd-person objects by younger speakers – **spread** of the construction.

³ % = only a part of the speakers accepts the sentence, ** = agrammatical (they don’t understand the sentence), * = agrammatical (although they know that people can produce the sentence and they understand it), ? = dubious and/or childish, ok = they accept and/or produce the sentence

b. The applicative hypothesis

The origin and evolution of the construction are reminiscent of an applicative mechanism. For the same meaning, older speakers will use the sentence in (11), while younger may use the sentence in (12). If we compare these two sentences we see that the oblique complement is promoted to object. And the oblique pronoun in (11) is reanalyzed as an applicative marker in (12).

(11) ézī fā nú ʒbê

á-zī fā nú ʒbê
3:ACP-go.down x3S LOC river

‘they took **her** to the river / they went down to the river **with her**’ (elicitation)

(12) ézī fā yì nóbê

á-zī fā yì nú ʒbê
3:ACP-go.down APPL O3S LOC river

‘**they took her** to the river’ (elicitation)

c. The causative hypothesis

The meaning conveyed by this construction is sociative causative, i.e. “the causer is also **involved** in the activity” (Dixon, 2000). Regardless of the origin of the construction, we can analyze it as a causative construction.

If we compare the two sentences in (13) and (14) we see that a new participant (the causer) has been introduced as subject, while the causee is demoted to object. The operation is marked by the morpheme ‘fa’.

(13) ézī nú ʒbê

á-zī nú ʒbê
3:ACP-go.down LOC river

‘she went down to the river’ (elicitation)

(14) ézī fā yì nú ʒbê

á-zī fā yì nú ʒbê
3:ACP-descend CAUS O3S LOC river

‘**they took her** to the river [by going with her]’ (elicitation)

d. Applicative and (sociative) causative in typological studies

In the above analyses I separately elaborated two hypotheses for applicative and causative constructions. But the interactions between the two notions (applicative and causative) can be complex.

While the literature shows that sociative causatives may grammaticalize into comitative applicatives, as for instance Shibatani and Pardeshi (2002), recent works provide examples of the reverse path of grammaticalization, from comitative sources to (sociative) causatives (Payne, 2002; Guillaume and Rose, to appear). Guillaume and Rose also argue that “the semantics of sociative causation is frequently manifested by applicative morphemes”.

It is difficult in Ikposo to draw a clear line between a causative and an applicative interpretation of the construction, as there is no other manifestation in the language of voice marking, and as the construction is only at the beginning of its grammaticalization process.

V. Conclusion

The sociative causative construction is emergent in Ikposo: it is at the very beginning of its grammaticalization process and it is used only in very restricted contexts (sociative meaning, verbs usually used in intransitive constructions, movement verbs, 3rd-person object). However we saw that the 3rd-person object restriction is evolving in the younger speakers. As for the other parameters tackled in this presentation, they have to be checked in a further field-trip, in order to have a full picture of the construction:

- sociative vs non-sociative meaning
- pronominalized object vs full-NP object
- movement vs other types of verbs
- intransitive vs transitive verbs

VI. Bibliography

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