

A STUDY OF TIV PREDICATES

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Abstract

The concept of predicate is a phenomenon that is widely recognized within the framework of Generative Grammar. It is conceived by generative linguists as that part of the sentence that makes an assertion about the subject; it defines the relation between arguments in a sentence. There is hardly any human language without predicate. The theory of government and binding projects the centrality of predicates in sentence structure in the sense that they may subcategorise for arguments on the basis of the theta grid of the verb involved, and also assign theta role to arguments. The phenomenon of Tiv predicates has not been fully examined. Therefore, this work delves into the study of Tiv predicates with the aim of examining their intricate features and how they work in the syntactic and semantic structure of the language. Data is elicited from interview and observation. As for the analysis, the work depends on the theta theory of Government and Binding model (Chomsky 1981, 1982). The study finds out that Tiv predicates can take one, two, three, or four arguments depending on the theta grid of the verb involved; certain predicates in Tiv contain verb serialization which means that two or more verbs are strung together within a clause without the intervention of coordinating conjunction. Tiv verbs also exhibit compound or complex predicate. This means that two or more morphemes or words can function as a single verb. Also, Tiv adjectives and prepositions may require one or two obligatory arguments. It has been proven, therefore, that Tiv predicate fits into UG principles and parameters of linguistic description. The work adds to knowledge by placing the syntax of Tiv predicates on a formal linguistic pedestal.

Keywords: Tiv, predicate, arguments, Government and Binding, Verb serialization.

Introduction

The UG (Universal Grammar) approach to the study of language establishes the centrality of predicate in sentence structure. This notion gained wide recognition in Chomsky's Government and Binding theory (1981, 1982). The idea that verbs hold a key position in sentences, and to a large extent is the determinant matrix for nominal categories is well established in this model. This phenomenon has been proven by many linguists and researchers, and their validity is continually tested in natural languages. Studies in GB reveal that constituent entries are obligatory in syntactic structures. The notion of VP- internal hypothesis, for instance, accounts for the presence of subjects and objects in sentences. Verbs are not the only constituents that constitute the knowledge of predicate, adjectives and prepositions also form the basis of predicate in language study (Haegeman 1994). In view of this, predicate is understood in the generative sense as that part of

the sentence which expresses a state or a relationship between individuals or constituents in a structure (Cook & Newson, 2007; Carnie, 2013). Predicates are the only constituents that subcategorize for complements. These complements are formally expressed in GB as arguments. They include subjects and objects which are technically referred to as external and internal arguments respectively. Internal arguments are either expressed as NPs or PPs in line with the state of the predicate. Although the exploration of predicates and their arguments is widely carried out within the frame of linguistics, most languages, and Tiv in particular has not been given such privileged attention. Thus, the linguistic intricacies that characterise Tiv predicative phenomenon have been left unexplored. This work, therefore, aims at examining Tiv predicates and their arguments. The objectives are to identify the unique features of Tiv predicates, and to state argument structure of Tiv

predicates and their thematic functions. The work adds to knowledge by placing the syntax of Tiv predicates on a formal linguistic pedestal.

The Linguistic Profile of Tiv

The word 'Tiv' according to Hembe (2005) refers to the people, their language and their progenitor. In the words of Wegh (2003:3), 'the word Tiv has triple meanings; it is the name of Tiv ethnic group, and it also refers to their language: it is the name by which the Tiv know their ancestral father - Tiv'. Therefore, the word Tiv portrays, on the one hand, the name of Tiv ancestor; the one through whose loins all Tiv people have come to be, on the other hand, it refers strictly to the people, their culture and their language. Tiv language is largely spoken across Nigeria, particularly in the states of Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, and Plateau with a numerical strength of over six million speakers (Mkor 2012). On the basis of classification of African languages, Tiv belongs to the Bantoid subfamily of the Benue-Congo of the Niger-Congo language family (Ishima 2017).

Review of Related Literature

The phenomenon of predicate and its arguments is a linguistic trait that is common to all natural languages. The difference is, however, expressed in the manner predicates of various languages take and assign theta roles to their arguments. This notion fits into Chomsky's description of universal languages in his 'principles and parameters' introduced in Government and Binding model (1981 & 1982) and later developed as a theoretical approach for analyzing grammar. Under this notion, the predicate of various languages may share some similarities in their argument structure, but their classification may create certain variations sometimes. It is a common occurrence in human languages for predicates to require certain number of arguments. The proposition that the knowledge of predicates and their subcategories are mentally encoded in every native speaker is well rooted in generative syntax. Carnie (2013:228) asserts that 'information about the peculiar and particular properties of verbs is contained in our mental dictionary.' This information reveals the UG principles that guide the operation of predicates in human languages as well as the parameters that

make them vary in some ways. On this basis, Nwachukwu (1987) classified Igbo verbs into two discrete classes: inherent complement verbs and non-inherent ones. In his view, the former does not correlate with transitive verbs. These sorts of verbs (inherent verbs) are obligatorily followed by a meaning specifying complement which is not an argument. Ndiribe (2018:27) buttressed this fact with the example below.

1. Ndu kwùrù ókwú

Ndu talk RV (past) talk

'Ndu talked'

Ndiribe posits that the verb 'kwu' has the subject argument which is 'Ndu'. But the verb itself does not subcategorize for an internal argument. The reason for this is that 'okwu' is an inherent verb, a meaning specifying complement, and not an argument in itself. The assertion that certain Igbo verbs are inherent complements is, however, contestable (Ndiribe 2018) as some believe that the inherent complements could be arguments in themselves. Also, some Igbo verbs are noted to operate in verb serialisation. Ndiribe (2019) observes that the phenomenon of Serial Verb Construction is highly operational in Igbo language. He advances his arguments by providing much data to validate his claims. He also notes that most African languages allow for a series of verbs to occur in a single sentence without any overt connector. This view is also shared by Ogunwale (2005) who observed that serial verb construction are the most dominant structures in Yoruba complex verbs. However, Ogunwale saw serial verb construction as posing a serious problem for the identification of verbs' internal structures in Yoruba. He posits that in Yoruba, it is difficult to classify serial/complex verbs as affixation, compounding or reduplication.

The common principle that binds all languages is that most verbs subcategorize for at least one argument to which they assign a theta role. Mohammed (2014) asserts that Hausa verbs and prepositions assign the thematic role to argument, and that the most prominent and frequent thematic role that exists in Hausa is the theta role agent assignment. This is common with most African languages. Research in various languages has proven that certain verbs must take a particular

argument structure notwithstanding the language they occur. There is a general claim in the literature that the verb 'give' for instance, takes three arguments in every language (Ndiribe 2018). Also, the number of arguments required in a sentence is usually determined by the state of the predicate. Predicates may require one, two, or three arguments in certain constructions. The present study, therefore, investigates whether this phenomenon applies in the predicate frames of Tiv verbs; by identifying certain unique features of Tiv predicates, their argument structure as well as their thematic roles.

Theoretical Framework

This work adopts the Government and Binding (GB) model as the theoretical approach for the analysis of Tiv predicates. Government and Binding is a theory of syntax that has its base from Transformational Grammar which was earlier initiated and developed by Chomsky in 1957. The theory was developed in 1981 and 1982 in Chomsky's publications of *Lectures on Government and Binding* and *Some Concepts and Consequences of the Theory of Government and Binding* respectively with the focus to understand how natural languages operate. The theory's major preoccupation is that human languages consist of universal principles that are the same and parameters that make their grammar vary in some ways. The task of GB is to identify the UG principles that are universal to human languages and by this project a formal linguistic description that is characteristic of particular languages. One of the universal principles is that all human languages have subject, verb and object; and indeed, words of any human language can be categorized into word classes such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. These features are shared cross-linguistically. In order to explain the phenomenon of universal Principles and Parameters, GB exhibits a modular character in the sense that it consists of separate but interrelated modules of grammar. These modules are a network of interlocking sub theories. The modules include, X-bar theory, government theory, control theory, theta theory, bounding theory, case theory and binding theory. This work adopts one of the sub theories which is theta theory. Theta theory states

that arguments are determined and assigned thematic roles by their predicates. In other words, it has to do with the functional relationship between a predicate and its arguments (Brown 1991). The theory posits that arguments are not randomly distributed in a sentence but that their positions and roles are determined by the state of the predicate and as such, the semantic relationship between the predicate and its arguments is part of the lexical knowledge of the native speaker. This information is represented in the theta grid. The requirement that predicates must assign thematic roles to their arguments obligatorily is summed up in the theta criterion (Carnie 2013). There is no certainty about the number of thematic relations that exist, linguists have divergent views about this. The list below is given by Haegeman (1994).

Agent/Actor: the one who intentionally initiates the action expressed by the predicate

Patient: the person or thing undergoing the action expressed by the predicate

Theme: the person or thing moved by the action expressed by the predicate

Experiencer: the entity that experiences some psychological state expressed by the predicate

Benefactive/Beneficiary: the entity that benefits from the action expressed by the predicate.

Goal: the entity towards which the activity expressed by the predicate is directed.

Source: the entity from which something is moved as a result of the activity expressed by the predicate.

Location: the place in which the action or state expressed by the predicate is situated.

Theta theory is very essential in any discussion of syntactic study that borders on argument structure. This is because it accounts for the phenomenon of predicate and argument structure of human languages and the UG parameters that are language specific. This theory is selected on the basis that it provides a good ground for the explanation of the concept of predicate in relation to arguments, and how the state of the predicate determines the number and semantic roles of arguments in Tiv sentence structure.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design.

Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and participant observation involving competent native Tiv speakers aged between 35 and 58, from Gboko town, in Benue state, Nigeria. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to reflect fluency and dialectal standard. Interviews were conducted in informal settings such as participants' homes and work places, reflecting natural language use. Observational notes were recorded in a field notebook. Selected data were sampled and presented in a tabular form to illustrate particular Tiv verbs and their theta grids. Example sentences provided as data include morpheme-by-morpheme glossing and are translated into English to facilitate understanding and interpretation. The methods for analysis were guided by the provisions of theta theory within the government and binding model (Chomsky, 1981).

Table 1-Tiv Verbs and their Subcategories

Word	Subcategory of the verb
1. Wuá (grind)	V [NP-----NP] transitive
2. Gbidyé (play)	V [NP-----NP] transitive
3. Bèè (finish)	V [NP-----] intransitive
4. Númbè (play)	V [NP-----] intransitive
5. Kùmé (pound)	V [NP-----NP] transitive
6. Pàsè (preach)	V [NP-----NP] transitive
7. Ná (give)	V [NP----NP NP/PP] ditransitive
8. Kôndo (ascend)	V [NP-----] intransitive
9. Vér (put)	V [NP---- NP PP] ditransitive
10. ôô (wash)	V [NP-----NP] transitive

All Tiv native speakers do not only know the meaning of these verbs but also possess an innate knowledge on how they are used. The verbs contained in the table above, apart from 'bèè', observe strictly their subcategorical features as seen in the notations. The verb 'bèè', however, requires object argument in certain instances. Consider (1a and 1b) as illustrations:

2a. Mngèrèm bèè

N. finish- PST
'Water has finished'

2b Doowuese bèè mngerem mela

N. finish- PST water- OBJ the- DET
'Doowuese has finished the water'

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This study examines the phenomenon of Tiv predicates with the specific objectives to investigate their intricate features, and determine their argument structure as well as thematic roles. The analysis depends on the theta theory as it provides information on how predicates determine and assign thematic roles to arguments in Tiv syntax.

The Tiv Predicate

The Verb Category

Tiv verbs are grouped into different subcategories. These subcategories are encoded into the lexicon of every native speaker. For instance, every speaker knows which verb requires an object, two objects or three objects. This trait is shown based on the theta grid of the verb involved. This is shown in the table below:

Tiv Verbs and their Arguments

Tiv verbs determine the number of their arguments and also assign thematic roles to them. This is done based on the transitivity of the verb and its meaning. For instance,

3. Simon gbidyé boo

N. play- PST ball- N. finish- PST
'Simon played ball'

θ grid
Gbidyé

NP1	NP2
Agent	Theme

The predicate 'gbidyé' takes two arguments: 'Simon' as the subject argument is realised outside the VP and therefore is considered an external

argument. The NP argument standing in the subject position is often thought of as originating in the VP composition (Chomsky 1986). The NP 'boo' as an argument of the verb 'gbìdyé' occupies the object position and receives the theta role of theme from its assigning head (gbìdyé). Thus, the Tiv verb 'gbìdyé' requires an object argument obligatorily. This is, however, not the case with the verb, 'numbé' which is synonymous to 'gbìdyé' except that the former has the property of intransitive and thus requires only one argument in its theta grid. This is illustrated in (4a) below:

4a. Musa númbé
N. play- PST
'Musa played'

θ grid	NP1
Numbé	Theme

The verb 'gbìdyé' expresses an activity that is specifically carried out on something and, therefore, requires an object. However, the verb 'numbé' does not point to anything specific as one could be playing with himself or just playing on a general note. On this basis, Tiv native speakers know intuitively that 'gbìdyé' requires a complement but 'numbé' does not, hence it is strange to hear a Tiv native speaker utter the following statement.

4b *Musa numbe boo
N. play- PST ball- N.
'Musa played ball'

It is also not common to hear a competent Tiv speaker utter the following structure:

5. *Sesugh ngu gbìdyen
Sesugh- N be playing- PROG
'Sesugh is playing'

This is because the verb 'gbìdyé' unlike 'numbe' requires an object obligatorily as earlier stated. This is in agreement with the assertion by Haegeman (1994: 41), 'if a VP has a transitive verb as its head, one NP (the direct object) is required'. Also, the two verbs provide different semantic interpretations to the arguments. In (3), 'Simon' and 'boo' stand in different semantic

relationships, 'Simon' is the agent while 'boo' is the patient. In (4a), Musa is the experiencer of the action 'numbé'. The subject does not always assume the semantic property of agent. Consider (2) repeated here as (6).

6. Mngérèm bèè
N finish- PST
'Water has finished'

θ grid	NP1
Bèè	Theme

'Mngérèm' is the theme because it does not initiate the action by itself; as a matter of fact, it has no control over the action. We must also note that the idiosyncratic property of the verb 'bee' in (6) requires no complement since it is an intransitive verb. According to Cook and Newson (2007:81), 'the semantic role that an argument bears depends on the predicate.'

Tiv verbs may require up to three arguments in their theta grid. This feature is common with the verb 'ná' as contained in (7) below:

7. Oryá ná Terdoo inyaregh.
N. give- PST Terdoo money
'Oryá gave Terdoo money'

θ grid	NP1	NP2	NP3
Ná	Agent	Goal	Theme

The verb 'ná' requires three arguments- the subject argument which is 'Oryá', the direct object 'inyaregh' and the indirect object 'Terdoo'. 'Ná' as the head of VP requires two internal arguments compulsorily. This is because 'ná' is a ditransitive verb and therefore requires two arguments in its VP which are realised as NPs.

Tiv verbs may even require four obligatory arguments in certain instances. Consider (8a-8b) as illustrations.

8a. Vé tá un azér iyol
Pro- 3PL hit- PST him/her saliva body
'They spat on his body'

θ grid	NP1	NP2	NP3	NP4
Tá	Agent	Patient	Instrument	Location

The above sentence shows that ‘*tá*’ can subcategorise for three arguments in addition to its external argument. The subject ‘*vé*’ takes the theta role of agent, the NP ‘*un*’ is the patient, the second internal NP ‘*azér*’ is the instrument and the third internal NP ‘*iyol*’ is the location. The agent and patient theta roles also correspond with the nominative and accusative respectively under structural case assignment. The rest of the NPs are assigned inherent case hence they are not adjacent to the verb, ‘*tá*’. It may be argued, however, that ‘*un*’ and ‘*iyol*’ may mean the same thing, but a close analysis of these words shows that they are used in different semantic positions. This is illustrated by the fact that ‘*iyol*’ as a locative can be replaced to show the exact position where the action affected the person being talked about. When this is done, the replaced element must be a PP.

- 8b. Vé tá un azér shá íshígh.
Pro- 3PL hit- PST him/her saliva up face
‘They spat him on the face’

‘*tá*’, the head of the VP in (8b) requires three obligatory arguments. Although the PP ‘*shá íshígh*’ is an adjunct, its presence in the sentence is obligatory as it contributes essentially to the semantic input of the sentence. Thus, it assumes the semantic role of location. The verb, ‘*tá*’ as head of VP, therefore, usually requires a minimum of three and a maximum of four obligatory arguments. This feature is unique to Tiv predicates as it is difficult to enunciate the phenomenon in English and many other languages. This projects Tiv as a language whose verb syntactic category is rich with argument structure.

Certain verbs may, however, take an optional argument, in which case they may require two or only one argument in their theta grid. (9a) illustrates this fact.

- 9a. Daudu v àà mlyam.
N. cry- PST cry- N
‘Daudu shed tears’

The NP ‘*mlyam*’ is the argument of the verb ‘*v àà*’ and it semantically occupies the position of theme as it is moved by the action of the subject, ‘*Daudu*’ which itself stands in the semantic position of agent. The verb, ‘*v àà*’ may take no internal argument at all in certain instances as seen below:

- 9b. Wan la v àà
N. that- DET cry- PST
‘That child cried’

A Certain subjects in Tiv may not, however, receive a semantic role. Such subjects are only needed for structural reasons; to fulfil the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) which states that every sentence requires a subject, regardless of whether the predicate assigns a meaningful theta role to it or not. This situation results into expletives (dummy pronouns) occupying subject positions sometimes. Contrast (10a) with (10b) below:

- 10a. Í kumá Terkula ihô.
They- INDF Pro stab- PST Terkula knife
‘They stabbed Terkula with a knife’

- 10b. Í hen ér Terkula kpé
It- INDF Pro. think- PST Terkula- N. die- PST
‘It has been thought that Terkula has died’

In (10a), ‘*í*’ stands in a semantic position as agent. The ‘*í*’ in (10b), however, lacks a semantic function since ‘*í*’ in Tiv may be an expletive (Ishima 2018). ‘*í*’ may be considered an expletive when its verbs precede ‘*ér*’ the head of a subordinate clause.

Verb Serialization and Complex Predicates

Tiv predicates may contain multiple verbs that are strung together in a single clause. This phenomenon is called verb serialisation or Serial Verb Construction (SVC) (Omachinu 2012). In Tiv, two or more main verbs may coexist without the intervention of coordinating conjunction. Consider the sentences below:

- 11a. Aondosoo mough yèm.
N. stand go- PST
‘Aondosoo stood and left’

The verbs ‘*mough*’ and ‘*yem*’ are both main verbs with a single subject argument, ‘*Aondosoo*’. The verbs are built in series as one event leads to another, but they culminate into a single idea

which is the fact that ‘Aondosoo’ left. This kind of combination is hardly obtainable in English. As we look at Tiv verbs, we see that it is more complex in structure than say English. Many verbs can occur in series without the help of any conjunction or punctuation.

11b Aondosoo mough due yem

V1 V2 V3

Aondosoo- N stand out go- PST

‘Aondosoo stood, got out and left’

11c. Aondosoo kighir mough due yem

V1 V2 V3 V4

Aondosoo- N do stand out go-.PST

‘Aondosoo did stand, got out and left’

We cannot say that (11a-11c) are compound or complex sentences, but we do admit that they indicate a complex situation of multiple predicate formations. We can also agree that (11a-11c) are possible in a situation where the speaker is stressing a point or laying emphasis on the action carried out by the subject. This unique feature sets Tiv aside as a language with rich predicates. These predicates also take and assign theta role to their arguments. The predicates in (11a-11c) require only the subject argument to which they assign the role of theme. Verb serialisation may also take an internal argument as seen in (12) below:

12a. Tyona mough tôô ñyaregh ki la.

Tyona- N stand carry- PST money the

‘Tyona got up and carried the money’

12b. Tyona mough tôô ñyaregh ki la yem.

Tyona- N stand carry- PST money the go- PST

‘Tyona got up, carried the money and went away’

In (12a), the predicate ‘*mough tôô*’ subcategorises for one internal argument which is ‘*ñyaregh ki la*’ which it assigns the role of theme. The subject argument ‘Tyona’ takes the thematic role of agent. In (12b), the predicate is made up of three verbs, ‘*mough*’, ‘*tôô*’, and ‘*yem*’ these three serial verbs also require two obligatory arguments. In their hierarchy of importance, the verb ‘*tôô*’ is rated to be the most essential of them all. Both ‘*mough*’ and ‘*yem*’ have no much semantic impact on the object argument the way ‘*tôô*’ does. The simple reason is that these verbs lack ability in the context of (12b) above to take and assign thematic roles to

internal arguments.

Apart from verb serialisation, Tiv verbs can be compounded in which case two or more morphemes or words can function as a single verb. The phenomenon is different from SVC in that it does not occur in series, instead linguistic items (of verb category) are reduplicated. This situation gives rise to complex predicate. For instance,

13a. Sesugh hide-á-hide

N. return return- PST

‘Sesugh has returned’

13b. Nadoo vá-á-vá

N. come come- PST

‘Nadoo has only visited’

These Tiv predicates do not require any object hence they take zero complement. They, however, assign the semantic role of theme to their subject argument. These verbs may also require two arguments as it is the case with (14) below.

14. Surum íí á íí anivo la.

N. steal steal- PST DIM -goat that-DET

‘Surum has stolen that goat’

The verb ‘*íí á íí*’ requires two obligatory arguments, the subject argument ‘Surum’ and the object argument ‘anivo la’. The verbs assign theta role of agent to the subject argument and theme to the object argument.

The Adjective

Adjectives may also subcategorise for arguments. A particular adjective may require one NP complement or an infinitive phrase, or may require no argument at all. This is typical of the adjective ‘nyoho’ as it is seen in (15a – 15b)

15a. Ankyegh la nyoho nyam.

DIM -chicken that- DET sweet meat- N.

‘That chicken has sweet meat’

15b. Ankyegh la nyoho.

Chicken- N that sweet

‘That chicken is sweet.’

Based on the above evidence, we can propose the structure for the adjective ‘nyoho’ thus:

16a. nyoho: adjective; NP1 NP2

16b. nyoho: adjective; NP1

This analysis shows that certain Tiv adjectives take different argument structures. This is because ‘the argument structure of lexical items is not always uniquely fixed’ (Haegeman 1994:48). The varied

semantic implication of Tiv adjectives and the intention/choice of the speaker may be the simple reason for this.

Also, on the basis of (15), the phrase structural rule for Tiv could as well be written thus:

17. S \longrightarrow NP AP

It is important to note that phrase structural rule in Tiv language is not always constant. In certain instances, adjectives succeed and modify subjects immediately. Such sentences usually lack verb phrases as seen in (15) and (17) above. Many Tiv linguists including Orjime (2016) and Iorjim (2022) view the kind of structure in (15) as containing verb as they argue that adjectives could function as verbs in Tiv. They base their argument on the prescription that every sentence must have a verb. This may be true for English and many other languages. For Tiv, the proposition is not always valid. The word ‘nyoho’ basically describes the subject and does not function as a verb. This illustration is typical of Tiv sentences as adjectives are (in most cases) neither preceded nor succeeded by auxiliary verbs, nor are they in themselves treated as verbs.

The Preposition

Prepositions also take argument structure. Like adjectives, prepositions may require one or two arguments. Let us consider (18) below:

18. Aondosoo ngu kér

Aondosoo- N be inside

‘Aondosoo is inside’

The preposition, ‘kér’ requires only one argument which is the subject argument. This shows that Tiv prepositions also have unique syntactic properties. Whereas some require only one argument, a few of them take two arguments as it is the case with the preposition ‘sha’ illustrated in (19) below:

19. Kwase la ngu sha Abuja

N. that- DEM be- AUX up Abuja

‘That woman is in Abuja’

The preposition, ‘shá’ requires two obligatory arguments; the subject argument ‘kwase la’ and the object, ‘Abuja.’

Conclusion

This study investigates the phenomenon of Tiv predicates with the specific objectives to identify the unique features of Tiv predicates, and to state argument structure of Tiv predicates and their thematic functions. The analysis is guided by the provisions of theta theory of Government and Binding. The study finds that Tiv verbs are categorised as intransitive, transitive and ditransitive, which may require one, two, three or four arguments to which they may assign thematic roles. This knowledge is encoded in theta grid as a representation of the linguistic competence of the native speaker. Arguments that stand in dummy positions are, however, not assigned any semantic function. The Tiv pleonastic ‘i’ is, therefore, required in certain structures for syntactic reason; to fulfil the Extended Projection Principle which requires every sentence to have overt subjects. Predicates may also contain verb serialization which means that two or more verbs are strung together in a clause without the intervention of coordinating conjunctions. In addition, certain Tiv verbs exhibit compound or complex predicate. In this case, two or more morphemes or words can function as a single verb. Furthermore, an adjective or preposition may take one or two obligatory arguments. This study, therefore, reveals in line with the principles of UG that Tiv predicates are very functional in determining the syntactic structure of the language. However, UG parameter also applies as Tiv predicates may contain a complex structure such as verb serialization and compound or complex predicate phenomena requiring a specified number of arguments. Also, Tiv predicate may require up to four arguments as seen in the analysis, giving it a unique linguistic feature.

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