Emai's Aspect-Causative Interaction

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Talmy (2000) articulates a typology of lexicalization potentials for how verb roots incorporate semantic elements of aspect, causation, and their interaction. The latter, for instance, reveals three semantic types — stative (being in a state), inchoative (entering a state), and agentive (being put in a state), with verb roots cross-linguistically registering restricted combinations of types and achieving others via grammatical augmentation. As this typology unfolds, Talmy notes that languages often lexicalize posture and position events asymmetrically, although no clear boundary is evident and overlap might thus occur. For this paper, we explore how posture and position verbs manifest aspect-causative (A-C) interaction in the Edoid language Emaj (Elugbe 1989, Williamson and Blench 2000). Typologically, Emaj exhibits relatively strict SVO word order and employs verbs in series. Its intransitive posture verbs and transitive position verbs exhibit unmarked and marked syntactic constructions that reveal a shift from one A-C type (stative or agentive) to another (inchoative). To signal an inchoative change in orientation ("move up/down") for a theme participant, each adds a second verb to a construction whose grammatical properties are then highly restrictive.

Transitive position verbs occur in unmarked and marked constructions. In unmarked constructions, the verbs khuae ‘raise’ (1a) and gbe ‘fell’ (1b) are preceded by an agent subject and followed by a theme direct object.

(1) a. ôje khuaè ôñi òkòdò.¹
  Oje raise  the pot
  ‘Oje raised the pot.’

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¹ Orthographic conventions for Emaj are consistent with those in Schaefer (1987) and Schaefer and Egbokhare (1999), where <a> represents a lax mid-back vowel, <e> a lax mid-front vowel, and <v> a voiceless bilabial approximant. High tone is marked by an acute accent, low tone by a grave accent and high downstep by an acute accent followed by an apostrophe.

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b. òjè gbè gbí óràn.
   Oje fell the tree
   ‘Oje felled the tree.’

Each position verb appears in a corresponding marked construction where its theme participant has entered or assumed a positional end state. This inchoative construction is formed by adding a verb in series \( nwu \) with \( khuae \) in (2a) and \( fì \) with \( gbè \) in (2b)) and by changing word order so that the erstwhile direct object now precedes the position verb and follows the added construction verb.

(2) a. òjè \( nwù \) gbí \( ukóòò \) kúááé.
   Oje pick.up the pot raise
   ‘Oje raised the pot up at arm’s length.’ / ‘Oje got the pot raised up.’

b. òjè \( fì \) gbí óràn gbè.
   Oje drop the tree fell
   ‘Oje got the tree down (flat out).’ / ‘Oje felled the tree (down) flat out.’

Added construction verbs can also appear as the primary predicate of a simple clause, particularly in non-literal structures with body-part subjects or direct objects. \( nwù \) has the sense ‘pick up’ (3a-b) and \( fì \) the meaning ‘drop, dangle’ (3c-d). Each reflects movement and a corresponding orientation: “upward” for \( nwù \) and “downward” for \( fì \).

(3) a. òjè \( nwù \) \( ukóòò \) \( vë \) gbí ògìjì.\(^2\)
   Oje pick.up stick LOC ground
   ‘Oje picked up a stick on the ground.’

b. òjè \( ò \) \( ò \) \( nwù \) gbè.
   Oje SC C pick.up body
   ‘Oje is getting prepared.’

c. òjè \( fì \) \( bë \) \( ò \) \( vë \) \( dò \).
   Oje drop foot CL LOC hole
   ‘Oje stepped into the hole.’

d. áwë \( fì \) \( òjè \) \( ò \) \( ò \) \( fì \).
   legs ASS Oje SC C drop
   ‘Oje’s legs are dangling.’

\(^2\) Abbreviations used throughout this study include the following: ANT=antecedent, ANTI=anticipative, ASS=associative, C=continuous, CL=change of location, CON=conative, D=displacement, F=factitive, LOC=locative, NEG=negative, PF=positive focus, PR=prohibitive, SC=subject category, TEMP=temporal perspective.
Marked constructions with position verbs reveal a stringent grammatical character. They require perfective tense/aspect (ọjé [complete form] and ọjé [complete form past]) and reject imperfective continuous (4b).

(4) a. ọjé / ọjé nwú ọlì ụkọdọ khụâé.
   Oje Oje pick.up the pot raise
   ‘Oje has raised up the pot.’ / ‘Oje raised up the pot.’

   b. *ọjé ọ ọ nwú ọlì ụkọdọ khụâé.
      Oje SC C pick.up the pot raise
      ‘Oje is raising the pot up (at arm’s length).’

Marked constructions do not accept any aspectual or temporal forms. For instance, they disallow particles for preverbal aspectualizers that access temporal phases of event onset (ọdè CON ‘go to’ (5a)), postverbal temporal perspective (lèé TEMP ‘already’ (5b)) as well as adjuncts of temporality (ọdè ‘yesterday’ (5c)).

(5) a. *ọjé ọdè nwú ọlì ụkọdọ khụâé.
      Oje CON pick.up the pot raise
      ‘Oje went to raise the pot up (at arm’s length).’

   b. *ọjé nwú ọlì ụkọdọ khụâé lèé.
      Oje pick.up the pot raise TEMP
      ‘Oje already raised the pot up.’

   c. *ọjé nwú ọlì ụkọdọ khụâé ọdè.
      Oje pick.up the pot raise yesterday
      ‘Oje raised the pot up (at arm’s length) yesterday.’

Marked constructions limit particles that bear on event assertion/polarity and speaker attitude toward event occurrence. They reject predicate negation and prohibition (6a-b) in addition to intentionality preverbs (ọdóg ‘mistakenly’ (6c)).

(6) a. *ọjé ọdè nwú ọlì ụkọdọ khụâé.
      Oje SC NEG pick.up the pot raise
      ‘Oje did not raise the pot up (at arm’s length).’

   b. *è è nwú ọlì ụkọdọ khụâé.
      you PR pick.up the pot raise
      ‘Don’t raise the pot up (at arm’s length).’

   c. *ọjé ọdóg nwú ọlì ụkọdọ khụâé.
      Oje mistakenly pick.up the pot raise
      ‘Oje mistakenly raised the pot up (at arm’s length).’
Intransitive posture verbs exhibit construction pairs highlighting their shift from stative to inchoative. In unmarked constructions with a stative character, *muzan* 'stand' and *mgan* 'lie' appear with a locative complement.

(7) a. ̀gĩ ̀gmę̀ mű́zän-f vbe ̀lę́bù.  
    the child stand-F LOC table  
    'The child stood on the table.'

b. ̀gĩ ̀gmę̀ mgan-f vbe ̀lę́bù.  
    the child lie-F LOC table  
    'The child lay on the table.'

Posture verbs also appear in marked constructions where body orientation of the subject referent has assumed a positional end state. Inchoative "stand up" requires *muzan* in series with the verb *daa* 'raise' (8a) and "lie down" demands *mgan* with the verb *dee* 'lower' in series (8b).

(8) a. ̀gĩ ̀gmę̀ daa mű́zăn.  
    the child raise stand  
    'The child stood up.'

b. ̀gĩ ̀gmę̀ déé mgan.  
    the child lower lie  
    'The child lay down.'

Verb forms in series with posture verbs can serve as the primary predicate of a simple clause. Transitive *daa* 'raise' occurs with a body-part complement, while *dee* 'lower' appears with or without a body-part complement (9a-b).

(9) a. ̀jẹ̀ ̀jẹ̀ ì́ ì́gà ̀daa ̀gà̀bà̀n.  
    Oje SC C raise chin  
    'Oje is raising his chin.' / 'Oje is searching for a better view.'

b. ̀jẹ̀ déé ré ̀/ déé ̀ògbò ré.  
    Oje lower D lower hand D  
    'Oje lowered himself / lowered his hand.'

Marked constructions with posture verbs exhibit severely restricted syntax. They permit perfective tense/aspect (*gĩ́ ̀gmà* completive present and *gĩ́ ̀gma* completive past (10a)) but not imperfective continuous (10b).

(10) a. ̀gĩ́ ̀gmę́ ̀/ ̀gĩ́ ̀gmę́ daa mű́zăn.  
    the child the child raise stand  
    'The child has stood up.' / 'The child stood up.'
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b. * őfí őmkó źí źí dâá múźán.
   the child SC C raise stand
   ‘The child is standing up.’

They do not permit aspectual and temporal grammatical forms: neither aspectualizer preverbs (dâ’ ‘go to’ (11a)), temporal perspective postverbal particles (léé ‘already’ (11c)), nor temporal adjuncts (ôtè ‘yesterday’ (12d)).

(11) a. * őfí őmkó źí dâá múźán.
   the child CON raise stand
   ‘The child went to stand up.’

b. * őfí őmkó dâá múźán léé.
   the child raise stand TEMP
   ‘The child stood up already.’

c. * őfí őmkó dâá múźán ôtè.
   the child raise stand yesterday
   ‘The child stood up yesterday.’

As well, marked posture verb constructions do not permit the speaker to register polarity (negation and prohibition particles, (12a-b)) or attitude toward event occurrence (intentionality preverbs like dobè ‘mistakenly’ (12c)).

(12) a. * őfí őmkó f l dâá múźán.
   the child SC NEG raise stand
   ‘The child did not stand up.’

b. * è è kè dâá múźán.
   the child ANT raise stand
   ‘Don’t stand up anymore.’

c. * őfí őmkó dobè dâá múźán.
   the child mistakenly raise stand
   ‘The child mistakenly stood up.’

Marked constructions do not seem constrained primarily by their position or posture verbs and their lexical properties. Rather, their stringent syntax appears to be a function of the inchoative construction. Position verbs in unmarked constructions, for example, entertain the range of grammatical forms rejected by their marked counterparts. They permit imperfective continuous tense/aspect (13a) as well as completive present and completive past (13b).
(13) a. ọjẹ̀ ì gbà khù̀rà ọ̀lù ìkù̀dò̀.
Oje SC C raise the pot
‘Oje is raising the pot.’

b. ọjẹ̀ / ọjẹ̀ khù̀rà ọ̀lù ìkù̀dò̀.
Oje Oje raise the pot
‘Oje has raised the pot.’ / ‘Oje raised the pot.’

Unmarked position-verb constructions allow grammatical forms denoting an event’s aspectual and temporal properties. They accept preverbs that access aspectual phases of event onset (àà̀pì (14a)), postverbal particles of temporal perspective (léé (14b)), and adjuncts of temporality (òdè̀ (14c)).

(14) a. ọjẹ̀ àà̀pì khù̀rà ọ̀lù ìkù̀dò̀.
Oje CON raise the pot
‘Oje went to raise the pot.’

b. ọjẹ̀ khù̀rà ọ̀lù ìkù̀dò̀ léé.
Oje raise the pot TEMP
‘Oje has finished raising the pot.’ / ‘Oje already raised the pot.’

c. ọjẹ̀ khù̀rà ọ̀lù ìkù̀dò̀ òdè̀.
Oje raise the pot yesterday
‘Oje raised the pot yesterday.’

They also admit forms for event assertion/polarity and speaker attitude toward event occurrence. Predicate negation and prohibition auxiliaries (15a-b) as well as preverbs of intentionality (dòbòh ‘mistakenly’ (15c)) are acceptable.

(15) a. ọjẹ̀ i lì khù̀rà ọ̀lù ìkù̀dò̀.
Oje SC NEG raise the pot
‘Oje did not raise the pot.’

b. é è khù̀rà ọ̀lù ìkù̀dò̀.
you PR raise the pot
‘Don’t raise the pot.’

c. ọjẹ̀ dòbòh khù̀rà ọ̀lù ìkù̀dò̀.
Oje mistakenly raise the pot
‘Oje mistakenly raised the pot.’

Unmarked position-verb constructions and their posture neighbors thus exhibit far less restrictive behavior in contrast to the stringent syntactic behavior of marked inchoative constructions. This suggests that the inchoative's rigid
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grammatical character derives from a structural template more complex than the lexical projection of a posture or position verb. What is the nature of that template? In the African context, one might look to the frequently noted consecutive construction. Niger-Congo languages often signal a temporal sequence of actions by marking the second verb in series overtly: Nupe’s *cî‘and‘ (16a; Hyman 1971) and Tswana’s à/CONS (16b; Creissels 2000).

(16) a. u lá dîku ci bê.
   he take pot and come
   ‘He took the pot and came.’

   b. kî-îlé                 tîrîpö-ng   k-à-rîkâ
   SM.IS-go.ANT   town-LOC   SM.IS-CONS-buy  C18.shoes
   ‘I went to town and bought shoes.’

Emai exhibits no formal marking of consecutive constructions. However, it does show constructions with a similar function that also reference a temporal sequence of events (17a). Functional consecutives and transitive inchoative constructions exhibit some commonality. Both manifest a surface syntax consisting of NP1-V1-NP2-V2 and observe a linear-order constraint. Functional consecutive constructions strictly limit syntactic ordering of their verbs (17b) and position verbs never precede their construction verb in inchoative sentences (17c).

(17) a. ôjê dê émå é.
    Oje buy yam eat
    ‘Oje bought yam and ate it.’

   b. *ôjê é émå dê.
    Oje eat yam buy
    ‘Oje ate yam and bought it.’

   c. *ôjê kûûâj éfì òkûdò nwâ.
    Oje raise the pot pick up
    ‘Oje raised the pot and picked it up.’

Moreover, inchoative constructions reflect the orientation of their theme participant through verb selection. Contrasting orientations of the repositioned theme correlate with distinct verbs in series: *nwu khuæ ‘raise up’ and *fì gbe ‘fell down’ among position verbs and *daa mûzan ‘stand up’ and *dee meghen ‘lie down’ among posture verbs. Alternative verb combinations are disallowed; one cannot for example pair fì with khuæ or *dee with mûzan.

Emai’s functional consecutives and positional transitive constructions are distinct in other respects, however. Functional consecutives deconstruct in a strict
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fashion. In a mono-verbal clause, each verb of the consecutive is found with the
construction’s grammatical subject and direct object.

(18) ọjẹ dé émà / ọjẹ é émà.
    Oje buy yam  Oje eat yam
    ‘Oje bought yam.’ / ‘Oje ate yam.’

Transitive inchoative constructions do not deconstruct consistently. Although V2
from (19a) is obviously compatible with its preceding noun phrase (19b), V1 most
often is not (19c). Simple transitive clauses composed of fi and the theme ọlì ọrán
‘the tree’ from inchoative constructions are ungrammatical. fi allows only the
meaning ‘throw’ in simple transitive clauses with theme direct objects (19d).

(19) a. ọjẹ fi ọlì ọrán gbé.
    Oje drop the tree fell
    ‘Oje got the tree down (flat out).’ / ‘Oje fell the tree (down) flat out.’

b. ọjẹ gbé ọlì ọrán.
    Oje fell the tree
    ‘Oje felled the tree.’

c. *ọjẹ fi ọlì ọrán.
    Oje drop the tree
    ‘Oje dropped the tree.’

d. ọjẹ gbé ọlì úkpó ọrán.
    Oje throw the stick
    ‘Oje threw the stick.’

As an alternative, one might consider the inchoative construction as a classic
resultative, which also exhibits the surface syntax NP1-V1-NP2-V2, and seek to
explicate V2 as intransitive. Emai has few resultatives, but they have been noted
in analyses of other West African languages (Durie 1997). NP2 in resultative
constructions functions as grammatical direct object for V1 but logical subject for
V2 (20a). And like consecutives, the resultative deconstructs strictly (20b-c).

(20) a. ọjẹ họọ ọlì úkpùn fún.
    Oje wash the cloth clean
    ‘Oje washed the cloth clean.’

b. ọjẹ họọ ọlì úkpùn.
    Oje wash the cloth
    ‘Oje washed the cloth.’
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c. ụkpụn fúán-ị.
  the cloth  be.clean-F
  ‘The cloth is clean.’

By analogy, one might construe a V2 like khuae in an inchoative construction as
intransitive. ụkọdọ ‘the pot’ would then serve as khuae’s logical subject, where
English translation in (21a) suggests this analysis. A major obstacle for this
interpretation is that khuae, like other inherently transitive position verbs, does
not occur as a simple intransitive (21b). Moreover, it is important to recognize
that Emai has no syntactic passive construction whereby khuae, and others of its
ilk, might become syntactically intransitive.

(21) a. ọjè nwụ ụkọdọ khuáè.
     Oje pick.up the pot raise
     ‘Oje picked up the pot and it raised up (at arm’s length).’

b. * ụkọdọ khuáè-ị.
  the pot  raise-F
  ‘The pot was / got raised.’

Additional facts with a body-part subject show that an inchoative construction
with a position verb like khuae requires co-event expression by a verb in series.
That is, khuae in (22a) requires the verb in series tin ‘fly’ (22b) in order to convey
the notion ‘become erect.’ khuae alone is not sufficient (22c).

(22) a. ukpẹgẹlẹ ịsị ọjè tin khuáè.
       penis  ASS  Oje fly raise
       ‘Oje’s penis became erect.’ / ‘Oje’s penis flew up.’

b. ụkọalụmị ọ ọ tin.
  the bird  SC  fly
  ‘The bird is flying.’

c. * ukpẹgẹlẹ ịsị ọjè khuáè-ị.
  penis  ASS  Oje raise-F
  ‘Oje’s penis became erect. / Oje’s penis raised up.’

Transitivity and word order properties thus suggest that marked constructions
for position and posture verbs do not clearly align with widely recognized
functional consecutive or resultative constructions. What about other grammatical
properties? Let’s consider additional facets of functional consequitives, beginning
with tense/aspect. Functional consequitives accept perfective tense/aspect (ọjé
completive present and ọjé completive past (23a)) but reject imperfective
continuous (23b), as did marked inchoative constructions.
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(23) a. òjè / ôjè òg òj i ̀ òmà è.
   Oje Oje buy yam eat
   ‘Oje has bought yam and eaten it.’ / ‘Oje bought yam and ate it.’

   b. * òjè òg òj i ̀ òmà è.
      Oje SC C buy yam eat
      ‘Oje is buying yam and eating it.’

Emai’s functional consecutive constructions allow a range of aspectual and temporal forms. They admit aspectualizer preverbs accessing event phases (òòò (24a)), postverbal temporal perspective particles (lé lé (24b)) and temporal adjuncts (òòòg (24c)). Recall that inchoative constructions accepted none of these.

(24) a. òjè òg òg òj i ̀ òmà è.
   Oje CON C buy yam eat
   ‘Oje went to buy yam and eat it.’

   b. òjè òj i ̀ òg òmà è lé lé.
      Oje buy yam eat TEMP
      ‘Oje already bought yam and ate it.’

   c. òjè òj i ̀ òg òmà è ôòòg.
      Oje buy yam eat yesterday
      ‘Oje bought yam and ate it yesterday.’

And unlike inchoatives, functional consecutive constructions permit particles that bear on event assertion/polarity (predicate negation and the prohibition (25a-b)) and speaker attitude toward event occurrence (intentionality preverbs of the type òòòg ‘mistakenly’ (25c)).

(25) a. òjè òj i ̀ òj òg òmà è.
   Oje SC NEG buy yam eat
   ‘Oje did not buy yam and eat it.’

   b. òj i ̀ òj òg òmà è.
      you PR buy yam eat
      ‘Don’t buy yam and eat it.’

   c. òjè òòòg òj òg òmà è.
      Oje mistakenly buy yam eat
      ‘Oje mistakenly bought yam and ate it.’

We thus conclude that functional consecutive constructions and marked position-verb constructions (as well as marked posture verb constructions) are not
of the same grammatical type. Building on this, we turn to the consecutive construction’s temporal “and then” interpretation. Emai reveals semantic relations other than temporal sequence for constructions that might otherwise appear to be functional consecutives. Temporal sequence fails to capture their semantic identity. For example, Emai has serial constructions exhibiting purposive (26a) or extensive (26b) relations. The first verb event in the purposive is construed as actualized while the second is not (hwa ka ‘carry to dry’), whereas both verb events in the extensive are actualized (vig mgben ‘cry until asleep’).

(26) a. òjè hùá ìwàwà ká.
Oje carry cooking.pots dry
‘Oje carried cooking pots to dry.’ / * ‘Oje carried cooking pots and they dried.’

b. òjè vig mgbèn.
Oje cry sleep
‘Oje cried until asleep.’ / * ‘Oje cried and then slept.’

Using this richer set of semantic relations, we suggest that position and posture inchoatives are more akin to extensive constructions than to purposives. The latter reveals an actualization pattern of events not shown by marked position and posture constructions. That is, Emai inchoative constructions express entering a state of posture or position by incorporating an orientation-bearing verb whose actualization is required over a temporal extent that concludes with a change in postured or positioned state: “event X until end state Y.” Hence, the marked inchoative constructions in (2a) and (8a) might be rendered explicitly and symmetrically as ‘Oje moved the pot upward until it entered a raised state’ and ‘Oje moved himself upward until he entered a standing state’. It is this extensive (‘until’) parameter that precludes grammatical augmentation by forms bearing on event aspectuality (e.g. ògà ‘go to’) and temporality (e.g. òdà ‘yesterday’). Apparently, it is also this parameter that rules out expression of polarity (negation and prohibition) and speaker attitude (dògb ‘mistakenly’). One of the major tasks confronting further investigation of Emai concerns the identification of semantic relation types in serial constructions (e.g. temporal consecutive, resultative, purposive, extensive) and how each correlates with a particular set of grammatical properties. This applies in particular to events of position and posture not explicitly considered in this paper and to broader syntactic issues of construction verb transitivity as it relates to body-part complements. More importantly, we need to clarify the principles that constrain semantic relation types in the overall serial verb system and that link individual types to specific syntactic patterns.
References


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