On the Syntax of Yorùbá Splitting Verb Constructions

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Abstract

The syntactic behaviour of splitting verbs in Yorùbá has generated the interest of two groups of scholars. The first group accounts for splitting verb constructions as having two separate entities. In contrast, the second group accounts for the same constructions as having a single v head that splits up as the derivation progresses. The first system predicts that splitting verbs have the structure of serial verbs, a move that this study shows to be incorrect. The second system that this present study builds on fails to predict the possibility of focus verb movement that involves both splits (the entire verb), a movement that is grammatically realized, as will be shown. This study discusses Yorùbá splitting verb constructions as instances of discontinuous predicates derived through the process/rule of scattered deletion. Following the first group, splitting verbs enter the derivation as single lexical items with their split realization resulting from scattered deletion on movement chains. This approach derives the splitting verb structure in intransitive, transitive, and focus constructions. In focus constructions, it predicts the availability of the entire verb at the clause-initial position, a move that is not present with existing proposals.

Keywords: Discontinuous Predicates, Focus Construction, Movement Chains, Splitting Verbs, Scattered Deletion

1.0 Introduction

The phonological realization of movement chains is an issue that is central to the linearization of syntactic structures and the Copy Theory of Movement (Chomsky, 1995). The motivation for the re-resurrection of the Copy Theory is built upon the Inclusiveness Condition, which made it possible to eliminate traces. In place of traces, Copy Theory assumes that a moved element leaves behind a copy of itself, rather than a trace (Bošković & Nunes, 2007:14). The Copy Theory approach also raises questions about determining which (among the chain) since they leave copies at every spot, reaches the interface and why (Bošković & Nunes, 2007:14).

The assumption (Bošković & Nunes, 2007:14) states that it is generally assumed that only a copy of the moved element survives. This restriction deletes all other copies of the moved element and

assumes that the head of the nontrivial chain survives. Observe (1):

1. **Standard CD on Movement Chains**
   …[AB] … [~~AB~~]… full deletion of one copy.

The standard full deletion of lower copies shown in (1) shows that lower copies cannot be phonetically realized. However, pieces of evidence have been presented to favor arguments that lower copies may be phonetically realized in certain constructions. In line with this argument, of particular interest to this study are Bošković & Nunes (2007:16) and Chan et al. (2022:26) where linguistic data have been presented to defend what is called Partial Copy Deletion. For further reviews of the partial copy deletion approach, readers are referred to (Bošković & Nunes, 2007; Fanselow & Damir, 2000, 2001; Landau, 2006) where interesting insights are presented.

From (1) above, where the standard Copy Deletion movement chain is illustrated, consider the possibilities of Partial Deletion on movement chains (2) and partial deletion on head chains (3).

2. Partial deletion on Movement Chains where AB belongs to the same chain

a.	…[AB] … [~~AB~~]	Partial Deletion of one copy
b.	…[$_{XP}$ A~~B~~] … [$_{YP}$ AB]	Partial Deletion of both copies
c.	*…[A~~B~~] … [~~AB~~]	Partial/full deletion is blocked

3. Scattered deletion on Movement Chains where AB belongs to the same chain

… [$_{X}$ A~~B~~] … [$_{Y}$ ~~AB~~] Partial Deletion on head chains

From (2) above, (2a) shows the possibility of having a partial deletion on a copy (phrase) in the chain, while (2b) shows partial deletion on the two copies. The derivation in (2c) is blocked because it predicts that none of the copies will be spelled out in full. In (3) however, the derivation fleshes out the possibility of spelling out different aspects of head chains at different levels of the derivation. The focus of this study is to present further evidence for the possibility of (3) above from constructions in the Yorùbá language that have been termed 'splitting verb' constructions in the literature. See (4a&b), for example:

4. (a). Mo **gbàgbọ́** nínú Olúwa	(b). Mo gba Olúwa **gbọ́**
1SG believe inside God	1SG V God V
'I believe in God'	'I believe in God'

Important questions arise as to how the single verbal element in (4a) splits to derive (4b) and how to account for both (4a & b) theoretically uniformly.

There are at least two approaches to deriving Yorùbá Splitting Verb constructions. First, some linguists propose that splitting-verb constructions are treated similarly to serial-verb constructions, holding that each split component is generated at different levels in the derivation (Oduntan, 2000; Parrish & Feldscher, 2019). A second position is that splitting verbs are single lexical entries and are generated lower in the derivation, with the first part splitting and moving to a higher position (Ilori, 2016).

In this paper, the argument put forward is based on the second school of thought. It is argued that splitting verbs in the Yoruba language are base-generated as a single lexical item (head V), and their projection at different levels involves copy/scattered deletion of the head verb. Contrary to the existing base-generation analysis which proposed a sub-extraction movement (see (4a and b), and 21) of the first part of V in the split, it is assumed that a copy of the head verb is raised to lexicalize the little v (through Asp) with the first syllable of the higher copy getting phonologically realized in order to satisfy the language-internal constraint of tone raising on raised verbal heads. The lower copy also does not get all its features deleted as the second syllable is phonologically realized through scattered/distributed deletion of the split complex head V chain. This lends credence to the assumption that splitting verbs in Yoruba are single lexical items. It also provides general support for the copy theory of movement. It entails that not just a phrase, but a single head/syntactic atom can appear to be "split" through the course of syntax in a phonologically motivated way.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the phenomenon of splitting verbs and their properties and provides an overview of two main existing analyses for deriving the upper split-V. Section 3 presents a new analysis of deriving the split-V through scattered/distributed deletion (Chan et al., 2022). Section 4 provides evidence in favor of the scattered/distributed deletion approach by extending it to splitting verbs in focus constructions. Section 5 discusses the possibility of extending the approach to the phonological realization of a full copy of the complex splitting verb in a focused environment. Section 6 concludes.

2. Properties of Yorùbá Splitting Verbs

The Standard Yorùbá has extensive literature with a consensus on its basic clause structure as SVO (Bamgbose, 1990a; Yusuf, 1995; Yusuff, 2006) ,

among others. As in (5):

5. Àdùkẹ́ pa ẹran dúdú náà
   Àdùkẹ́ kill goat black the
   'Àdùkẹ́ killed the black goat'

Beyond such simple verb constructions, (Bamgbose, 1974, 1990a; Oduntan, 2000; Yusuff, 2006) two other major verbal categories in Yorùbá, complex verbs and splitting verbs, were also observed and described. From Oduntan's generalizations, verbs placed under the complex category and those placed under the splitting category are syntactically complex. What separates them is the lexical category combinations that they select in their derivation (complex verbs are formed from verb-noun incorporation, while splitting verbs are formed from verb-verb concatenation). Also, complex verbs do not split and generally obey the strict SVO word order of the language. Splitting verbs can split, and on the surface, their splitting property seems to truncate the SVO word order of the language. The focus of this study is the syntax of splitting verbs, which has, over time, attracted the interest of scholars (Ilori, 2016), (Parrish & Feldscher, 2019) who have all presented proposals to account for the syntactic behavior(s) of Yorùbá splitting verb constructions in the tradition of minimalist syntax.

2.1 Splitting Verbs in Inchoative, Causative, and Focus Constructions

Splitting verbs in Yorùbá belong to a closed word class with limited members such as **rẹ́…jẹ́ 'cut…eat', bẹ̀…wò 'beg…look', gbà…gbọ́ 'collect…hear', bà…jẹ́ 'touch…answer', tún…ṣe 'do…do', ṣẹ́…kù 'remain…remain', tú…ká 'separate…around'** (Oduntan, 2000; Yusuf, 1995; Yusuff, 2006) among others. (Ilori, 2016:6) describes their derivation as a fusion or combination of two simple verbs (a V + V = V) structure, which yields a new but more complex verb. The above-listed splitting verbs are illustrated below in Inchoative and Causative constructions.

2.1.2 Inchoative Constructions

In inchoative constructions (6)-(7), the splitting verbs appear to be intransitive, showing the semantics of the action as if it were to have happened on its own. Observe the following:

6. Aṣọ Jídé **bàjẹ́**
   Cloth Jídé spoil/destroyed
   'Jídé's cloth got spoilt/destroyed'

7. Àwọn aṣebi **túká**
   3pl evil-doer disperse
   'The evil-doers dispersed.'

The examples of splitting verbs in (6)-(7) appear to be intransitive, without any agent argument(s) acting. Following (Ilori, 2016:15), it is assumed that the structures are outcomes of syntactic movements, an argument that will be revisited later in this study.

2.1.2 Causative Constructions

In causative constructions, the agent/causer arguments of splitting verbs are expressed syntactically. However, even when the surface syntax projects each verb as a possible head V, none of the verbs can individually contribute to the surface semantics of the complex V in the inchoative constructions in (6 and 7). In sum, none of the split V can be glossed as a single verb if the meaning of the complex V is to be maintained. Observe the following:

8. Akín **ba** aṣọ Jídé jẹ́
   Akín V cloth Jídé V
   'Akín spoilt/destroyed Jídé's cloth(es)'
9. Ó **tú** àwọn aṣebi **ká**
   3sg V 3pl evil-doers V
   'S/he dispersed the evildoers. '

An important assumption that will be discussed in this study is that the inchoative construction in (6) is derived from the basic syntax of the causative in (8). The same observation applies to (7) and (9). For a clearer perspective on the relationship between inchoative and causative splitting verb constructions, I present the examples in (10a)-(10b). Where (10a) is the basic inchoative, and (10b) is the derived causative:

10.a. Oúnjẹ **ṣẹ́kù**
   Food remain
   'the food remains'- (ṣẹ́kù = leftover)
  b. Adé **ṣẹ́** oúnjẹ **kù**
   Adé V food V
   'Adé left some food'

2.1.3 Splitting Verbs in Focus Constructions

Focus constructions in Yorùbá have been described as derived through two strategies (Bamgbose, 1974, 1990a; Yusuf, 1995; Yusuff, 2006). The first

strategy is preposing the focused item, which is obligatorily followed by the focus particle ni, as in (11b) below. This strategy operates on constituents other than verbs. To derive grammatical focused verbal constituents, the second strategy is used. The second strategy requires a copy of the root verb (the target of focus) merged with the preposed root verb, with a vowel change. This is shown in (11c) and (11d) below:

11a. Adé **ré̩** Akin **je̩**
Adé V Akin V
'Adé cheated Akin'

b. Akin ni Adé **ré̩je̩** **Focusing the object 'Akin'**
Akin foc Adé cheat
'it was Akin that Adé cheated'

c. **rí-ré̩je̩** ni Adé ré̩ Akin je̩ Focusing the verb 'ré̩je̩'
copy-cheat FOC Adé cut Akin eat
'Cheating is what Ade did to Akin'

d. **Rí-ré̩** ni Adé **ré̩** Akin **je̩**.
copy-cut FOC Adé cut Akin eat
'Cheating is what Ade did to Akin'

From the above examples, we have examined Yorùbá splitting verbs in three constructions and made three observations about the possibilities of their projection. First, the inchoative constructions (6, 7, and 10a) are the basic constructions from which the causative constructions (8, 9, and 10b) are derived because they obey the strict SVO word order at the DS. Second, each of the verbs (when split) does not individually contribute to the semantics (meaning) of the complex verb that splits (hence, the glossing of each split as V). Third, either the complete complex V head or the higher split v head can be targeted by focus (11c and d). Following these three observations, this study will focus on accounting for the syntax of splitting verbs. The approach taken in this study follows from the Minimalist tradition of (Chomsky, 1995) and (Chomsky, 2001). Hence, in what follows, I will only review existing proposals relevant to the approach that is followed in this study.

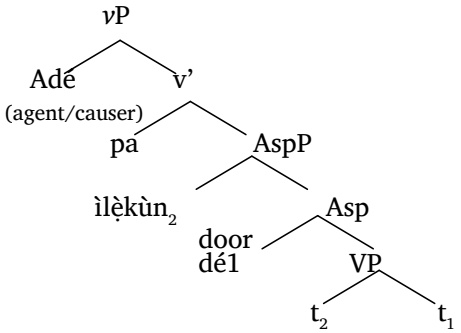
2.1 Existing Proposals

The first proposal treats splitting verbs as the same construction as serial verbs (entering the derivation as two separate verbs) (Oduntan, 2000; Parrish & Feldscher, 2019). The second treats splitting verbs as a single lexical entity (Ilori, 2016). This study draws on the second proposal and argues against the first proposal that Yorùbá splitting verbs are different complex V heads from their serial verb counterparts and, as such, should be analyzed differently.

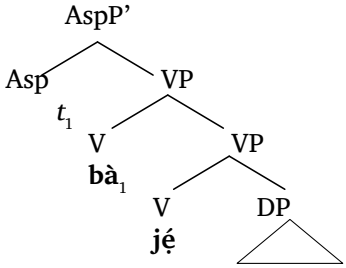
2.1.1 Splitting Verbs and Serial verbs

If the analysis presented by (Oduntan, 2000) and (Parrish & Feldscher, 2019) are to be followed, one would expect splitting verbs and serial verbs to behave the same way syntactically in the language. However, they do not. Observe the proposal in (Oduntan, 2000) and (Parrish & Feldscher, 2019):

12. (Oduntan, 2000, p. 246)



13. (Parrish & Feldscher, 2019)



The assumption (Oduntan, 2000) as seen above (12), is that the first part of the splitting verb is generated higher in the head position of vP, while the other part is generated lower as the head of VP and raises to Asp. This treatment assigns each split the ability to function as a single verb. However, it agrees that splitting verbs are morphologically single lexical items but maintains that they are realized as two words syntactically. Put simply, the assumption that each part of the split enters the derivation as separate heads does not hold (a V head must be able to function independently as a V, but parts of the splitting verbs do not). This proposal also fails to predict that both elements of the splitting verbs can be moved to the clause-initial

position for focus.

The treatment of splitting verbs by (Parrish & Feldscher, 2019), is only minimally different from what is obtainable in the earlier version (Oduntan, 2000) in (13). The structure also proposed two head V positions for the split verbs; the only difference is that both Vs are generated low in the syntax before the higher V moves to Asp and the projection progresses.

With the above structures, one would expect the syntax of splitting verbs to replicate that of serial verb constructions in the language. I argue that if serial verbs are syntactically different from splitting verbs, they cannot occupy separate V heads as serial verbs do. Observe the following sentences in (14) and (15):

Serial Verb

14. Adé **ra** ẹran **pa tà**
    Adé buy goat kill sell
    'Adé bought a goat,
    slaughtered and sold it,

Splitting verb

15. Ó **tú** àwọn aṣebi **ká**
    1SG V 3PL evil-doer V
    'he dispersed the evildoers'

If we are to treat each verb in the above constructions as projecting independent clauses, it will be observed that the serial verbs in (14) include clauses sharing the same object (17-18) in conformation with (Kang Kwong & Bodomo, 2000:179).

16. Adé **ra** ẹran
    Adé buy goat
    'Adé bought a goat'

17. Adé **pa** ẹran
    Adé kill goat
    'Adé slaughtered a/the goat'

18. Adé **ta** ẹran
    Adé sell goat
    'Adé sold the beef/meat'

However, splitting verbs do not share the same objects (19)-(20):

19. *Ó **tú** àwọn aṣebi
    3SG V 3PL evildoers
    'he split the evildoers' (intended)

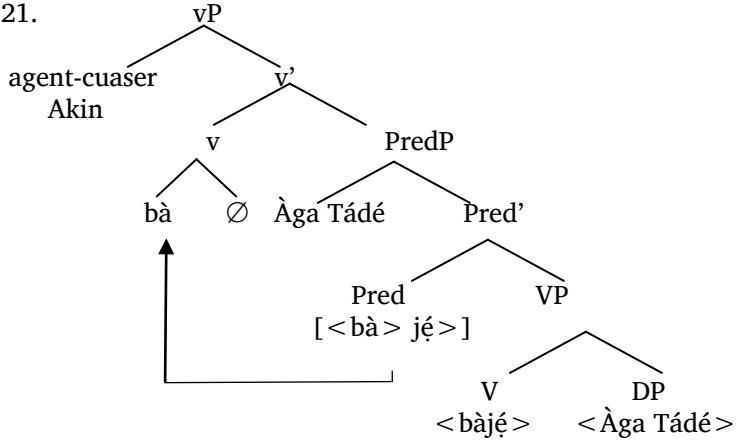
20. *Ó **ká** àwọn aṣebi ‘he around the evildoers’
3SG V 3PL evildoers
‘he split the evildoers’ (intended)

Secondly, the observation (Ilori, 2016) that both inchoative and causative splitting verb constructions are similar and should share the same inner core VP fails if each split is generated separately in the tree. Since the analysis in (Oduntan, 2000) and (Parrish & Feldscher, 2019) are premise upon analyzing splitting verbs as serial verbs, and data from (16-20) have shown that serial verbs can be analyzed as independent clauses sharing the same object, which makes them structurally different from splitting (see (Bamgbose, 1974, p. 18), (Awoyale, 1988:21–27) for Yorùbá, and (Kang Kwong & Bodomo, 2000:166) Dagaare and Cantonese). I assume that their analyses do not conform with the structure of splitting verbs. Lastly, serial verbs can have one of the verbs missing and still make a grammatical construction; splitting verbs rely on the presence of the two halves to remain grammatical.

2.1.2 Single Item Approach

(Ilori, 2016) presents an analysis of splitting verbs that differs from the serial verb approach described above. In his proposal, splitting verbs are base-generated as single lexical items. Their projection at different stages of the tree is described as a movement of the first syllable (first verb in the V+V concatenation) of the head V to lexicalize the functional little v. Observe Ilori’s projection:

21.



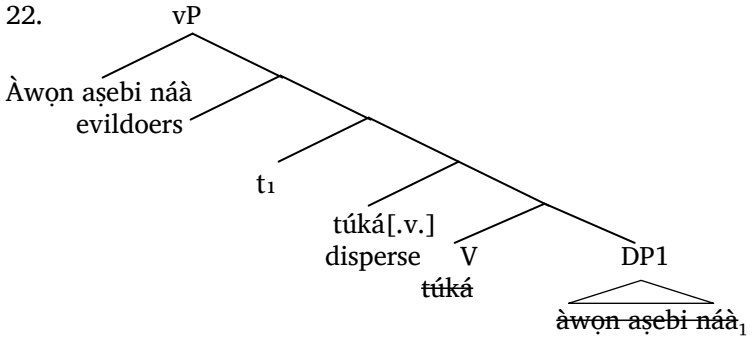
One will observe that in Ilori's splitting verbs syntax, the causative structure of the Yorùbá splitting verb is derived from the inchoative structure. However, one would wonder what motivates the kind of sub-extraction movement that only targets a syllable of the head V and moves it to adjoin to v. In this study, I agree with Ilori on the first claim that causative splitting verb constructions are derived from their inchoative counterparts but disagree on the nature of sub-extracting only a part of the head V and targeting such for movement(s), a process that Ilori also failed to explain its motivation. Also, the leading argument in Ilori's work is that splitting verbs are single lexical items, but the study fails to explain how such movement works in clear terms. For example, the nature of PredP, where the base form of the splitting verb is generated, is not explained. Also, it is not clear how a focused form of the splitting verb [Bíbàjẹ́ ni ...] would be derived in this system.

In what follows, I will argue for the possibility of scattered/distributed deletion following Fanselow & Damir (2000), Fanselow & Damir (2001), and (Chan et al., 2022).

3.0 The Proposal

To account for the behavior of splitting verb constructions, I propose that Yorùbá splitting verbs enter the syntax as a single lexical V, as in (Ilori, 2016), but their split realization is a result of scattered/distributed deletion of heads (i.e partial deletion at word level) as proposed by (Chan et al., 2022) for Cantonese. Based on evidence that splitting verbs are not separate V heads, I propose that a copy of the entire head V moves (internal merge) with its pronunciation split between the lower copy and the higher copy in its new head v position. Through this, the head v is lexicalized and the causative is derived from the inchoative. The proposals for the derivation of inchoative and causative splitting verbs are shown below.

22.



The proposal follows from the kind of scattered/distributed deletion described in (3) and repeated herein (23):

23. … [$_X$ ~~AB~~] … [$_Y$ ~~AB~~] Partial Deletion on head chains

What is shown in (23) establishes the possibility of certain parts of head chains getting phonetically realized at different stages of the derivation. I will account for Yorùbá splitting verbs in the same way. As in (24):

24. … [$_x$ ~~túká~~] … [$_Y$ ~~túká~~]

I will elaborate on this by assuming that the verb túká is a single lexical item generated at V with a DP complement. The proposal will rely on these assumptions:

a. Splitting verbs are single verbal elements (not serial verbs)
b. for their splitting parts, I assume that when V moves to v through Asp, the incomplete pronunciation results from the language-internal morpho-phonological rule which raised the tone of moved verbs in the language.
c. Scattered/distributed deletion erases the lower V's second syllable and the base V's first syllable. As shown in (24) above.

I will proceed to account for how this proposal fleshes out the syntax of Yorùbá splitting verbs.

3.1 Yorùbá Splitting Verbs as Partial Deletion

From the above review of existing proposals, analyses of the syntax of Yorùbá splitting verb constructions have been approached concerning their behavior in three constructions, inchoative, causative, and focus. The derivation of each is presented below.

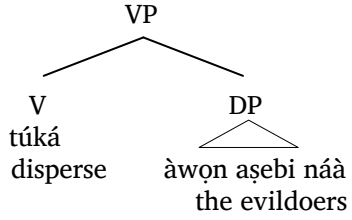
3.2 Inchoative constructions

I assume that the splitting verbs are transitive and that their intransitive (inchoative) structure results from object raising via internal merge.

25. Àwọn aṣebi náà **túká** inchoative
    3pl evildoer the disperse
    'The evildoers dispersed'

BASE VP: for all Yorùbá Splitting Verb Constructions

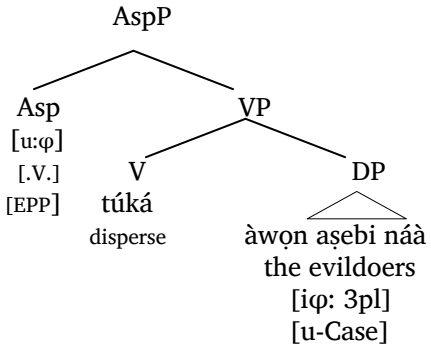
26.



The analysis in (26) above accounts for splitting verbs uniformly (that they follow the VO word order) of the Yorùbá language. Hence, the derivation of splitting verb constructions begins with the external merging of the verb to its object complement, deriving the VP [VP [V túká] [DP àwọn aṣebi náà]]. The derivation does not converge yet, since this is not the surface structure order. For the derivation to converge, the object complement DP [àwọn aṣebi náà 'the evildoers'] needs to take a position higher than the head verb [túká 'dispersed']. My proposal deviates from that of (Ilori, 2016) from here.

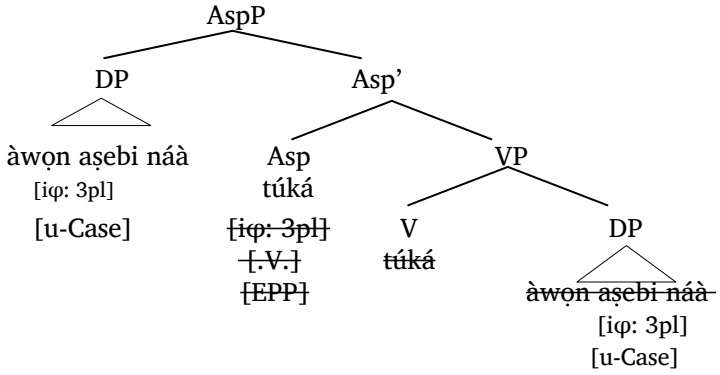
For this derivation to converge, I assume that an aspect phrase AspP is projected with the above VP [VP [V túká] [DP àwọn aṣebi náà]] as its complement. The derivation progresses with the merging of the VP to Asp. I assume that the DP [àwọn aṣebi náà 'the evildoers'] enters the derivation with valued φ-features [3-Pers, Pl-Num], and with unvalued case feature [u-Case]. The head Asp also enters the derivation with [u:φ], [.V.], and [EPP]. The above derivation generates the structure below:

27.



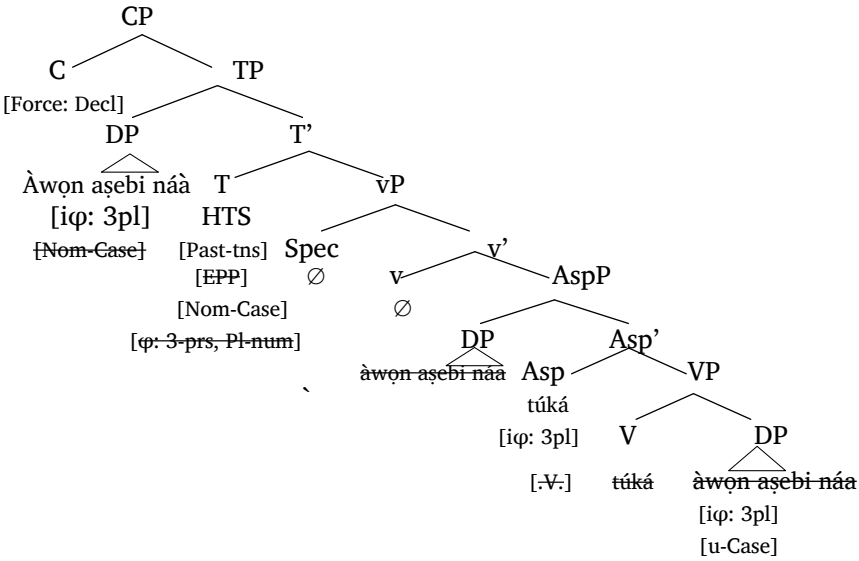
From the above, following the Earliness Principle operations must apply as early as possible in the derivation. I assume that Asp will serve as a probe and agree with a goal in its domain for feature valuation. Since Asp has a [.V.] feature, its immediate goal is the head V [túká], hence, head V moves to Asp and the [.V.] feature of Asp is checked. Since there are [u:φ] and [EPP] of Asp yet to be valued, it probes further in its domain for a goal to agree with in these features. The suitable DP [àwọn aṣebi náà] is located and φ-features are valued. The φ-features of Asp are valued [3-prs, Pl-num], while the [u-Case] feature of the DP remains. The EPP feature of Asp is also checked against the DP, internally merging it at Spec Asp. These feature valuations derive the following structure:

28.



In continuation, AspP merges with head v. I assume that v is null for inchoative splitting verb constructions in Yorùbá. Hence, it also carries no features. The agent DP of the vP is also null in this kind of construction. Since we will achieve a vP with this, the derivation converges when the vP is merged with a T category. The head T enters the derivation with the features [Past-Tns, u-Pers, u-Num], also with [EPP] and [Nom-Case]. T probes for feature valuation and locates the DP at Spec AspP [àwọn aṣebi náà]. The unvalued φ-features of T are valued [φ: 3-prs, Pl-num], and the unvalued case feature of the DP gets valued [Nom-Case]. The [EPP] feature of T attracts the DP goal to Spec T and projects the TP. The derivation is then merged with a null C head to project a CP with the declarative force of the sentence. As shown below (29):

29.



Since there are no feature mismatches, the derivation for inchoative splitting verb construction converges, as shown in the structure above. The assumption is that all other splitting verb constructions are derived from inchoative constructions (shown above). I will account for causative splitting verb constructions and focused splitting verb construction from the structure above. With the above, the first assumption (i.e., that splitting

verbs are single verbal elements that behave like regular verbs with DP objects) is explained. The other assumptions (i.e., language-internal rule of tone raising truncates the pronunciation of the second syllable of the higher copy, and that the unpronounced first syllable of the lower V is a result of scattered/distributed deletion erasing the first syllable of the base V) will be the focus of the next two sections.

3.3. Scattered/Distributed Deletion

3.3.1 Causative Splitting Verb Constructions

To account for causative splitting verb constructions that have the verb head split and pronounced in a scattered/distributed manner, I will discuss the example in (30) as an exemplar.

30. ó **tú** àwọn aṣebi náa **ká**
3sg V 3pl evil-doer the V
'God dispersed the evil-doers'

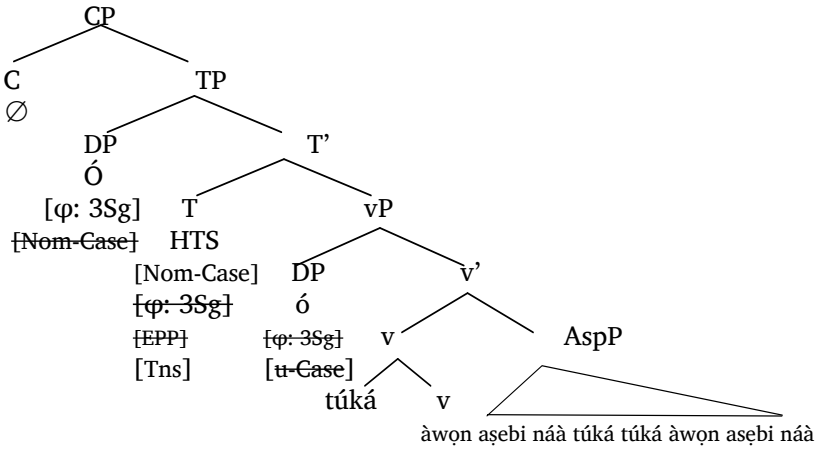
If the assumptions driving this study are correct, the above sentence (30) is derived from the inchoative structure in (25), with the construction in (29). I account for the derivation as follows.

The derivation progresses from the external merging of the main verb with the DP to derive the VP [VP[V túká] [DP àwọn aṣebi náà]]. The VP merges with an Asp to derive the AspP [Asp [VP[V túká] [DP àwọn aṣebi]]], and feature valuations triggers the movement of V to Asp, and DP to Spec Asp to derive the AspP [AspP [DP àwọn aṣebi náà] [Asp[+v] túká] [VP [V ~~túká~~] [DP ~~àwọn aṣebi náà~~]]]. For the inchoative construction given above, I assumed that the DP moves from Spec AspP to Spec TP and that v and its spec are both null, see (29) above. However, to derive the causative, the v head must be lexicalized and its features fully valued. The derivation is as follows.

In inchoative constructions, where the splitting verb's surface syntax appears intransitive, the object complement has moved to a higher position in the derivation. For causative constructions, the object first moves above the verb, and then the head V moves above the object when the features of v attract it. The assumption is that for this construction to converge, AspP is merged with v. v enters the derivation with [.V.] and [DEPP] features. v probes for a goal and feature valuation attract V to adjoin to v. The [DEPP] feature of v is valued when the agent DP [ó] is merged in Spec vP to project the vP. The agent DP [ó] enters the derivation with [u-Case], [iφ: 3-prs, Sg-

num]. The vP is merged with a head T that enters the derivation with [Tns], [EPP], [Nom-Case], and [uφ]. The EPP feature of T attracts the agent DP [ó] to Spec T, the [u-Case] feature of the agent DP is checked against the [Nom-Case] of T, and the [uφ] of T is valued against the [φ: 3-prs, Sg-num] of the DP. The above descriptions derive the following structure:1

31.



I assume that the discontinuous pronunciation of Yorùbá disyllabic splitting verbs is a result of the obligatory tone raising that occurs after Yorùbá monosyllabic verbs are raised. Also, it seems that only monosyllabic verbal elements can undergo such tone raising. Hence, only the first part of the raised verb is phonetically realized. The example above is illustrated with a verb with a high tone.2 However, with a verb that bears a low tone, the low tone raises to a mid-tone once the verb is raised. Although the operations of the HTS are unclear and have not been thoroughly studied, I assumed that its operation affects splitting verbs, leading to their discontinuous pronunciations. Observe the following verb tone raising:[xii]

32a. Aṣọ Adé bàjẹ́ low tone first syllable
cloth Adé spoil
'Ade's clothes got spoilt'

b. Akín ba aṣọ Adé jẹ́ mid-tone first syllable
Akín V cloth Adé V
'Akin spoilt Ade's cloth'

4.0 Extending to Focus Constructions

From the examples in (11c and d) repeated below, we observed that both full and partial copies of splitting verbs can be a target of focus. Observe:

33.a. **rí-rẹ́jẹ** ni Adé **rẹ́** Akin **jẹ** **Focusing the verb 'rẹ́jẹ'**
copy-cheat FOC Adé V Akin V
'Cheating is what Ade did to Akin'

b. **Rí-rẹ́** ni Adé **rẹ́** Akin jẹ. **Focusing the partial-copy 'rẹ́'**
copy-V FOC Adé V Akin V
'Cheating is what Ade did to Akin'

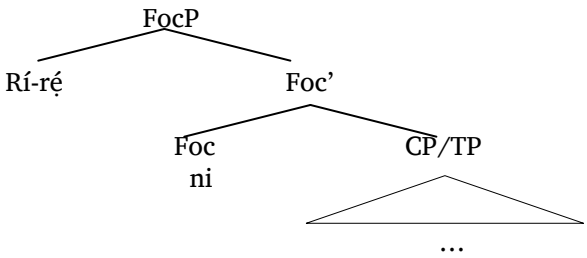
To account for the syntax of Yorùbá splitting verbs in focus constructions, I assume that the above constructions follow from the assumption that Yorùbá splitting verbs are derived from a scattered/distributed deletion approach. The construction in (33b) above can be accounted for straightforwardly. However, the construction in (33a) is complex and will be discussed in the next section 5.

The derivation of split-verb focus (33b) above can be accounted for through the derivation of causative splitting verbs in (31), repeated below in simplified form (34):

34. [CP [C ∅] [TP [DP Ó] [T HTS] [vP [DP ~~Ó~~] [v tú~~ká~~] [AspP àwọn aṣebi náà ~~tú~~ká ~~àwọn aṣebi náà~~]]]]

The structure in (33b) is accounted for if the assumption that FocP is projected when the Foc particle is merged with the CP/TP (see 31) to project Foc' and v is copied and merged at SPEC Foc (after it is duplicated and vowel change occurs). This assumption is given below:

35.



A complete description is simplified in (36) below:

36. [FocP [Rí-ré̩je̩] [Foc ni] [CP [C ∅] [TP [DP Adé] [T HTS] [vP [DP Adé] [v ré̩je̩] [AspP Akin ~~ré̩je̩~~ ~~Akin~~]]]]]

This accounts for the focused v [v ré̩je̩]. However, at issue is the grammaticality of the full v appearing in focus constructions, as seen below:

37. **rí-ré̩je̩** ni Adé **ré̩** Akin **je̩** **Focusing the verb 'ré̩je̩'**
copy-cheat FOC Adé V Akin V
'Cheating is what Ade did to Akin'

The next section is dedicated to this issue.

5.0 At Issue

The construction in (37) above is quite strange. It does not follow directly from my assumption that the split form of the so-called Yorùbá *Splitting Verb Constructions* are instances of scattered/distributed deletion on movement chains. From the analysis so far, one would expect the sentence in (37) to be ungrammatical, leaving us with (33b), which I have accounted for in (36). About (37) above, I am open to two possibilities. First, it may be the case that when v [v ré̩je̩] is focused, it leaves the option of recovering the deleted second syllable of v. However, there is nothing pointing to the possibilities of this recoverability property. Second, it may be the case that what is copied for focus is the complete v, and the scattered/distributed partial deletion is why we have [rí-ré̩] and not [ré̩je̩-ré̩je̩] at Spec Foc. The second assumption is simple and more plausible. I assume that what we have as surface structure as [ríré̩] is a segment that permits the scattered/distributed deletion as is derived as [ré̩je̩-ré̩je̩]. However, this does not account for the vowel change and such an explanation requires further research.

6.0 Concluding remarks

This paper provides further pieces of evidence to support partial/copy deletion and the phonetic realizations of lower copies (or at least parts of lower copies) in the movement chain from Yorùbá splitting verb constructions. Following the approach from the literature, the paper discussed Yorùbá splitting verbs from their behavior in three constructions: inchoative, causative, and focus constructions. Splitting verbs are analyzed as having been derived from inchoative constructions where they appear intransitive. Arguing against a serial verb approach to the syntax of splitting verbs, the study proposes following the single lexical item approach (Ilori, 2016) . It proposes a scattered/distributed deletion approach stemming

from the movement of V to v through Asp, which creates a lower copy in the internal VP. The analyses pursued in this paper assumed that a complete V is moved, contrary to a sub-extraction movement approach earlier proposed.

The paper analyses the PF realization of split head V due to scattered/distributed deletion where chain reduction does not delete all the features of the lower copy. This scattered/distributed deletion is derived through the language-internal rule of morpho-phonological tone raising when a verb raises to a position that inherently permits only monosyllabic verbs. The syntactic raising of V to v permits tone raising, forcing only the first syllable to be phonetically realized. Scattered/distributed deletion accounts for the phonetic realization of the second syllable of the lower. This is a form of economy of pronunciation since the first syllable has been phonetically realized higher.

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ENDNOTES

[i] *Several instances of successive syntactic movements create movement chains.*

[ii] *Abbreviations: 1SG = first person singular, 3SG = third person singular, 3PL = third person plural, Foc = focus, HTS- high tone syllable (used to mark tenses in Yorùbá), Asp = Aspect, V = verb (used to represent each syllable of a split verb because they either do not have independent meanings or their meaning does not conform to the sentence).*

[iii] *This is assumed to be derived through phonology and syntax. However, to the best of my knowledge, there is no concrete phonological evidence as to what conditions the vowel change in the copy of the head verb.*

[iv] *For readers who are interested in a more robust analysis of Yorùbá verbal constructions, see (Awobuluyi, 1967), (Awobuluyi, 1978), (Bamgbose, 1967), (Bamgbose, 1990b), (Schleicher & Schleicher, 1990), (Déchaine, 2000), and (Yusuff, 2006).*

[v] *The examples in (19-20) cannot be properly glossed because they are not verbs in the sense of serial verbs (as in 16-17).*

[vi] *The definition of serial verbs is given in (Westermann, 1930, p. 126) as 'a row of verbs one after another […] in which, the verbs stand next to each other without*

being connected'. This definition calls into question the assumption in (Oduntan, 2000), and (Parrish & Feldscher, 2019) on analyzing two structurally different constructions as one, and the same

[vii]*Splitting verbs are dependent for meaning. I have continued to gloss each split as [V] simply to show that unlike serial verbs, when a complex splitting verb splits into two, each half of the split is dependent on the other for its meaning.*

[viii]*The proposal from (Chan et al., 2022) for what they termed 'discontinuous predicates' in Cantonese is slightly different from Yorùbá. The empirical base for their argument concerns the observation that disyllabic verbs in Cantonese can appear in discontinuous form when they take a verbal suffix. Consider the following example:*

1. Aaming feilou-zo/ fei <zo> lou
Aaming fail-PERF/fail<PERF>
'Aaming failed'

The minimal difference between the phenomenon in Cantonese and Yorùbá is that Cantonese requires a verbal suffix, while Yorùbá requires none. Instead, Yorùbá is triggered by a floating high tone that obligatorily raises the tone of a raised verb.

[ix]*The proposal in (Chan et al., 2022) is also the only study to the best of my knowledge to discuss such partial deletion on heads. Hence, this study presents data from Yorùbá to further strengthen their arguments.*

[x]*I agree with the suggestion of anonymous reviewer that the light verb in v introduces an external argument in vP. The argument is assigned the Agent/Causer θ-role.*

[xi]*Phonologically, I assume that this tone raising is an inherently floating high tone with the capacity to raise the element it attaches to the next level of tone specification. If the tone of the verb is high, the floating high tone also acts and the contraction remains a high tone.*

[xii]*There is a sense in which the analysis presented here generally follows from the Yorùbá literature. The HTS (high tone syllable) is the tense marker in the language, it can either attach to the subject NP or a raised verb (Bamgbose, 1990a). In this sense, since it can attach to two separate categories (not simultaneously in a single construction), I also agree with the suggestion of the HTS being an affix. However, it is not yet clear how it selects the constituent it attaches to in a Yorùbá SVO structure. These are interesting suggestions that will be further pursued.*

Endnotes

1 I agree with the suggestion of anonymous reviewer that the light verb in *v* introduces an external argument in *v*P. The argument is assigned the Agent/Causer θ-role.

2 Phonologically, I assume that this tone raising is an inherently floating high tone with the capacity to raise the element it attaches to the next level of tone specification. If the tone of the verb is high, the floating high tone also acts and the contraction remains a high tone.