

## Subject Agreement and Ìbibió Clause Structure

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### Abstract

The agreement morpheme is an obligatory part of all verbal morphology in non-imperative finite clauses in Ibibio language. Visible copies of agreement morphemes appear multiple times attached to every verbal functional head like aspect, auxiliary, mood, participle as well as tense in the same clause. This creates a problem of analysis for the phrase structure theory which projects only one agreement projection for finite clauses. The theory cannot account for the multiple realization of agreement projection as attested in Ibibio language. It is arguable that the multiple occurrence of agreement projection in Ibibio non-imperative finite clauses is a result of the need for all the functional heads in the clause to agree with the subject DP. It is shown that the study of the interplay of morphemes in Ibibio clause structure can help to resolve some empirical and theoretical questions that have currently been deliberated upon in the linguistic literature such as deciding which of the two projections (AgrP or TP) is the highest in the clause structure. Analyses of empirical data collected from native speakers of Ibibio through elicitation method show that AgrP is not an independent projection, because agreement feature is regarded as [-interpretable] phi feature. Rather, each of the major functional heads with [+interpretable] phi features is an agreement bearer. This study shows that the clause is a TP, a maximal projection of T and that the head of what would constitute the agreement projection AgrP is fused into the major functional heads.

**Keywords:** *Agreement Morpheme, Tense-Aspect Morphemes, Functional Heads, Ibibio Clause Structure, Features*

### Introduction

The clause structure ramification formalizing the subject-predicate relation is a very complex structure. This has been noticed since the early works in generative grammar beginning from Chomsky's (1957) *Syntactic Structures* where a node is generated between the subject NP and the VP to host modals, auxiliaries and other affixes constituting the paradigm of the English morphology. Although there was implicit assumption in the 1960s and 1970s that languages displaying special categories for modals and auxiliaries should involve more formal structures mediating the relation between the subject-NP and the predicate, it was not until the 1980s with the coming of the principles and parameters approach that the assumption was formalized and generalized and taken to be a property of Universal Grammar (UG). A more articulated clause structure was introduced in Chomsky (1981) where the subject-predicate relation is systematically mediated by a functional node labeled Infl, assumed to contain the grammatical information normally associated with verbs such as tense, mood and agreement affixes.

Also, in a work done by Baker (1988) on agglutinative languages (which Ibibio is one), it was shown that much more grammatical information can actually be associated with the verb as these languages overtly manifest. Hence, the assumption must be that the Infl node should have room for even more features/affixes than those mentioned above. The clause structure that emerged from Chomsky's (1981) principles and parameters approach is shown in (1) below.

(1) S NP Infl VP

Further inquiries were conducted into the nature of Infl node itself. One such inquiry was Pollock's (1989) article which introduced the Split Inflection Hypothesis which argues that the inflection node be split into agreement (Agr) and tense (T) nodes. That is, the single Infl node should best be split into two separate nodes one corresponding to tense and the other to

agreement features. Now, since the clause is considered to be an endocentric projection of I, (Chomsky 1986), it should now rather be seen as a projection of both agreement and tense each considered as a head in X-bar terms (Belletti 2001). There has been some brain-storming by linguists on the question of which of the two projections; (AgrP or TP) should be the highest in the clause structure. Many linguists assume that the clause should be interpreted as an AgrP maximal projection of Agr, with the TP projection of T being the complement of Agr. However, people like Pollock (1989) assume that the TP is the highest in the clause structure, so that the clause would be a projection of T. This paper will stick with the latter assumption following Pollock (1989). In terms of X-bar schema, following the former hypothesis championed by Belletti 2001 and Chomsky 1995), the basic clause structure which emerged is the one in (2) with the subject-NP filling the Specifier of Agreement [Spec, Agr] position and the first lexical projection being the VP complement of T.

(2): [<sub>AgrP</sub> Agr [<sub>TP</sub> T [<sub>VP</sub> V ]]]

The grammatical features contained in Agr are those appearing on the verb entering the subject-verb agreement relation manifested in finite clauses. As we can see from the structure in (2), this agreement relation is mediated by the Agr node. Thus, according to Belletti (2001:488), “such phenomenon of subject-verb agreement comes out as a result of two operations: the agreement relation between the subject in [Spec, Agr] and the Agr head plus the realization of the feature of Agr on the verb”. The Spec-head relation is generally interpreted as a relation of agreement such that the elements in the Spec and the head share certain phi-features. The most typical of this relation is the one holding between the subject and Agr head where the phi-features involved are those of person and number as far as finite verbal morphology is concerned.

Another feature which is currently assumed by some linguists to be involved in the subject-verb agreement relation is Case. It is assumed that Agr (or Agr + T) carries nominative Case feature in finite clauses. Hence the agreement relation directly established through this configuration with its Spec assigns or checks nominative Case with the subject NP. However, another important issue concerning Case is related to the checking procedure of accusative Case; the Case for the direct object in nominative-accusative languages. It has been assumed that if an Agr head mediates Case checking under the agreement relation, another AgrP projection must be present in the clause to host the Case checking for objects. Since accusative Case is a property of the verb associated with its transitivity, the relevant Agr projection should be found around the VP projection. This leads to the introduction of another AgrP projection called AgroP (agreement of object projection). The clause structure would therefore be revised to have the form in (3a) following (Belletti 2001:489).

(3a) [<sub>AgrsP</sub> Agrs [<sub>TP</sub> T [<sub>AgroP</sub> Agro [<sub>VP</sub> V ]]]]

However, Belletti (2001:491) proposes that there is another AgrP projection between the upper AgrsP and TP to host the subject clitics in northern Italian dialects spoken in Florence, Trento. This would give the clause structure in (3b) which bears semblance to the Ibibio clausal/verbal structure discussed in the next section.

(3b) [<sub>AgrsP</sub> Agrs [<sub>AgrsP</sub> Agrs' [<sub>TP</sub> T [<sub>AgroP</sub> Agro [<sub>VP</sub> V ]]]]

### **The Proposal**

The main thrust of this paper is to show that the agreement morpheme is a mandatory part of all verbal morphology in non-imperative finite clauses in the Ibibio language. This paper intends to

show that agreement with a single subject is repeated on all functional heads in all non-imperative finite clauses in this language. What this means is that, in most cases, copies of the agreement morphemes are visibly attached to each functional head like the tense marker, the modal marker, the auxiliary and so on. This paper shows that even where agreement morphemes are not visible, they are deleted by general and systematic phonological rules that resolve vowel hiatus based on the height and the quality of the interacting vowels. This ubiquitous nature of agreement morphemes in this language creates a problem of analysis for the phrase structure theory which projects only one agreement of subject projection (Henceforth AgrsP projection) for finite clauses or other agreement bearing heads following Chomsky (2000, 2001) etc. The theory cannot account for the double/multiple realization of AgrsP projections as observed in the Ibibio language.

This paper proposes that the double/multiple occurrence of the AgrsP projection in the Ibibio non-imperative finite clauses is a result of the need for all the agreeing heads in the domain (including the main verb, the auxiliary verb and the tense/aspect/ modal morphemes) to agree with the subject NP or DP.

This paper also intends to show that the study of the interplay of morphemes in the clause structure of Ibibio can help to solve some empirical and theoretical questions that have currently been deliberated upon in the linguistic literature. Such questions include; which of the two projections (AgrsP or TP) would be the highest in the clause structure after the Split Inflection Hypothesis of Pollock (1989)? Linguistic scholars have been brain-storming on this issue. Some linguists assume that the clause should be interpreted as the maximal projection of Agr with the TP projection of T being the complement of Agr. However, this paper intends to show that AgrP may not really be regarded as an independent projection in the clause structure. Rather, as evidence from Ibibio shows, each of the major functional heads (heads with + interpretable features) in the clause is an agreement bearer.

In this regard, Belletti's (2001) analysis differs from Pollock's (1989) analysis in that the former regards the AgrP as the highest in the clause structure while the latter regards the TP as the highest in the clause structure. However, Pollock's (1989) analysis is not clear as to the position of the AgrP if the TP should be analyzed as the maximal projection in the clause structure taking cognizance of the fact that in languages like Ibibio all subject agreement morphemes canonically precede all tense/aspect morphemes. In that regard, this paper proposes that the heads of what would constitute AgrPs in the clause structure are fused into the major functional heads.

### **The Ibibio Subject Agreement**

All subjects agree with the verbs with overt markings on the verbs in all non-imperative finite clauses in Ibibio. The paradigm in example (4a-f) is an exposition of such agreement relation between the subjects and their respective predicates in all grammatical persons in the language.

- 4a. Àmì ñ- yèm ówó:  
1sgS AgrS- look-for person 'I am looking for somebody'.
- b. Àfò à- yèm ówó  
2sgS AgrS look-for person 'You are looking for somebody'
- c. Ànyé á- yèm ówó  
3sgS AgrS look-for person 'He/She is looking for somebody'.

- d. Ñnyìn i- yèm ówó  
 1plS AgrS look-for person We are looking for somebody
- e. Ñdùfò è- yèm ówó  
 2plS AgrS look-for person You are looking for somebody
- f. Òmmọ́ é- yèm ówó  
 3plS AgrS look-for person They are looking for somebody

As is evident from example (4), the subject agreement morpheme for the first person singular is /í/ with a high tone as shown in (4a), that for second person singular is /à/ with a low tone as shown in (4b), for third person singular is /ú/ with a high tone as shown in (4c), for first person plural is /ì/ with a low tone as shown in (4d), for second person plural is /è/ with a low tone as shown in (4e) and for third person plural is /é/ with a high tone as shown in (4f). The agreement morphemes have allomorphs depending on a number of environmental and grammatical factors in the clause. The factors may include the vowel quality of the verb root, the vowel quality of the subject, tense, question, negation etc. For instance, the second person plural agreement marker /è/ has an allomorph /í/ if the sentence contains negation marker as can be evident in example (5) which contains a negation morpheme when contrasted with example (6) which is in the affirmative.

5. Ñdùfò í- yém -mé ówó  
 2plS AgrS look-for -Neg person You are not looking for somebody
6. Ñdùfò è- yèm ówó  
 2plS AgrS look-for person You are looking for somebody

In the above examples (4-6), the subject agreement morphemes are obligatory parts of the non-imperative finite clauses in Ibibio. Next, the paper shows that copies of the agreement morphemes systematically and overtly repeat on all functional heads like auxiliaries, tense markers, aspectual markers and modal markers when such functional heads co-occur with the main verbs in the clause (Baker 2008, Baker & Willie 2010, Willie & Udoinyang 2012, and Willie 2012). What this means is that one copy of the subject agreement morpheme shows up before each functional head in a single-main-verb-construction and the final copy shows up immediately before the object agreement marker if such appears overtly. Even more distinctive about agreement feature in this language is the fact that the agreement morphemes appear to be quite interdependent because in most cases the copies of the agreement morphemes are required to be identical (see Willie 2007, Baker & Willie 2010). Now, consider the paradigm in the examples in (7a-c) below.

- 7a. Okon á- sósóp á- dọk èkpàt  
 3sgS AgrS- quickly AgrS- make bag Okon quickly made a bag
- b. Òmmọ́ é- mààná é- nám  
 3plS AgrS again AgrS- nam They are doing it again
- c. Ñnyìn i- kpà- í- k- í- s- í- sósóp í- dọk èkpàt  
 1plS AgrS Mod- AgrS- Tns- AgrS- Asp- AgrS- quickly AgrS- make bag  
 We would have quickly made a bag

The example in (7a) shows a case where a copy of the third person singular agreement marker /*ú*/ appears before the adverbial *sósóp* ‘quickly’ and a copy also before the main verb *dòk* ‘make or weave’. In (7b) a copy of the third person plural agreement morpheme /*é*/ appears before the adverbial *màaná* ‘again’ and a copy also before the main verb *nám* ‘do’. In example (7c), a copy of the first person plural agreement marker /*í*-/ appears before the modality morpheme /*kpa*-/, ‘would’ a copy appears before the tense morpheme /*k*-/, a copy also appears before the aspect morpheme /*s*-/, a copy still appears before the adverbial *sósóp* ‘quickly’ and yet another copy appears before the main verb *dòk* ‘make or weave’. A cursory look at the examples in (7a-c) shows that in each case, copies of the agreement morphemes are required to be identical as they appear before every functional head. Example (7c) does not only show the ubiquitous nature of agreement in this language, it also shows that the appearance of agreement markers before all functional heads in non-imperative finite clauses is regular and systematic and that, as we stated earlier, where copies of the agreement morphemes do not seem to appear visibly, they are deleted by phonological rule of vowel hiatus. But before we move forward to establish this claim, let us present the overall table of agreement morphemes in the Ibibio language as in table (1) below.

**Table 1: Basic Agreement Markers in Ibibio (adapted from Baker & Willie 2010)**

	Subject	Object	Subject	Object
1sg	ń-	ń-	1pl	ì-    ì-
2sg	à-/ú-	u-	2pl	è-/í-    ì-
3sg	á-	ø	3pl	é-    ø

As can be inspected from table (1) above, the agreement morpheme for first person plural is /*í*/ and canonically in this language, the past tense allomorph that can co-occur with the modal marker /*kpa*-/ ‘would’ is /*ké*-/. But as can be observed in example (7c), the vowel of the past tense morpheme /*e*/ deletes in interaction with the vowel of the first person plural agreement morpheme /*í*/ which is a higher vowel in Ibibio vowel hiatus. Also, the basic form of the modal marker in this language according to Essien (1990), Urua (2000), Willie 2012 and others is /*kpàá*/ ‘would’. But in (7c) the first vowel of the modal marker /*á*/ is deleted in interaction with the vowel of the first person plural marker /*í*/ which is a higher vowel<sup>8</sup>. What this means is that in example (7c) we would have expected the form in (8a), but we rather realize the form in (8b)

- 8a. Ñnyin ì- kpàá- í- k-é- í- sí- í- sósóp í- dòk èkpàt  
 1plS AgrS- Mod- AgrS- Tns- AgrS- Asp- AgrS- quickly AgrS- make bag  
 We would have quickly made a bag
- b. Ñnyin ì- kpà- í- k- í- s- í- sósóp í- dòk èkpàt  
 1plS AgrS Mod- AgrS- Tns- AgrS- Asp- AgrS- quickly AgrS- make bag  
 We would have quickly made a bag

Another example that shows that lower vowels delete in interaction with higher vowels in this language is presented in (9) below.

9. Áfò ú- k- ú- s- ú- yém -mé ébót  
 You 2sgS- Tns- 2sgS- Asp- 2sgS- want -Neg goat You didn’t use to want a goat

<sup>8</sup> Details of why the second vowel of the modal marker, which is also a lower vowel in the Ibibio vowel hiatus, does not delete before the vowel of the first person plural marker is beyond the scope of this paper.

We stated earlier that the allomorph of the past tense marker in this language that obligatorily co-occurs with the modal marker is /*ké*<sup>9</sup>. It is the case that the same allomorph also, obligatorily, co-occurs with the negation morpheme /-*mé*/ as can be inspected from (9). Also, the base form of the habitual aspectual marker is /*sí*-. However, if one inspects the example in (9), one finds out that the /*e*/ vowel of the past tense allomorph /*ké*-/ has been deleted and that the /*i*/ vowel of the aspectual morpheme /*sí*-/ has also been deleted and both are replaced by an allomorph of the second person singular subject agreement marker /*u*/. This is the allomorph that is obligatorily used in co-occurrence with the negative morpheme /-*me*/. What this means is that in example (9), we would expect the form *àfò ú- ké- ú- sí- ú- yém -mé ébót* but we rather realize the form *àfò ú- kú- sú- yém -mé ébót* showing clearly that the mid front vowel /*e*/ and the high front vowel /*i*/ delete in interaction with the high back vowel /*u*/.

An independent motivation for this analysis can be observed in the examples in (10) and (11) below.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>10a. <i>ké íkót</i> (underlying form)<br/> in bush ‘in the bush’</p>           | <p>b. <i>k’íkót</i> (derived form)<br/> in bush ‘in the bush’</p>           |
| <p>11a. <i>ké úfòk</i> (underlying form)<br/> in house ‘at home/in the house’</p> | <p>b. <i>k’úfòk</i> (derived form)<br/> in house ‘at home/in the house’</p> |

The examples in (10) and (11) show independent phono-tactic contexts in this language where lower vowels delete in interaction with higher vowels. In example (10b), the mid front vowel /*e*/ of the preposition /*ke*/ deletes before the initial vowel /*i*/ of the object of the preposition which is a high front vowel. In example (11b) also, the mid front vowel /*e*/ of the preposition /*ke*/ deletes before the high back vowel /*u*/, the initial vowel of the object of the preposition.

### The Descriptive Generalization

From the foregoing discussion, we propose a descriptive generalization of the phonological factors surrounding the interaction of vowels in Ibibio pre-verbal clause structure. Such generalization is motivated by a set of phonological rules. Willie (2007:39) proposed a set of phonological rules operative at the left periphery of the Ibibio clause structure with regard to the interaction of vowels of tense/aspect/mood and agreement morphemes as presented in (12) below.

- |                  |                |                |                |                |  |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--|
| 12a. a → ∅ / e — | b. e → ∅ / e — | c. e → ∅ / i — | d. i → ∅ / — u | e. i → ∅ / u — |  |
| f. i → ∅ / i —   | g. a → ∅ / a — | h. a → ∅ / — I | i. a → ∅ / — u | j. e → ∅ / — u |  |

In (12), one can observe that only four out of sixteen occurring phonetic vowels in Ibibio participate in these rules because they are the only ones used in agreement prefixes (see Urua 2000:17 for details). [*a*] is a central open unrounded vowel, [*e*] is a half close front vowel, [*i*] is a close front unrounded vowel, and [*u*] is a close back rounded vowel. From the description of the vowels and observation of the rules in (12), this paper claims that vowel height plays important role in the interplay of vowels in the rules. Vowel height seems to entail vowel strength; the higher the vowel, the stronger it is and the more resistant it is to deletion and or change in quality when it interacts with other vowels. The rules in (12a, c, g, h and i) show that lower vowels delete before or after higher vowels. However, the rules in (9b, e, and f) show

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<sup>9</sup> The other allomorph is /*máá*/ which is used mainly in affirmative declarative sentences (see Essien 1990, Urua 2000, Willie 2012 etc).

vowels of the same height interacting. Our claim here is that when the vowel of the tense marker and the vowel of the agreement morpheme have the same height and the same quality, the vowel of the agreement morpheme must delete as shown in example (13a-b). However, when the vowel of the agreement marker is lower than the vowel of the tense marker, the vowel of the agreement marker must delete as shown in example (14a-b) below.

- 13a. Ñdùfò    è-    ké-    é-    kòòd ñwèd    (underlying form)  
           2pIS    AgrS    Tns- AgrS    read book    You were reading
- b. Ñdùfò    è-    ké-    kòòd ñwèd    (derived form)  
           2pIS    AgrS    Tns- read book    You were reading
- 14a. Àfò        à-    mé-    á-    mààná    á-    dí    (underlying form)  
           2sgS    AgrS    Perf- AgrS    again    AgrS- come    You have come again
- b. Àfò        à-    mé-    mààná    dí    (derived form)  
           2sgS    AgrS    Perf- again    come    You have come again

In the examples above, (13a) and (14a) are the underlying forms while (13b) and (14b) are the derived forms. In (13b), the vowel of the second person plural morpheme /e/ deletes after the vowel of the tense morpheme /e/, a vowel of the same height and quality (the mid front unrounded vowel). In (14b), the vowel of the second person singular agreement morpheme /a/, the low front unrounded vowel, deletes after the vowel of the perfective marker /e/, the mid front unrounded vowel, which is higher in the vowel hierarchy. And more importantly, the rule in (12d) presents a case where the height of the two vowels is same but the quality is different: /i/ is the high front unrounded vowel while /u/ is the high back rounded vowel. The claim is that backness must entail more strength as the high back rounded vowel never deletes anywhere in the rules as illustrated in example (9) represented here as example (15) below.

- 15a. Àfò        ú-    ké-    ú-    sí-    ú-    yém -mé ébót    (underlying form)  
           2sgS    AgrS    Tns- AgrS- Asp-    AgrS- want -Neg goat    You didn't use to want a goat
- b. Àfò        ú-    k-    ú-    s-    ú-    yém -mé ébót    (derived form)  
           2sgS    AgrS    Tns- AgrS- Asp- AgrS- want -Neg goat    You didn't use to want a goat

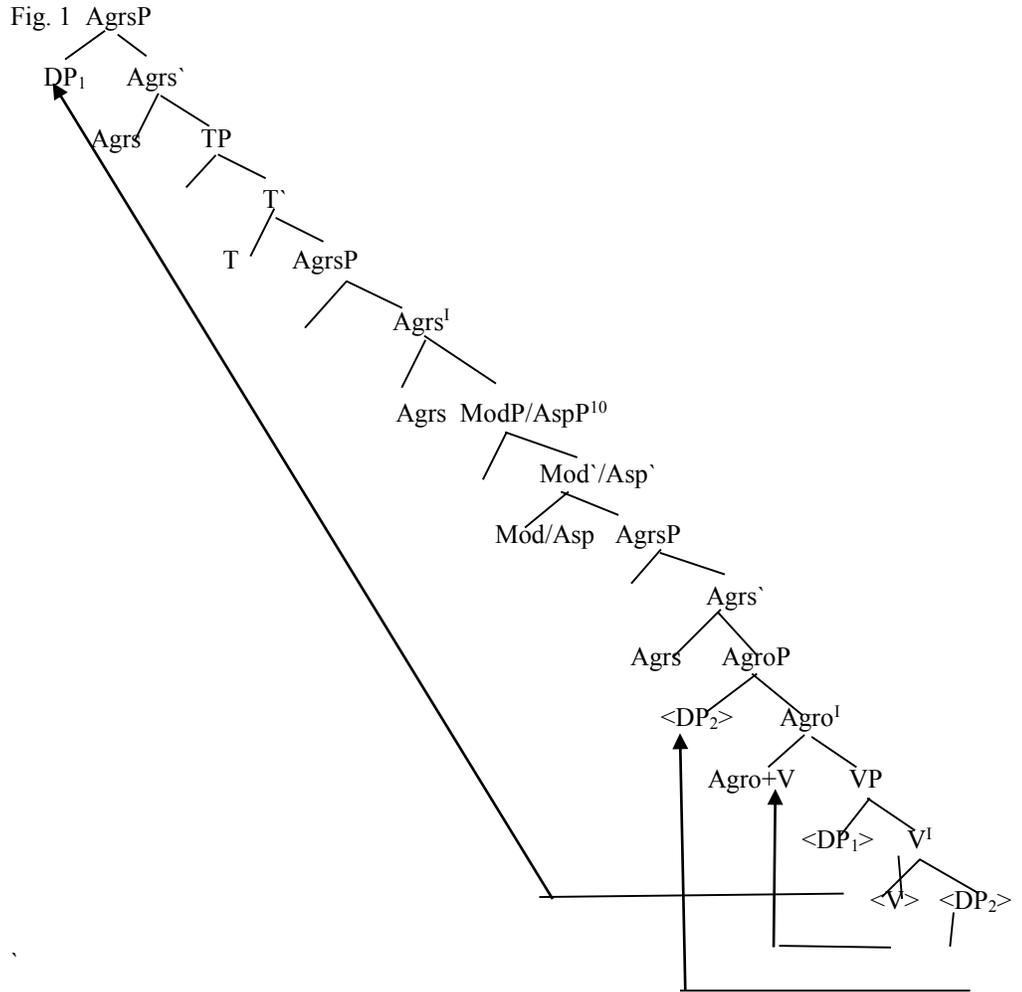
Also, in cases where the vowel of the agreement morpheme is higher in the hierarchy than the vowel of the tense marker, they co-exist in most cases. This is because the vowels of the tense markers are fully specified for features and are, therefore, more stable than the vowels of the agreement morphemes.

So, the generalization is that when the vowel of the tense marker is higher than that of the agreement morpheme, the agreement morpheme deletes. When the vowel of the tense marker and the agreement morpheme have same height and quality, the agreement morpheme deletes, but when the vowel of the agreement is higher than the vowel of the tense/aspect/modal marker, they subsist except in a few cases like in *ommo e-ku-yem fi:n* 'they were looking for you'. Here we would expect the form *e-ke-u-yem* in the verbal structure. The /e/ vowel of the tense marker does not co-exist with /u/ the agreement vowel. This is probably because /u/ is a high back vowel and backness entails more strength and therefore /u/ never deletes in any of the rules presented and or discussed.

Next, this paper moves on to show why we claim that an analysis of the interplay of syntactic elements in Ibibio clause structure can contribute to finding answers to some empirical and theoretical questions in the clause structure generally.

### **The Analyses**

If we assume, following Pollock (1989) and Belletti (2001), that the clause is a maximal projection of AgrP and that the clause structure contains visible agreement of subject projections (AgrsP), i.e. one AgrsP on top and another AgrsP either in-between the topmost AgrsP and tense projection (TP) to host subject clitics as in Northern Italian dialects or in-between TP and agreement of object projection (AgroP) as in Ibibio, then the clause structure would be as in (Fig. 1) below. We also assume that feature checking is strictly in a Spec-head relationship and that subject DPs are base-generated at the Spec of VPs (VP internal DP hypothesis). Another assumption we want to work with is that ‘attraction’ for feature checking is based on sharing of (at least one) phi-features between the ‘attractor’ (probe) and the ‘attractee’ (goal) and that feature checking does not take place in base positions. Elements generated at particular positions in the derivation would have to be “attracted” out of that position for feature checking. We can now have a clause structure as the one in (Fig.1) below that may be tolerable in terms of the general scientific requirement for the principle of simplicity of analysis; a very important ingredient of any systematic inquiry including the minimalist program.

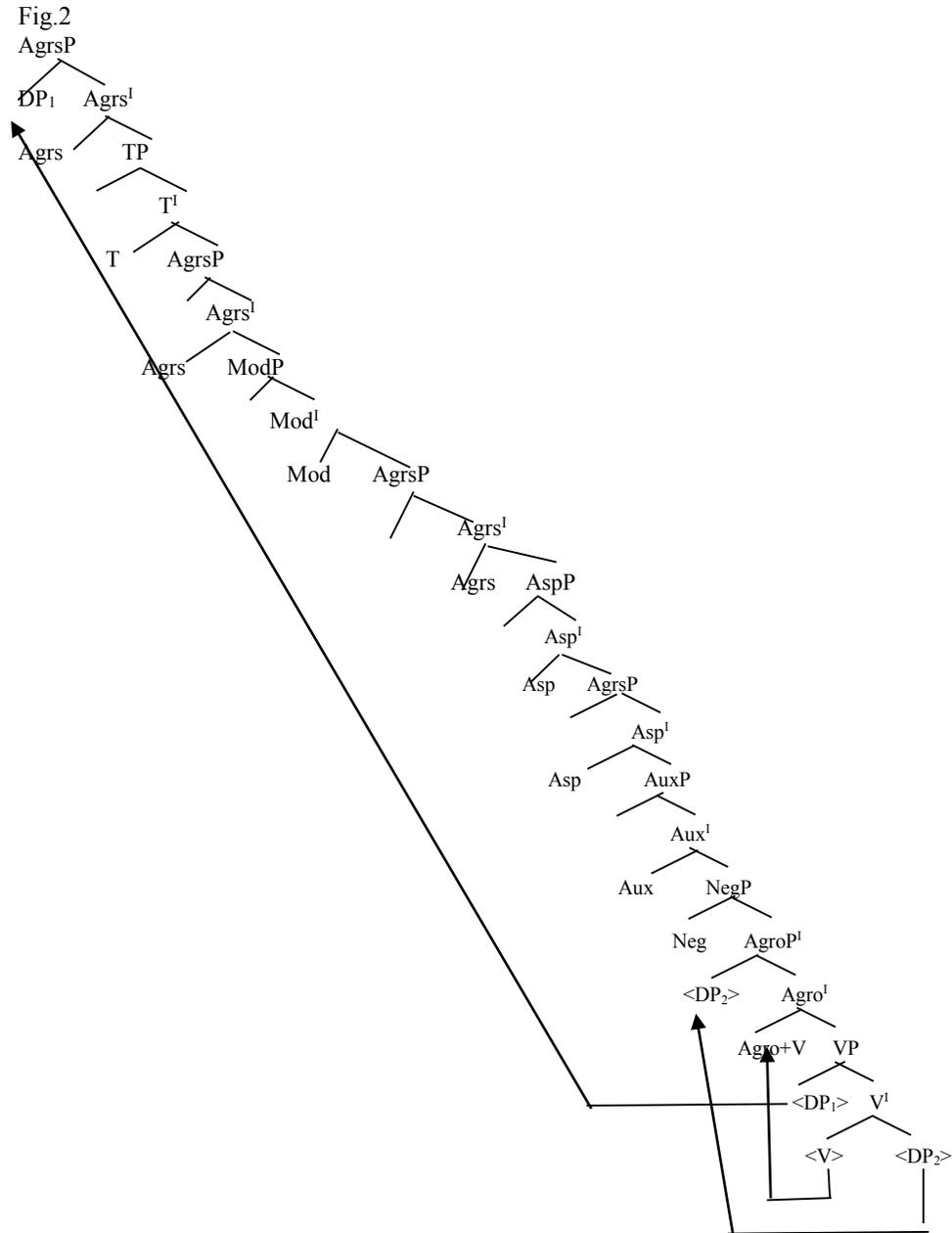


But the clause structure in (Fig. 1) is just the beginning because there are examples in Ibibio with very complex agreement morphology as shown in (16) below.

16. Afò ú- kp- ú- k- ú- s- ú- mààná -ké ú- n- yém mí:n  
 2sgS AgrS Mod- AgrS- Tns- AgrS- Asp- AgrS- again Neg AgrS- AgrO- look for me  
 You should not have been looking for me again

If we assume that agreement has visible projections in the clause structure, a partial clause structure for the example in (16) can be generated as in (Fig.2) which does not conform to the scientific principle of simplicity of analysis.

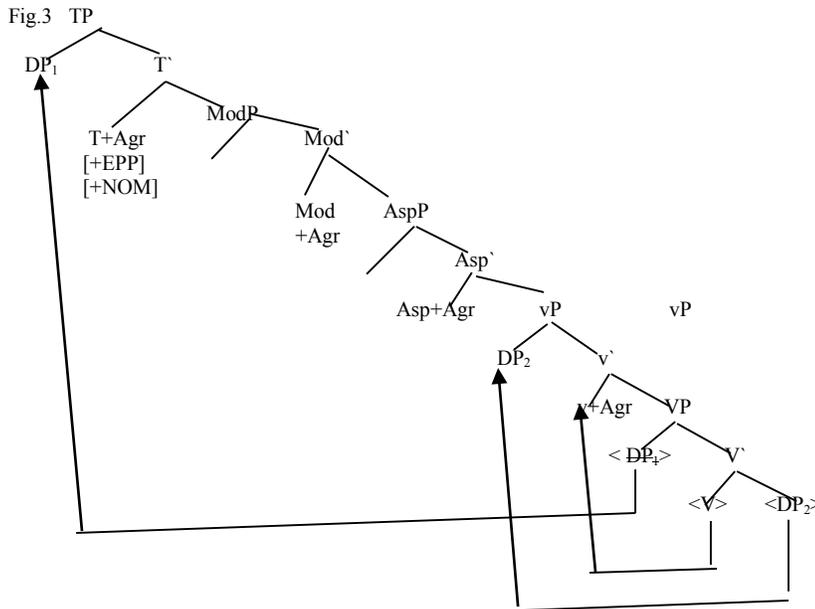
<sup>10</sup> Mood or Aspect phrase



Complex structures like the one in (Fig.2) in Ibibio, and other languages like it, may persuade one to have a second look at the status of agreement as a Phi-feature (henceforth  $\emptyset$ -feature) and other  $\emptyset$ -features like person, number and gender in relation to the clause structure typology. Chomsky (1995) has made a proposal on the interpretability of  $\emptyset$ -features. Chomsky

(1995:174) claims that “agreement is a collection of  $\emptyset$ -features (gender, number and person); these are common to the systems of subject and object agreement...” This means that the systems of subject and object arguments have a canonical way of agreeing with the verbs in the clause in terms of person, number and gender.

Chomsky (1995) proposes a distinction between [-interpretable] and [+interpretable] features and Belletti 2001:502) claims that “ $\emptyset$ -features content in agreement are considered [-interpretable] since they simply express morpho-syntactic relations”. According to Chomsky 1995 and Belletti 2001, [-interpretable] features are checked with the  $\emptyset$ -features of DPs and erased or deleted in the course of computation since they do not play any role at LF. This paper adds that agreement, therefore, does not attract a visible representation in the clause structure. Rather they are part of the composition of other categories (like T, Asp, Mod, v, V). [+interpretable] features, on the other hand, are present at LF and play crucial role in interpretation (Chomsky 1995, Belletti 2001). They are not erased or deleted at computation after checking with the  $\emptyset$ -features of DPs and this paper claims that they include features like (Tense, Aspect, Mood, Neg. etc.) that may appear visibly in the clause structure. This, we claim, guarantees simplicity of analysis. With these in mind, the clause structure would now be as presented in (Fig.3) below.



How, then, does feature checking operate in a structure like (Fig.3)? This paper claims that T is the major “attractor” (probe) for DP<sub>1</sub>; its ‘attractee’ (goal). Any other head/heads in the structure are minor attractors for DP<sub>1</sub>. DP<sub>1</sub> is attracted by T and it moves to Spec-TP because it shares the features [+EPP] and [+NOM] with T. Also, DP<sub>1</sub> shares agreement feature with the other heads in the domain and each head agrees with the immediate higher head in the domain or clause forming a chain of agreement from head-to-head (see Baker & Willie 2010). The DP<sub>2</sub> shares the feature [+ACCU] with the verb; they also share the agreement feature. In order to

have these features checked, V has to move out of its based position and adjoin to the little v and the combination of V and v attracts DP<sub>2</sub> to Spec-v where their accusative and agreement features are checked. However, in order for DP<sub>2</sub> to reach Spec-v, it has to cross DP<sub>1</sub> or its trace or copy. This seems to violate the principle of minimal link or shortest move. But since the landing site for DP<sub>1</sub> is within the same minimal clause as the landing site for DP<sub>2</sub>, we say following Chomsky (1995), that they are within the same minimal domain and therefore the principle of equidistance applies making the movement permissible.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we have shown that agreement relation is established before every agreement bearing head in non-imperative finite clauses in Ibibio. We have shown that, in some cases, copies of the agreement morphemes appear visibly before every agreement bearing head namely tense, aspect, mood, auxiliary and the verb. However, in some cases, the agreement morphemes are disguised by phonology and therefore do not appear visibly. In this regard, this paper has established some descriptive generalizations which show that when the vowel of the tense marker is higher than that of the agreement morpheme, the agreement morpheme deletes. Also, when the vowel of the tense marker and the agreement morpheme have same height and quality, the agreement morpheme deletes, but when the vowel of the agreement morpheme is higher than the vowel of the tense/aspect/modal marker, they co-exist except in a few cases. We, therefore, claim that the study of the interplay of morphemes in Ibibio non-imperative finite clauses can help us resolve some current theoretical problem such as deciding which structural projections really appear visibly in the clause structure and which ones do not. We claim that TP is the maximal projection in the clause structure and that, based on the data from Ibibio and other languages like it and also considering Chomsky's distinction between [+interpretable] and [-interpretable] features, agreement does not appear as a visible projection in the clause structure. Rather, it is fused into other agreeing heads (like Tense, Aspect, Mood, Neg. etc.) which have representation in the clause. This serves simplicity of analysis; a basic ingredient of any systematic and scientific inquiry including the minimalist program.

### **List of Abbreviations**

AgrP:	Agreement Projection or phrase;	Agr:	The Head of the Agreement Projection
AgrS:	Agreement of Subject or Subject Agreement	TP:	Tense Projection or phrase
DP:	Determiner Projection or phrase	T:	The Head of the Projection
Inf:	Inflection	Spec:	Specifier
AgrOP:	Agreement of Object Projection	AgrO:	Agreement of Object or Object Agreement
1sgS:	1 <sup>st</sup> Person Singular Subject	2sgS:	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Singular Subject
3sgS:	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Singular Subject	1plS:	1 <sup>st</sup> Person Plural Subject
2plS:	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Plural Subject	3plS:	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Plural Subject
Tns:	Tense Morpheme or Marker	Mod:	Modality Morpheme or Marker
Asp:	Aspect Morpheme or Marker	Perf:	Perfective Aspectual Marker
Neg:	Negation Morpheme or Marker	ACCU:	Accusative Case
NOM:	Nominative Case	EPP:	Expanded Projection Principle

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