

**A Morphosemantic Account of Verb Extension in C’LELA**Muhammad Ango Aliero<sup>1</sup>, Sadiya Abubakar Gwandu<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of Modern European Languages and Linguistics, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, P.M.B. 2346, Sokoto, Nigeria<sup>2</sup>Department of European Languages, Fderal University, Birnin-Kebbi, Nigeria**\*Corresponding Author:**

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**Abstract:** This article provides a descriptive account of the morphosemantics of verb extension in C’lela. It examines the forms, and the semantic functions of the various verbal extensions in the language. The article looks at the simple concatenative and non-concatenative morphological operations that relate to core arguments in verb extension in C’lela. The study discovers that while most Niger-Congo / Bantu languages use affixation in verb extension processes; C’lela often employs a non-concatenative system to achieve similar processes. The present analysis contributes to the studies on verb extension in Niger-Congo languages.

**Keywords:** C’lela, verb extension, causative, applicative, benefactive, recipient

**INTRODUCTION**

C’lela, the language which this study seeks to explore, is one of the Nigeria’s numerous minority languages that were less studied. C’lela, coded ISO 639-3 [dri] [1], is classified as group 7 (G) of Western-Kainji, Benue-Congo, Volta-Congo, Niger-Congo [2]. However, [3], have more recently placed C’lela as Northwest, Kainji subgroup of Benue-Congo. It is the language of the Lelna (or the Dakarkari) people spoken

by a majority of the inhabitants of Zuru emirate, located in the eastern part of Kebbi State, and in some parts of Kontagora Emirate in Niger State, Nigeria.

C’lela Language has an eight vowel system. All vowels in C’lela have contrastive length: long and short [4]. The C’lela vowel inventory is represented in the following figure 1 below.

	Front	Central	Back
high:	i		u
Near Mid-high:		ə	
Mid-high:	e		o
Mid-low:	ɛ	ɔ	
low:		a	

C’lela has forty consonant sounds out of which thirty-eight are listed with examples of contrast [4]. The other two consonant phonemes [ŋ] and [ʔ] occur merely in specific positions. While the nasal velar consonant [ŋ] occurs as [n] before a velar stop [g] or [k] in a few environments, the glottal stop phoneme [ʔ] appears phonetically on vowel-initial syllables. The language has twenty one single letter phonemes: **p, b, t, d, k, g, m, n, ŋ, f, v, s, z, h, r, l, tʃ, dʒ, w, j, ʔ**, and the other nineteen are labialized or palatalized consonants: **p<sup>l</sup>, b<sup>l</sup>, t<sup>w</sup>, d<sup>w</sup>, k<sup>l</sup>, g<sup>l</sup>, k<sup>w</sup>, g<sup>w</sup>, m<sup>l</sup>, n<sup>w</sup>, f<sup>l</sup>, s<sup>w</sup>, z<sup>w</sup>, tʃ<sup>w</sup>, dʒ<sup>w</sup>, r<sup>w</sup>, l<sup>w</sup>, h<sup>w</sup>, h<sup>l</sup>**.

In the C’lela orthography, the letter [c] represents phonetic affricate [tʃ]. The letter [j] represents the phonetic affricate [dʒ], while the letter [y] represents the palato-alveolar phonetic symbol [j]. In the most up-to-date C’lela orthography, an apostrophe /

ʔ/ is post-posed on the noun class markers, the underscored **ɛ**, represents the phoneme [ɛ], **o** represents [ɔ] and **a** represents the near close-mid central vowel [ə]. The language uses string of vowels that have the same features to represent vowel length, indicating the relative duration within a vowel phoneme. Length usually occurs in the first syllable of the disyllabic root words, and such root word may have phonemic contrast with other disyllabic words that end in a short vowel as in the following examples: **peete** ‘moon’ and **pete** ‘to rush’, **naama** ‘cow’ and **nama** ‘to grind’ [5]. This paper is written using the current C’lela orthography established in some other published works.

The verbs in C’lela are minimally monosyllabic and maximally tri-syllabic. C’lela verbs may be classified into four morphological forms: the

verb stem, the present progressive, the past and the simple future. In contrast to English language which differentiates past from perfect, the language does not make a difference between past and the perfect. The present progressive and the past are formed from the verb stems. All the noun class prefixes [a'-, i'-, u'-, d'-, k'-, v'-, m'-, c'-, and s'-] may be used on verbs to mark present progressive action in the language. The past is represented by a [-k(V)] suffix which attaches to the verb root; while the formation of future tense involves

**Present Form [a-, i-, u-, d-, k-, v-, m-, c-, s-] prefix**

(1) am c'-guzu  
I PRES-wash  
'I am washing'

**Past Form with [-kV] suffix**

(2) am guz-ku  
I wash-PST  
'I washed'

**Simple Future with [t-]prefix**

(3) t-ám gúzú  
FUT-I wash  
'I will wash'

The structure of the clause order showed that C'lela is an SVO language. The subject frequently precedes the verb in a sentence and such verb could be followed by an object.

In analyzing verb morphology in some languages, certain verbs are often accompanied by the participants that partake in the verbal events. Most of these verbs are associated with one, two or three arguments which have semantic valence such as agent, patient, experiencer, theme, and source. Other verbs could occur with arguments that may perform syntactic functions (syntactic valence); as subject, object, or oblique. This aspect of morphological operation which examines how verb elements are identified according to whether they perform causative, instrumental, agentive, locative, benefactive or experiencer role is referred to as 'verb extension' [7].

Verb extension in other words is "a term used in the Africanist Literature to designate the verbal affixes that are used to extend the verb root to form verb stems" [8]. Verb extension, sometime called valence-adjusting process refers to "morphosyntactic constructions that affect the semantic and / or grammatical valence of a clause" [9]. Verb extension affixes, as are commonly found in Niger-Congo languages, more especially within the Bantu (branch of) languages, may be used to increase the valence of a verb, for instance, in the derivation of applicative, instrumental, causative, dative intensive verbs etc, or decrease the valence to derive reciprocal, reversive,

prefixing a [t-] morpheme on an overt subject pronoun that usually precedes a verb. The occurrence of the t-prefix on the pronoun changes the usual low tone of the affected pronoun to a high tone.

Verbs in C'lela take a subject as well as direct or indirect objects appropriate to the verb. Similarly, the progressive aspects may be expressed by means of auxiliary construction in the language [6, 5]. The following sentences illustrate verb forms in C'lela:

passive or stative verb stems. The verb extension system is therefore a process which is often identified as having derivational function [10].

Verb extension affixes, which happen to be rare in Indo-European languages, are commonly found in African languages, especially the Niger-Congo family. Extant studies on verb extensions exist across African languages, which include among others [11-22].

Cross-linguistic studies [13, 14, 22-25] have shown that in most African languages, verbal extensions are normally realized by means of affixation. Secondly, it is observed that most Niger-Congo / Bantu languages that have an applicative morphology take an NP with semantic role of beneficiary, recipient etc as an applied object [18]. However, in C'lela similar extensions are often achieved through non-concatenative mechanism; hence, the present discourse discusses morphological forms and verbal extensions operational in the language.

## METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained from observation and interview with native speakers while the secondary sources were collected mainly from the C'lela Dictionary [26] and other literature most of which come from C'lela and other materials on verb extension. In the analysis, the prose and set of data together with gloss showing verb

extension will be provided. We will also give examples in sentences and provide interlineal translation to the expressions so as to provide information about the increase in the valence of a verb. The tone patterns of most source verbs and the derived extensive forms will also be explained.

## DISCUSSION

This section of the paper introduces the types of morphological process involved in verbal extension in C'lela. Some of the morphological forms in which verb extensions occur in the language include suffixation, reduplication and stem-internal vowel alternation.

### Suffixation

C'lela has a verb extension suffix that attaches to some verbs to 'add' or 'extend' the meaning of such verbs. A common causative extension suffix */-sa/*, which often denotes 'cause to', is used to increase the valence of the verb by introducing an event argument in the derived causatives. For instance, the causative suffix

- (5) a. *màak náatá*  
measure millet  
"Measure out the millet"
- b. *mèek-è ná náatà*  
measure-APPL them millet  
"Measure out the millet for them"  
[27] (interlinear gloss ours)

### Morphosemantics of Verb Extension in C'lela

Like in many other Niger-Congo languages, C'lela has verbal suffixes that may be added to the verb stem to derive other word forms; however, verb extension occurs in the language mainly through vowel alternation. This following section examines the various ways in which morphology can have an effect on the arguments of verbs in C'lela.

### Causatives

In C'lela, verbs undergo suffixation to derive Causative form. As stated earlier, a common verbal

Verb		Causative	Gloss
(6) a. <i>gàbà</i>	'obey/follow'	<i>gàbàsá</i>	'cause to obey/follow'
b. <i>hwèrá</i>	'rest'	<i>hwèràsá</i>	'let someone to rest'
c. <i>sòpà</i>	'scrub'	<i>sòpàsá</i>	'scrub off the surface'
d. <i>cílkà</i>	'settle'	<i>cílk-sá</i>	'cause to settle'
e. <i>sóodà</i>	'slide'	<i>sóod-sà</i>	'cause to slide'
f. <i>kàmgá</i>	'collect'	<i>kàmg-sá</i>	'cause to collect together'

### Intensive

In C'lela, reduplication of verb stems can be used as a means of intensifying action of the verb. It has been reported that the intensive extension does not usually change the valence of the verb rather it

*/-sa/* may combine with the verb stem *nàpà* 'know' to derive the causative form *nàpàsá*, which suggests 'cause someone to know'.

### Reduplication

In C'lela reduplication occurs to intensify actions in some verbs. C'lela utilized this process to signal extension, repetition, frequency or continuation of an action or event. For instance, in C'lela, repetition of the verb stem *tám̀bà* 'miss (the way)' to *tám̀bì* 'keep travelling/missing in the dark', indicates an extended effort or continuation in the action of the source verb.

### Stem-internal Vowel Alternation

Stem-internal vowel alternation within verb roots is a device used in increasing valence of the verb in C'lela. For instance, the formation of an applicative may sometimes involve the alternation of the low vowel */a/* to mid-vowel */e/* within a lexical root. Consider the following examples of benefactive applicative in a sentence as taken from [27]:

causative morpheme in the language is */-sa/*. The derived causative forms derived from suffixation of this morpheme usually involves an increase the valency of the verb by means of which a newly introduced argument serves the role of an agent-causer, Note that this causative involves phonological process which deletes the final vowel of the verb stems which have the heavy-initial syllable CVV-CV or CVC-CV as may be seen in (6 d-f). The process alters the tone patterns of most source verbs. Consider these examples:

intensifies the action of the verb [22]. For instance, in (7a) below, repetition of the verb stem *bàarà* 'wander/hunt' to *bàari b̀àari* 'wander about confusedly', indicates an extended effort or continuation in the action of the source verb. The source verbs contain

heavy CVC-CV or CVV-CV disyllabic stems. The tone pattern of the entire verb stem is mostly repeated in the

resultant intensive forms, as in Example (7) below:

	Verb		Intensive		Gloss
(7)	a. báàrà	'wander/hunt'	bààri bààri		'wander about confusedly'
	b. pìtlá	'struggle'	pìtlí pìtlí		'keep struggling confusedly'
	c. pùktú	'try'	pùktí pùktí		'try with effort'
	d. sàm̀bà	'brush'	sàm̀bì sàm̀bì		'brush hastily'
	e. míglà	'move'	míglí míglí		'move twistingly'
	f. tàktá	'rub'	tàktí tàktí		'rub clumsily'

Here are examples in sentences:

- (8) a. kanhiri **bààri-bààri** m'-hoba nàam-na  
 hunter walk-walk PROG-search animal-PL  
 "The hunter wanders about searching for animals"
- b. u el dà **taktí taktí** nu-emo  
 he is it rub rub PROG-do  
 "He is doing it clumsily"

We observe from examples (7), that the final vowel of the verb stems undergoes 'vowel alternation' from the low vowel /-a/ to high vowel /-i/ in the reduplicated forms. This exhibits a morphophonological process of vowel modification.

#### Applicative

According to [28], applicative is "a type of double-object construction in some languages", which may roughly corresponds to the direct and indirect object construction in English. Applicative construction on the other hand is an object-creating operation which generates a completely new object in the function structure of the verb [7]. This process normally involves the addition of an applicative affix on the verb to encode a series of functions, such as causative, benefactive, locative, and instrumental [29]. In C'lela, as in many other Bantu and non-Bantu languages; applicative is a valence increasing verbal extension; however, as indicated earlier, these languages make use of the applicative suffix on verbs for the formation of applicatives, while C'lela frequently utilizes stem-

internal vowel alternation for the creation of applicative forms such as benefactive, instrumental, and recipient which we shall discuss below.

#### Benefactive

A benefactive is a term which "expresses the sense of 'intended recipient' and is often introduced by a 'for' phrase in English" [28]. It is described as a particle which "introduces the noun which refers to the person who benefits from the action of the verb" [30]. In C'lela, benefactive may be formed from verb stem through internal modification. In the formation of benefactive in this process, the low vowel /a/ within the disyllabic verb stems undergoes 'morphophonemic alternation', or alternatively 'vowel rising' and becomes a mid-high vowel /e/ in both environments, thereby creating a direct-object function in the derived verb. So we assume here that the internal vowel alternation has a function which can be described as benefactive. The derived forms under this process in most cases carry over the tone of the verb stem. Consider the following examples:

	Verb Stem		Benefactive Form		Gloss
(9)	a. dàpà	'to stick'	dèpé		'to stick for someone/something'
	b. hàvá	'to go'	hèvé		'to go for someone'
	c. màaká	'to measure'	mèèké		'to measure for someone'
	d. vátá	'to explain'	vèté		'to tell someone'
	e. màtá	'to fill'	mèté		'to fill something completely'

Another means of deriving benefactive form in C'lela occurs when the back-rounded vowel /o/ or /u/ of disyllabic verbs undergoes internal alternations to front-

unrounded vowel /e/ or /i/. The derived benefactive form encodes 'for' which introduces the object that benefits from the action of the verb. This vowel change,

which appears to be a morphophonological rule of ‘vowel fronting’, looks similar to the vowel alternation used in the expression of tense aspect in many languages such as English, in words like; ‘sing’ vs. ‘sang’, or Dutch; *geef* ‘to give’ vs. *gaf* ‘gave’ [25], or in

Bernese; *suuffe* ‘drink’ vs. *gsoffe* ‘drank’ [28], or in Bemba; *kaana* ‘refuse’ vs. *keene* ‘has refused’ [24]. The derived benefactive forms in C’lela retain the tones of the source verbs; with exception of the last example (10e), Examples:

	Verb		Benefactive	Gloss
(10) a.	gòtò	‘to watch’	gwèté	‘watch for someone’
b.	kùmù	‘to obtain’	kwímí	‘obtain for someone’
c.	kùsú	‘to remain’	kwìsì	‘remain for someone’
d.	òmó	‘to pick up’	wèmé	‘pick up for someone’
e.	ùvù	‘to go (into)’	wíví	‘go in for someone’

Also we note that this particular process is associated with labialization of the initial plain velars before round vowels; and prefixing the same labio-velar consonant /w-/ to the vowel-initial verbs in the derived form as in (10 d and e). In C’lela, plain velars /k/ and

/g/ within the verbal forms undergo automatic labialization when they immediately precede a round vowel /o/ or /u/. The above benefactive form from C’lela in (10) may be used in sentences like in (11).

- (11) a. gòt náam-nâ  
watch cattle-PL  
“Watch the cattle”
- b. gwèt-é ò náam-nâ  
watch-APPL him cattle-PL  
“Watch the cattle for him”  
[27], interlinear glosses ours)

### Instrumental

The derived applicative that encodes ‘with’ phrase refers to ‘instrumental applicative’. In this type of applicative construction in C’lela, when the stem-final low vowel [o] or [a] alternates with the mid-high vowel

/-e/ in the same environment, the instrumental object occurs. This vowel modification within the verb stem allows the occurrence of instrumental applied objects as in (12) below. The tone pattern of the verb stem is retained in the output. Consider these examples.

	Verb Stem		Instrumental	Gloss
(12) a.	hòtò	‘to sneak away’	hòtè	‘to sneak away <b>with</b> something’
b.	gwèdàsá	‘to close (door)’	gwèdèsé	‘to close in (self) <b>with</b> (door)’
c.	làbàsá	‘to hide’	làbèsé	‘to hide (self) <b>with</b> something’
d.	cóbtá	‘to make noise’	còbté	‘to sneer <b>with</b> lips’

The above applicative form from C’lela may be used in sentences like in (13).

- (13) a. t-ú hòtò tente  
FUT-he sneak today  
“he will sneak away today”
- b. t-ú hòt-è kíndì  
FUT-he sneak-APPL money  
“He will sneak away with money”

### Recipient

As noted in [7], and [28], the applicative construction expressed by the ‘to’ phrase is called ‘recipient applicative’. In C’lela, there are certain disyllabic verbs whose final vowel undergoes modification to derive recipient form. This type of

applicative construction happens when the stem-final low vowel /a/ alternates with the mid-high vowel /-e/ in the same environment within the verb; and this allows the occurrence of ‘recipient’ applied objects as in (14). The tone pattern of the source verb is maintained in the

output, thus the vowel alternation appears very crucial.

These are examples:

	Verb Stem		Recipient	Gloss
(14)	a. cetà	'to carry'	cète	'to deliver something to someone'
	b. pàntá	'to take'	pànté	'to take (across) something to someone'

## CONCLUSION

This article provides a morphosemantic description of the main features of the verb extension in C'lela. It was shown that verbs undergo extension to form causatives by concatenating affixes and lexical stems, while internal modification is employed in the derivation of applicative. The article also deals with a process of reduplication of verbs to signal intensity. Furthermore, it was evident that for the most part the tone pattern of the verb stem is retained in the output after extension.

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