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The Complementizer *say* in Nigerian Pidgin English – Traces of Language-internal Processes or Areal Features?

Abstract: The paper presents the use of the complementizer *say* in various types of sentence structures of Nigerian Pidgin English. The data comes from the contemporary language in its written form and is based mostly on transcriptions of Wazobia FM on-air broadcasts as well as its Facebook fan page. The analysis of clausal examples enables us to claim that the differentiation of structures in which *say* is used in Nigerian Pidgin English is a result of grammaticalization which is an internal-language process but one that is strongly influenced by the conceptual patterns of introducing the complement phrase in substrate languages.

Keywords: complementizer, say, Nigerian Pidgin English, grammaticalization, West African languages structures

1. Introduction

The issue of complementizers attracts attention of linguists for both their typological and historical aspects. In the typological perspective, the linker in the construction consisting of the main clause and the complement clause has many structural and grammatically featured variants. On the other hand, the relation between the two elements may be coded by bare juxtaposition (Watters 2000: 223) that makes the status of the surface markers unclear. Historical investigations (Hopper, Traugott 2003) tend to establish lexical sources of the complentizers and to explain how they have gained grammatical functions in the process of development. In cross-linguistics analysis

it has been shown that on the world map of languages complementizers have their source in: nouns, verbs, demonstratives, adpositions (Heine, Kuteva 2007: 66-92). Fo example, *that* in English is traced back to the demonstrative (Radford 1997:57), similarly to *daß* in German, whereas the conceptual basis of many complementizers in African languages is different. In Nama, it is the noun *!xáis* 'matter, story' (*!xáisà* in the form of the oblique case) which serves as a "marker of clause combining" (Heine, Kuteva 2002: 211):[1]

1)   Nama:
tiíta   ke   kè   l'úú   'ií   !úũ-ts   ta   **!xáisà**
1:SG TOP PAST not:know   PAST go 2:SG:M IMPFV COMP-3:SG:M
'I didn't know **that** you were going'

In Twi, the verb *sɛ* 'resemble', 'be like', 'be equal' has developed into a complementizer. The two variants are differentiated in the language structure. In the example 2a *sɛ* functions as a main verb, in 2b it is a grammatical marker (Heine, Kuteva 2002: 257):

2) Twi: a. *kofi **sɛ**   amma.*
                    Kofi be:like   Amma
                    'Kofi **resembles** Amma'

                 b. *na   ama nim **sɛ** kofi yɛɛ adwuma no*
                    PAST Ama know that Kofi did work   the
                    'Ama knew **that** Kofi had done the work'

The focus of this paper is the word *say* in Nigerian Pidgin English[2] (hereafter also referred to by the acronym NPE) which is an English-based verb, used in the function of the main verb in a clause, but in descriptive works also distinguished as a complementizer (cf. Deuber

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[1] The examples are provided with transliteral translation which follows the principles applied in source materials. When adopted to one's own examples from NPE, a unified convention is used. All symbols of grammatical information are listed and explained at the end of this paper.

[2] Nigerian Pidgin English is spoken by 30 million people (including L1 and L2 speakers). In some parts of Nigeria it has already gained native speakers and has become a creole language. (https://www.ethnologue.com/language/pcm).

2005: 70). The question is how these functions are differentiated at the structural level and what is the relationship between the two words in the historical development of the complementizer.

This research is based on written texts of the contemporary language. The data was collected from Nigerian Pidgin English users' forums and the Wazobia FM Facebook page, the source materials also include transcriptions from the Wazobia FM radio station and discussions which took place on-air.[3] The variety of structures in which the complementizer *say* occurs is primarily interpreted in terms of the language-internal development. Possible areal influences will be verified with the examples from some West African languages in which the relationship between the complementizer and its lexical source is confirmed.

2. The complementizer in creole languages

From a typological perspective, Nigerian Pidgin English belongs to pidgin and creole languages in which patterns representative of the so-called creole-like structures (Bakker et al. 2011: 31) are very common. Complementizers are interesting for studies of the processes of language development mainly for their form and lexical sources on which they are based. In *The Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Structures* (Michaelis et al. 2013) complementizers from different pidgin and creole languages all over the world were divided into two groups depending on whether they follow verbs of speaking or verbs of knowing. In the first group the complementizers which are identical to bare 'say' are numerous (in 29 out of 75 languages) (Michaelis et al. 2013: 378), but not prevailing. In the second group the complementizers which are used after the verb 'know', or similar verbs of cognition such as 'learn' or 'forget' may be also related to 'say', but the number of other exponents is significantly higher (in 42 out of 73 languages) (Michaelis et al. 2013: 382). Among them, the complementizer based on 'that' is used in Sranan, e.g.:[4]

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[3] Original orthography of the sources was kept, therefore the same words may occasionally feature different spelling.

[4] Winford, Plag. 2013. (http://apics-online.info/contributions/2, accessed on

3) Sranan: Yu denki **taki** na ala sma   o   gi   bun sani.
          You think **that** cop every person will give good thing.
          'You think that everyone will give good (spirits)'.

The examples extracted from particular pidgin or creole languages confirm regional preferences in coding the relationship between the verb and its complements. However, in Tok Pisin the complementizer ('that') is expressed by the word *olsem* derived from English 'all the same' (Michaelis et al. 2013: 379), e.g.:

4) Tok Pisin:
Em tok **olsem** *mi mas skul   na   kisim gutpela   save*
3Sg talk COMP 1Sg   must school and   get   good-MOD knowledge
'He said [**that**] I must go to school and acquire good knowledge'

Detailed studies on the status of complementizers in English-based creoles show that *say* (etymologically related to the verb *say*) is a common innovation in West African creole structures and may be regarded as an areal feature (Frajzinger 1984: 210). Some sources indicate that the complementizer related to the verb of saying is a manifestation of "an African peculiarity of the creole language" (Frajzyngier 1984: 207, see also Watters 2000: 224; Michaelis et al. 2013: 378). The example containing the complementizer *se* ('say') in Krio (Sierra Leone) provides an illustration of this type of structure (Finney 2004: 74):

5) Krio: *A mɛmba* **se** *dɛm bin win loto*
          I think say/that they PAST win lottery
          'I thought **that** they won the lottery'

A *say*-based complementizer also functions in Cameroon Pidgin[5] and Ghanaian Pidgin[6], e.g.:

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2016-12-15).
[5] Schröder 2013 (http://ewave-atlas.org/languages/44, accessed on 2016-12-16).
[6] Huber 2013 (http://ewave-atlas.org/languages/40, accessed on 2016-12-17).

6) Cameroon Pidgin: *A tin **se** ren go fol tudei.*
                        I think (that) it will rain today.

7) Ghanaian Pidgin:
*Mi à tiŋk **se** dɛ dɔktafiʃ ì gud pas dɛ tuna.*
'As for meI think **that** doctorfish is better than tuna'.

In order to compare the complementizer *say* in Nigerian Pidgin English with the structures of substrate languages, the typological patterns of marking a relationship between the main verb and the complement in some West African languages will be presented in the subsequent section.

3. The status of the complementizer in some West African languages

Complementizers are connected with introducing the complement clause occurring after the verbs of saying, thinking, wishing, etc. The structures, however, are not unified and the analysis of an overt complementizer *say* in NPE in the context of West African languages will help determine whether it is a morpheme based on the conceptual pattern involving complementizers that are used in various languages of the area or a specific creole structure. On the basis of the available data from major Nigerian languages, namely Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo we can predict some direct influences on the language and its development[7], but the problem of substrate influence is much wider, as the features which may be perceived as areal go beyond the languages of Nigeria.

The examples from Yoruba (Lawal 1991: 75) show how the relationship between the verb and its complementizer functions in language structure. Therefore, *pé* is a complementizer ('that') which is used after the verb 'remember', but when *pé* fills a verb slot in the sentence it means 'to say', e.g.:

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[7] Direct lexical borrowings from Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba to Nigerian Pidgin English have been presented in (Mensah 2011).

8) Yoruba: *Olú   rántí   **pé**   Bola ńsun*
          Olu   remember COMPL Bola sleep-PROG
          'Olu remembered **that** Bola was sleeping'

9) Yoruba: *Olú **pé**   wọn   wá* '
          Olu say   they   come-PST'
          'Olu **says [that]** they came'

The example 9 confirms that structures without an overt complementizer are also possible and it is the verb 'to say' that introduces the object complement immediately.

Languages may also have more than one form of the complementizer. Uwalaka (1997) identifies four complementizers in Igbo: *ka, ma, no* and *si*,[8] but only one is etymologically related to the verb of saying. Güldemann (2008: 301) states that the complementizer *kà* is "identical in shape with the stem *kà* 'talk, speak, preach'". However, its use is preferred in contexts other than after verbs of saying or knowing, e.g. (Güldeman 2008: 463):

10) Igbo: *ọ bị̀àrà   **kà**   ha   họ yā*
        3S come:PST   Q   3P   see   3S
        'he has come so **that** they will see him'

In Hausa, a lexical equivalent of the complementizer 'that' is *cewa* [cêwā] which is a verbal noun of the verb *ce* [cê] 'to say'. Its usage "depends on the specific verb or verbal expression in the matrix sentence" (Newman 2000: 97), e.g.:

11) Hausa:
*Yârân   sun   tsayằ **cêwā**   sun   maidō manà dà kuɗînmù*
children-DET 3Pl/TAM   insist   COMP 3Pl/TAM return us with money-our
'The children insisted **that** they had paid us back our money'

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[8] Igbo may allow two complementizers that differentiate types of clauses, e.g. *Ogu họrụ **sị na** oge agaala* 'Ogu discovered **that** time has past' (Obiamalu 2013).

Following this, certain verbs like *ji* 'hear', *cê* 'say', and certain phrasal verbs, like *yi tsàmmānī da* 'think' and *sâ râi* 'expect' generally prefer the reportive particle *wai* 'hearsay, it is said that' as the complementizer instead of *cêwā*. Moreover, following the rules of Hausa grammar based on the systemic relations, "if the matrix sentence contains the verb *cê*' 'say' (or its verbal noun *cêwā*) then the complementizer *cêwā* is not allowed" (Newman 2000: 98). Therefore:

12) Hausa: *Yā   bayyànā cêwā   yànzu lōkàcī yā   yi*
            3SG/TAM explain COMP now   time 3SG/TAM do
            'He explained that the time had come'

The relationship between the form of the complementizer and the verbs of saying is already confirmed in some other West African languages. As it was shown in the earlier works (Frajzyngier 1984: 209, following the data of Lord 1976, Westermann 1930, Bamgboṣe 1966), there is evidence of the identity in the form of the verb 'to say' and the complementizer in Yoruba, Gã, Ewe, Twi[9] and in some Chadic languages. Introducing the complement clause directly after the verb 'say' is also possible, e.g. in Ewe *bé* 'say' may introduce reported speech as well as indirect speech (Lord 1993: 185), e.g.:

13) Ewe: *Me-**be** mewɔe*
         1SG **say** I-do-it
         'I **said [that]** I did it/I said ''I did it'

In correlations with verbs of mental activity and perception *bé* "functions as a complementizer introducing sentential complements" (Lord 1993: 185). The grammatical status of *bé* is confirmed in the following example (Ameka 1994: 63):

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[9] In Twi, there are two phonologically similar complementizers: *se* which is etymologically related to 'say' and *sɛ* which has developed from 'be like' (Heine, Kuteva 2002: 257), see also example 2b in this article.

14) Ewe: *Me- bu* **bé** *adogló yé*
       1SG think **that** lizard FOC
       'I thought it was a lizard'

Examples from Chadic languages other than Hausa give more explanations on variation of language patterns involving the complementizer in its conceptual structure, but the correlation of the verb 'say' and the complementizer is common, as for example in Kwami *gó* 'say'/'that' (Heine, Kuteva 2002: 262).

The relationship between the verb of saying and the complementizer which introduces its complements is specific to a particular language. Being not only a form derived from the verb, the complementizer may have the form of a phrase, e.g. in Birom, a Chadic language, *wɔkɔ* is an equivalent of 'it is stated that' (Frajzyngier 1984: 209).

The examples from West African languages motivate some questions about the development of complementizers in language structures. The complementizer *say* has already been involved in the discussion on grammaticalization in NPE in which the emphasis was put on internal processes (Mensah 2012). It has been stated that grammaticalization is an language-internal process, but the discourse patterns of native tongues are important in the process of shaping a pidgin which becomes a creole (Bruyn 2009: 312). Referring to the complementizer discussed here (identified as the equivalent of the English complement 'that'), it was shown that in West African languages it is largely represented by the forms derived from the verb 'to say'. Its status (whether it is a verb, verbal noun or grammatical particle) is determined by the systemic rules of a particular language and is motivated by its internal development. It is assumed that the development of *say* in Nigerian Pidgin English is also motivated by the processes that affect other languages of the area. It will be shown that structural variation of patterns in which *say* is used may be an

indication of its transformation from a regular verb to a grammatical morpheme.[10]

4. *Say* in Nigerian Pidgin English as an innovative structural phenomenon

Complementizers are referred to as clause introducers, but their presence and the choice of their form depends on the verb of the main clause and the semantics of the complement cause. Different types of sentential complements are traditionally marked by the English equivalents *that, if* and *for*. The present analysis aims at investigating the meaning and function of *say* in contemporary Nigerian Pidgin English mainly from the perspective of its function as a meaningful item incorporated into the phrases that conceptualize the idea of complementation through the notion of speaking.

The examples extracted from the sources were grouped according to semantic classes of verbs that introduce sentential complements with *say*. Following the cross-linguistic analyses of complementizers (Frajzyngier 1991), the use of the complementizer is associated with three groups of verbs: verbs of saying (*say, ask*)[11], verbs of perception (*see, hear*), and verbs denoting mental activity (equivalents of *know, think, remember, recall*). The three groups of verbs make a chain in the transformation of phrases that makes a grammatical element out of a semantic one.

4.1 The complementizer *say* with verbs of saying

This group may be presumed a conceptual basis for the development of the complementizer, therefore it is an illustration of an initial step in the grammaticalization process in which an English verb *say* is

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[10] In the reconstruction of syntactic patterns in Proto-Chadic (Frajzyngier 1996: 164) the complementizer is not proposed as an overt marker. Instead, its development from the verb 'to say' is postulated.

[11] In functional perspective, the complements introduced by the verbs of saying belong to *de dicto* domain (domain of speech) (Frajzyngier 1991: 225)

used as a component of a phrase meaning 'he stated by saying'. In examples 15-18, the verb *talk* represents the main verb, e.g.:

15) NPE: *She **talk say** she dey fear*
        3Sg tell   COMP 3Sg PROG fear
        'She **says that** she is afraid'

16) NPE: *Im con **talk say** make she marry am*
        3Sg PERF tell COMP IMP 3Sg marry   him
        'He **told** her **to** marry him'

17) NPE: *Im **talk say** El rufai nah Herod of Kaduna*
        3Sg tell COMP   El rufai be   Herod POSS Kaduna
        'He **says that** El rufai is Kaduna's Herod'

18) NPE: *Im **talk say** nah pity*
        3Sg tell COMP   be pity
        'He **says** it is a pity'

Some other verbs of saying used in the function of the main verb are also possible, (examples 19-21):

19) NPE: *Dey **ask** you **say** na which fish dey frown face*
        3Pl ask 2Pl COMP be which fish PROG frown face
        'They **ask** you which fish is frowning its face'

20) NPE: *Congress **claim say** dem get solutions to the problems*
        Congress claim   COMP 3Pl have solutions to the problems
        'Congress **claims that** they have got solutions to the problems'

21) NPE: *Dey **ask** you **say** if woman dey provide money for house*
        3Pl ask 2Pl COMP if woman PROG provide money for house
        'They **ask** you **if** the woman is providing money for the house'

The examples 15-21show that *say* in NPE follows the verb of saying other than the verb *say* itself. As a complementizer *say* introduces sentential complements and is an equivalent of English *that, for, to, if*. When the main verb is *say* 'say', the complementizer is not used, e.g.:

22) NPE: *Im **say** she be leader*
     3Sg say 3Sg be leader
     'He **says** she is the leader'

23) NPE: *Dem still **say,** light na ogbonge thing*
     3PL still say light be European thing
     'They still **say [that]** light is European thing'

24) NPE: *Na must say husband and wife must get joint account*
      Be must **say** husband and wife must have common account
      'It need to **be said [that]** husband and wife must have a common
                                                                    account'

25) NPE: ***Say why** dem dey increase tariff*
      Say why 3Pl PROG increase tariff
      '**Say why** they are increasing the tariff'

Therefore, when *say* is used as a verb, it functions either as an intro-
ducer of direct speech or covers the meaning 'say that'.

4.2 Complementizer *say* with verbs of perception
In the source material, the two verbs: *hear* and *notice* are predomi-
nantly used as main verbs followed by *say*, e.g.:

26) NPE:
     *We **hear say**   both the presidency and the people don confirm   visit*
     1Pl hear COMP both the presidency and the people PERF confirm visit
     'We **heard that** both the presidency and the people confirmed the visit'

27) NPE: *Dem **notice say**   the long queues worsen traffic*
          3Pl   notice COMP   the long queues worsen traffic
          'They **notice that** long queues make the traffic worse'

The examples show that in NPE the complementizer *say* also follows
the verbs of feelings, e.g.:

28) NPE: ***Hope say**   you don   ready*
          Hope COMP 2Sg PERF ready
          '**Hope that** you are ready'

29) NPE: *You* ***feel say*** *na dem go be the first team to win*
       2Pl feel COMP FOC 3PL FUT be the first team to win
       'You **feel that** they will be the first team and (will) win'

4.3 The complementizer *say* with verbs denoting mental activity

A variety of verbs and verbal phrases may be used as main verbs followed by the complementizer *say*, such as *know*, *decide*, *think*, *make sure*, e.g.:

30) NPE:
She go ***know*** ***say*** *other person na beta or no be beta person*
 3Sg FUT know COMPL other person be better or NEG be better person
    'She will **know that** the other person is or isn't good'

31) NPE:
PDP Senators don ***decide say*** *dem go stand chim wit the Senate President* PDP Senators PERF decide COMPL 3Pl FUT stay chim with the Senate President
'PDP Senators have decided that they will stay chimmed with the President'

32) NPE: *You* ***think say*** *e go cause any problem?*
       2Sg think COMPL 3Sg FUT cause any problem
       'Do you **think that** it will cause any problem?'

33) NPE: *You* ***think say*** *na the right and normal thing?*
       2Sg think COMPL be the right and normal thing
       'Do you **think** this is the right and normal thing?'

34) NPE:
Make sure say *na the same thing wey im administration submit*
Make sure COMPL be the same thing which 3Sg administration submit
'**Make sure that** it is the same thing which its administration submits'

The complementizer *say* after verbs denoting mental activity (as well as after verbs of feeling and perception) marks the next step in its development in which the link between the main verb and the complementizer derived from the verb 'to say' has a weak semantic motivation.

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4.4 Complementizer *say* in structures of the type 'it is (the case) that'

The last stage of grammaticalization is marked by structures in which the complementizer derived from the verb 'to say' is not linked to the notion of speaking/saying at any conceptual level. The most characteristic examples are clauses coding the meaning 'be' that are followed by the complementizer *say*. In these structures, an independent grammatical status of *say* is clearly manifested. Such is a phrase *Tori be say...* 'The story is…', 'it is the case that…', 'it is the story that…' or 'it happens that…', e.g.:

35) NPE:
Tori be say *Lagos State Government don **say** dem go punish any person*
Story be COMPL Lagos State Government PERF say 3Pl FUT punish NEG person
'**The story is**: Lagos State Government **said (that)** they won't punish any person'

36) NPE:
*The problem **be say**   my husband dey   spend all him salary on wears*
The problem be COMPL my husband PROG spend all his salary on clothes
'**The problem is [that]** my husband is spending all his salary on clothes'

4.5 The complementizer *say* as a constituent of phrasal verbs

In Nigerian Pidgin English, the word *say* shares the function of the complementizer with the function of the constituent of phrasal verbs. The phrase *say yes* is an equivalent of 'agree' which may be used as the main verb, as in 37:

37) NPE: *She think about am before she   go   **say yes***
        3Sg think about 3Sg before 3Sg FUT agree
        'She thinks about it before she will **agree**'

When used after a speaking verb, it functions as its complement (examples 38-39)

38) NPE: *My cousin **answer say** yes, before we know anything*
　　　My cousin answer COMPL yes before 1Pl know-PERF anything
　　　'My cousin **has agreed** before we knew anything'

39) NPE: *Some people don **talk say** yes we need investors*
　　　Some people PERF tell COMPL yes 1Pl need investors
　　　'Some people **agreed [that]** we need investors'

The phrase *say yes* manifests structural properties of many African languages[12] which concern the conceptualization of meanings through the complex structures, but it is also indicative of the source of the complementizer which refers to the notion '(by) saying [that]'.

5. Summary

The word *say* in Nigerian Pidgin English has many functions. It introduces direct speech or functions as a main verb followed by a complementizer ('say that'). In grammatical function, *say* links the main clause and the complement clause.

　　Although *say* is a lexical borrowing from English, its grammatical status was acquired through a grammaticalization process in which structural patterns of African (especially West African) languages were the source rather than the structure of English. In these patterns, the relationship between the verbs of saying and the complementizer based on the verb of saying is the most common.

The variety of structures in which *say* is used in Nigerian Pidgin English gives an opportunity to trace the path of its development – from the marker of the complement clause in which the idea of saying is a conceptual base – to the linker which is weakly associated with the main verb of saying, and finally, to the complementizer which has an independent status. This path evidences language-

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[12] The so-called phrasal verbs consisting of verbs and their nominal (or other) complements are very common in African languages. They function as fixed collocations, such as *ci gàb*ā 'continue, make a progress' (lit. eat front), *bugà harì* 'to attack, to raid' (lit. to beat raid), *shìga ukù* 'be in a dilemma' (lit. to enter three) in Hausa, *gbáá égó* 'pay' (lit. use money) in Igbo (Pawlak 2010: 195f).

internal process, which, however, follows the grammaticalization patterns characteristic of West African languages.

ABBREVIATIONS:
COMP(L) - complementizer
DET– determiner
FOC – focus
FUT – future
IMP – imperative
IMPFV - imperfective
M - masculine
MOD – modifier
NEG – negation
PERF – perfect
P(L/l) – plural
POSS – possessive
PROG – progressive
P(A)ST – past
Q – complementizer
S(G/g) – singular
TAM – Tense/Aspect/Mood
TOP – topic

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