

ESTABLISHING A SYNTACTIC CATEGORY OF P IN FON

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This paper¹ seeks to establish a syntactic category P in Fon, a West African language of the Kwa family. It is argued that a syntactic category P exists in the synchronic grammar of Fon. Hence, in this respect, Fon is no different from English, French or other languages which have such a syntactic category. Second, it is shown that there is no evidence supporting the claim that locative and comitative prepositions are cases of syntactic reanalysis from verbs. Finally, the syntactic category P coexists with verb serialization. Consequently, the claim that verb serialization developed in order to compensate for the lack of prepositions is not borne out by the Fon data.

Le but de cet article est d'établir l'existence de la catégorie syntaxique P en fon, une langue kwa d'Afrique de l'ouest. L'existence d'une classe de mots appartenant à la catégorie P dans la grammaire synchronique du fon est démontrée. Ainsi, à cet égard, le fon n'est pas différent de l'anglais, du français ou des autres langues qui ont des prépositions. Deuxièmement, il est démontré qu'il n'y a pas d'évidence appuyant la proposition selon laquelle les prépositions locatives et comitatives constituent des cas de réanalyse syntaxique à partir de verbes. Finalement, les prépositions coexistent avec les verbes sériels en fon. Ceci va à l'encontre de la proposition selon laquelle la sérialisation des verbes compense pour l'absence de prépositions dans une langue particulière.

0. INTRODUCTION

0.1 GENERAL ISSUES

This paper seeks to establish a syntactic category P in Fon, a West African language of the Kwa family. This research is embedded within the following more general issues. First, in the literature on West African languages, it has generally been assumed that these languages lack the category P. Second, there is a widespread assumption that verb serialization is developed in order to compensate for the absence of the lexical category P in particular languages (cf. Bickerton, 1981:120ff). Third, the claim has been made that the few cases of prepositions that are found in West African languages constitute cases of reanalysis from verbs. For example, Lord (1973) claims that in Ewe, Twi and Ga, locative prepositions have evolved from locative verbs and that in Yoruba, comitative, instrumental and manner prepositions have evolved from a comitative verb. In this view, a locative or a comitative verb projecting a syntactic VP and occurring as the second verb in a series, would have been analysed as a preposition projecting a PP.

I show that a syntactic category P exists in the synchronic grammar of Fon. Hence, in this respect, Fon is not different from English, French or other languages which have a syntactic category P. Second, I show that there is no evidence supporting the claim that locative and comitative prepositions are cases of syntactic reanalysis from verbs. The categorial status of the prepositions under study appears to be well-established in the language. Finally, the syntactic category P coexists with verb serialization in Fon (cf. Lefebvre, 1989). Consequently, the claim that verb serialization developed in order to compensate for the lack of prepositions is not borne out by the Fon data.

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0.2 SPECIFIC ISSUES

Three lexical items are considered in this paper: *dò* 'at', *kpódó* 'with', and *sín* 'from'².

dò 'at' introduces a locative phrase as in 1.

- | | | |
|----|--|----------|
| 1. | Kòkú wlán nú <u>dò</u> távò jí
Koku write something at table on
'Koku wrote something at the table' | LOCATIVE |
|----|--|----------|

Kpódó 'with' heads instrumental and comitative phrases as in 2.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------------|
| 2a. | Kòkú xò Asíba <u>kpódó</u> àtín kpó
Koku hit Asiba with stick with
'Koku hit Asiba with a stick' | INSTRUMENTAL |
| b. | Kòkú yì àxì <u>kpódó</u> Asíba kpó
Koku go market with Asiba with
'Koku goes to the market with Asiba' | COMITATIVE |
| c. | Kòkú <u>kpódó</u> Asíba kpó yì àxì
Koku with Asiba with go market
'Koku and Asiba went to the market' | COMITATIVE |

Sín 'from, out of' introduces locative phrases referring to a source³.

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 3. | Kòkú wá <u>sín</u> àxì (mè)
Koku come from market in
'Koku came from (within) the market' | |
|----|--|--|

These lexical elements obligatorily take a complement. They select a NP, as in 3, or a postpositional phrase, as in 1-3. The argument in complement position is associated with a specific theta-role: the complement of *dò* is a locative, the complement of *sín* is a source and the complement of *kpódó* is either instrumental or comitative.⁴ These characteristics resemble those of verbs. Moreover, in examples 1, 2a, b and 3 these lexical items occur in a surface position which corresponds to that of the second verb in a series. They exhibit properties, however, which distinguish them from verbs. For this reason, Westerman (1930) refers to this type of lexical item as function words, and Ansre as verbids. I will temporarily use Ansre's terminology and refer to them as verbids.

In section 1, I discuss the properties of verbs and verbids, contrasting the behaviour of the second verb in a series with that of verbids. I conclude that verbids constitute a lexical class distinct from verbs. In section 2, I show that lexical items heading locative and instrumental phrases as in 1-3 have, in fact, the properties generally attributed to prepositions. This analysis is compatible with Lord's (1973) conclusion that in related West African languages, verbids are in fact prepositions. Moreover, I show that phrases headed by prepositions, as in 1-3, do not occupy argument positions, but rather they are adjuncts.

² To my knowledge, there is at least one more lexical item which is a preposition in Fon: *nú*, which Segurola (1963) defines as a preposition meaning 'to, for, in favor of'. It is not included here, since it deserves a whole paper.

³ Note that this *sín* is different from case marker *sín*.

⁴ Manner phrases may also be headed by *kpódó* 'with' in Fon. They are not considered in this paper.

In addition to heading locative phrases as in 1, **ɖò** 'at' occurs in locative and progressive phrases as in 4a and b respectively.

- 4a. **Kòkú ɖò távò glúwê** LOCATIVE
Koku at table under
'Koku is under the table'
- b. **Kòkú ɖò nú wlán wè⁵** PROGRESSIVE
Koku at something writing PROC
'Koku is writing' (lit. Koku is at writing)

Segurolo states that while in 1 **ɖò** is a preposition, in 2 it is the verb 'be'. This statement is similar to Lord⁶ for comparable data in related languages⁶. A minimal hypothesis, however, would be that there is only one **ɖò**, unless convincing contrastive properties can be found to support a dual analysis for it. In section 3, I will argue for a unified analysis of **ɖò**, whereby in both 1 and 4, **ɖò** is a preposition. In section 4, I take up the discussion as to whether there are evidences showing that the prepositions of Fon constitute cases of reanalysis from verbs. My conclusion is that there is no evidence to this effect on the basis of available data.

1. PROPERTIES OF VERBIDS AND (SERIAL) VERBS

I now compare the characteristics of verbids with those of the second verb occurring in a serial construction. The properties of the second verb in a series are based to a large extent on Lefebvre (1989).

1.1 INDEPENDENT PREDICATES

The second verb of a series as in 5a may always occur as the main verb of a clause, as in 5b.

5. Serial verbs

- a. **Kòkú sù àsón yì àxì** b. **Kòkú yì àxì**
Koku take crab go market Koku go market
'Koku brought a crab to the market' 'Koku went to the market'

In contrast, verbids do not occur as main predicates of a clause. Example 6a can only mean 'Koku with Asiba'. If it occurred as a main predicate we would expect 6a to mean 'Koku is with Asiba'. This prediction is not borne out by the data. For 6b, similar results obtain.

6. Verbids

- a. **Kòkú kpódó Asibá kpó**
Koku with Asiba with
'Koku with Asiba'
* Koku is with Asiba
- b. ***sígà sìn gbáví ó**
cigarette from box DET
*'The cigarette is from the box'

⁵ **wè** occurs in conjunction with **ɖò** in progressive constructions. Pending a better understanding of the status and of the meaning of this lexical item, I will gloss it as PROCESS (PROC).

⁶ Lord (1973:271) proposes that in Ewe, while **le** is a preposition in (i), it is a verb in (ii).

- (i) **me fle agbalē le keta**
I buy book in Keta
'I bought book in Keta'
- (ii) **agbalēa le kplɔa dzi**
book-the be-at table-the top
'The book is on the table'

Additional evidence showing that **kpóǒ** 'with' and **sín** 'from' are not independent predicates is reflected in coordination. The contrast in grammaticality between 7 and 8 illustrates this point.

7. Serial verbs

- a. **Kòkú sɔ̀ àsón yì àxì**
Koku take crab go market
'Koku brought a crab to the market'
- b. **[Kòkú sɔ̀ àsón] bɔ̀ [é yì àxì]**
Koku take crab and he go market
'Koku took a crab and he went to the market'

8. Verbids

- a. ***[Kòkú xò Asíbá] bɔ̀ [é kpóǒ àtín kpó]**
Koku hit Asiba and he with stick with
'Koku hit Asiba and he was with stick'
- b. ***[Kòkú yì àxì] bɔ̀ [é kpóǒ Asíbá-kpó]**
Koku go market and he be-with Asiba-with
'Koku went to the market and he was with Asiba'
- c. ***[Kòkú wá hwé] bɔ̀ [é sín àxì]**
Koku come home and he from market
'Koku came home and he was from the market'

These facts show that unlike verbs, the verbids **kpóǒ** and **sín** cannot occur as the main predicate of a clause.

Unlike these two verbids, however, **dò** 'at' can occur as the main predicate of a clause, as in 4a repeated here as 9 for convenience.

9. **Kòkú dò távò glúwé** LOCATIVE
Koku at table under
'Koku is under the table'

Furthermore, **dò** may head a clause which can be coordinated with another clause as in 10.

10. **Kòkú wlán nú bɔ̀ é dò távò jí**
Koku write something and he at table on
'Koku wrote something and he was at table'

This difference between **dò** and the two other verbids will be taken up in section 3.

1.2 ORDER WITH RESPECT TO INTERNAL ARGUMENT

In progressive constructions, the nominalized verb always follows its argument⁷.

⁷ Nominalization is achieved by means of reduplication of the first consonant of the verb stem and inserting an epenthetic vowel, generally **i**, eg. **yì** > **yiyì** (go > going). When a nominalized verb occurs with an internal argument, the verb occurs in its simplest form, eg. **àxì yì** (market going).

11. Verbs

		Arg.	V	
Kòkú	ḍò	àxí	yì	wè
Koku	at	market	going	PROC

'Koku is going to the market'

In contrast, verbids always precede their argument in this context.

12. Verbids

		Arg.	V	Vrb.	Arg.
Kòkú	ḍò	àxí	yì	<u>kpóḍó</u>	Asíba-kpo wè
Koku	ASP	market	go	with	Asiba-with FO

'Koku is going to the market with Asiba'

- b. Kòkú ḍò hwé wá sín àxì-mè wè
 Koku at house coming from market-in PROC
 'Koku is coming home from the market'
- c. Kòkú ḍò wíwlán ḍò távò glúwè wè
 Koku LOC write LOC table under PROC
 'Koku is writing at the table'

This contrast in order between the head and its argument constitutes an important distinction between verbs and verbids. Furthermore, the fact that at S-structure verbids always precede their object suggests that these elements are Case assigners for their object. The directionality of structural Case assignment by all lexical categories in Fon is rightward (cf. Lefebvre, 1989).

1.3 EXTRACTION OF COMPLEMENTS AND THE NATURE OF THE TRACE.

Extraction of a postpositional phrase out of VP leaves a trace which is phonetically null as in 13.

13. Verbs

- a. Kòkú sò àsón ḍó távò jí
 Koku take crab put table on
 'Koku put the crab on the table'
- b. [távò jí]_i wè Kòkú sò àsón ḍó [e]_i
 table on FO Koku take crab put
 'It is on the table that Koku put the crab'

In contrast, extraction of a similar postpositional phrase out of a verbid projection requires that the trace be spelled out as in 14. Note that in 14b the vowel length realizes the lexical trace.

14. Verbids

- a. [àsá jí]_i wè Kòkú wlán nú ḍò è_i
 knees on FO Koku write something at it
 'It is on his knees that Koku wrote something'
- b. [àxì mè]_i wè Kòkú wá hwé sí:n
 market in FO Koku come home from
 'It is the market that Koku came from'

Note that the postpositional complement of **kpóǫǫ** cannot be extracted.

The contrast in extraction facts between the complement of verbs and the complements of verbids suggests that unlike verbs, verbids are not proper governors.

1.4 EXTRACTION OF VERB PHRASES AND OF VERBID PHRASES

In serial constructions, it is not possible to extract any of the verbs of the construction with their respective object, as shown in 15b and c.

15. Serial verbs

- a. **Kòkú sǫ àsón yì àxì**
Koku take crab go market
'Koku brought a crab to the market'
- b. ***àsón sǫ wè, Kòkú (ǫǫ è) yì àxì**
crab take FO, Koku (trace) go market
- c. ***àxì yì wè, Kòkú sǫ àsón (ǫǫ è)**
market go FO, Koku take crab (trace)

In contrast, verbids may be extracted with their object. The sentences of 16 illustrate focus on the projections headed by verbids⁸.

16. Verbids

- a. **kpóǫǫ àtín kpó wè, Kòkú xò Asíbá**
with stick with FO, Koku hit Asiba
'It is with a stick that Koku hit Asiba'
- b. **kpóǫǫ Asíbá kpó wè Kòkú yì àxì**
with Asiba with FO Koku go market
'It is with Asiba that Koku went to the market'
- c. **sín àxì wè, Kòkú wá hwé sí:n**
from market FO, Koku came home from
'It is from the market that Koku came home'
- d. **ǫǫ àsá jí wè, Kòkú wíán nú ǫǫ è**
at knee on FO, Koku write something at it
'It is on his knees that Koku wrote something'

Furthermore, the sentences of 17 illustrate that when the VP of a clause is being focussed the verbid phrase is left behind. This is in direct contrast with true verbs occurring in a series (cf.15).

- 17a. **Asíbá xò wè Kòkú ǫǫ è kpóǫǫ àtín kpó**
Asiba hitting FO Koku at it with stick with
'It is hitting Asiba that Koku is doing with a stick'
- b. **hwé wá wè, Kòkú ǫǫ è sín àxì**
house coming FO, Koku at it from market
'It is coming to the house that Koku is doing from the market'

⁸ Note that while preposing of a phrase headed by **kpóǫǫ** leaves a phonologically null trace, preposing of the verbid phrases headed by **sín** and **ǫǫ** leave a lexical trace, as exemplified in c. and d. Why this is so is not yet clear to me. The difference suggests that verbids do not constitute an entirely homogenous class.

- c. **nú wlán wè, Kòkú dò è dò távò glúwê**
 something writing FO, Koku at it at table under
 'It is writing that Koku is doing under the table'

The two sets of data presented above show that, unlike serial verbs, verbids do not form a complex predicate with the verb that precedes them.

1.5 SUMMARY OF PROPERTIES

The contrastive properties of true verbs and verbids are summarized in 18.

18.	Verbids			True verbs (as second verb in a series)
	<u>kpóḍo</u>	<u>sín</u>	<u>dò</u>	
a. independent predicate	-	-	+	+
b. Arg./V order in progress. constructions	-	-	-	+
c. phonologically null trace of extracted compl. (vs lexical trace)	-	-	-	+
d. extraction of head + complement	+	+	+	-

Except for the fact that **dò** can occur as an independent predicate, the above distribution shows that verbids share properties which clearly distinguish them from verbs.

2. VERBIDS ARE PREPOSITIONS

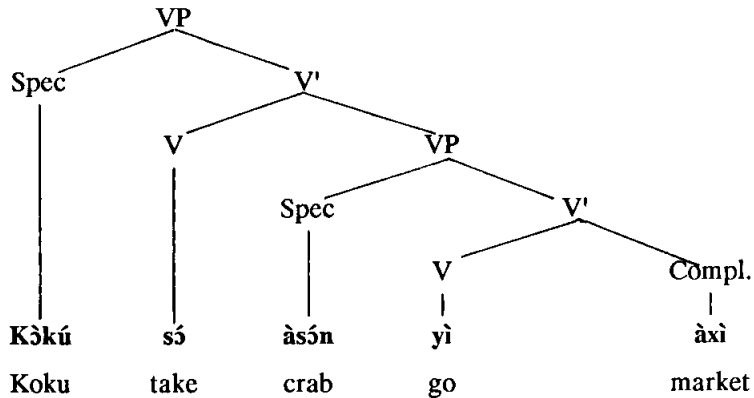
Given the contrastive properties of true verbs and verbids, verbids should not be analyzed as verbs. On the other hand, they have none of the properties of nouns⁹. I suggest, therefore, that verbids are prepositions which project a prepositional phrase. This proposal accounts for the characteristics of verbids enumerated in 18. Pending a better understanding of the syntactic features of Fon, I do not discuss the problem of such features defining this lexical category. I now discuss where prepositional phrases occur in a syntactic tree.

It is evident from the above that verbids do not constitute the second verb of a series in serial verb constructions. Following Lefebvre (1989), I will assume that 19 is the structure for serial verbs¹⁰.

⁹ Since there is no claim in the literature that verbids are nominal, I will not discuss this matter in detail. I mention a few major properties which distinguish them from nouns. They cannot appear with a determiner; the Case assigning properties of verbids are entirely different from those of nouns; verbid phrases do not occur in subject position.

¹⁰ The specifier of VP is the position where subjects are base generated (cf. Kuroda, 1985; Speas and Fukui, 1986; Kitagawa, 1986 etc.). From that position, they are generally moved to the Specifier of IP.

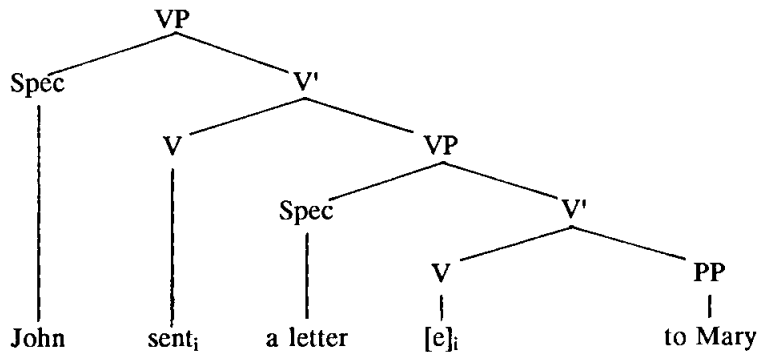
19.



'Koku brought a crab to the market'

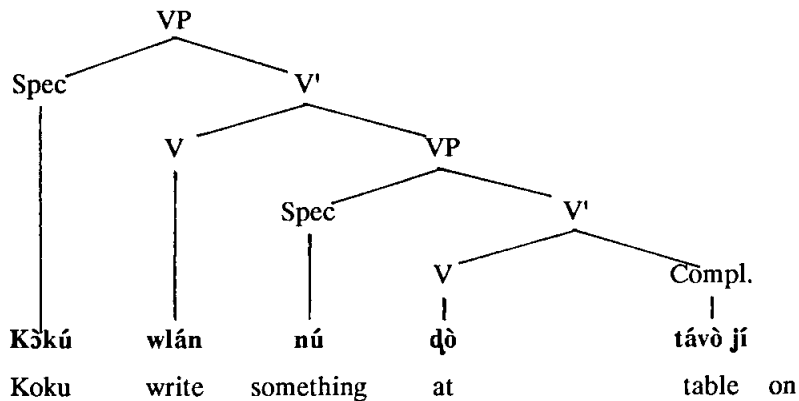
The above structure is inspired by work from Larson (1988) on English double object constructions. The structure proposed by Larson for such constructions is represented in 20.

20.



The contrastive properties observed in section 1 between verbids and serial verbs suggest that a structure of type 19 is not relevant for verbids. This impossible structure is illustrated in 21.

21*.

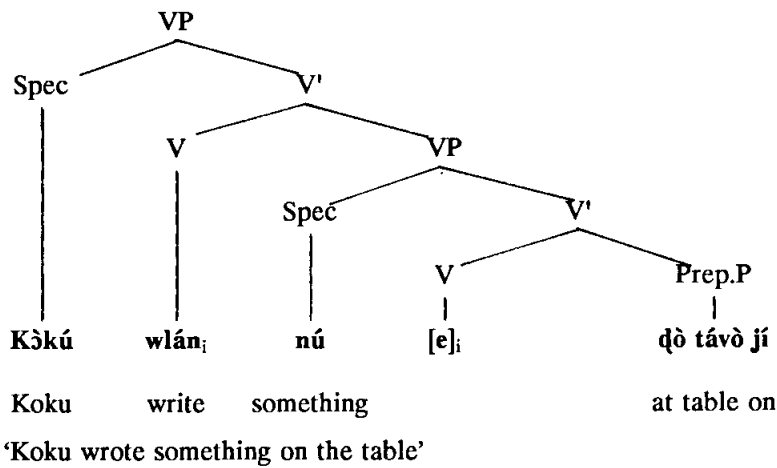


'Koku wrote something on the table'

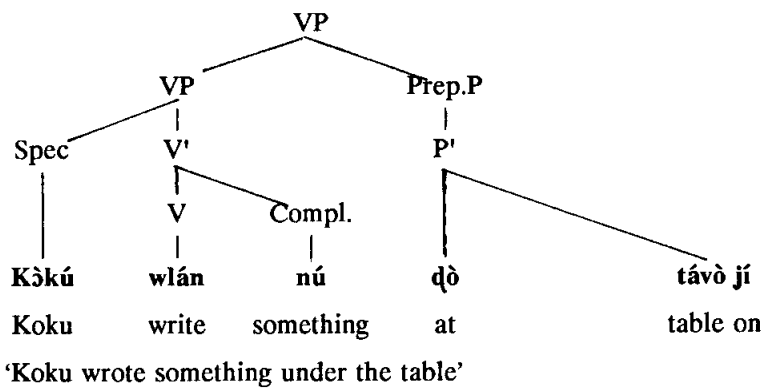
What alternatives are there?

Either prepositional phrases are base generated in the complement position of the verb as in 22 or they are adjoined to VP as in 23.

22.



23.



I will argue that prepositional phrases are best analysed as adjuncts and therefore that 23 rather than 22 is the correct structure for them. Structure 23 accounts for the following facts.

First, the sentences of 17 show that the verb of the clause and its complement can be preposed leaving behind the prepositional phrase. This extraction fact is difficult to explain if the prepositional phrase is in the direct argument position of V as in 22. It follows directly, however, if prepositional phrases are adjoined to VP as in 23.

Second, the progressive construction may exclude the prepositional phrase, a situation which is impossible in serial verb constructions. 24b is the progressive version of 24a.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>24a. Kòku jí àxì
 Koku go market
 'Koku went to the market'</p> | <p>b. Kòku dò àxì yì wè
 Koku at market going PROC
 'Koku is going to the market'</p> |
|--|---|

25 provides an example of a serial construction occurring in the progressive form. In 25 it can be observed that all the arguments of the complex predicate are inside the phrase headed by wè.

25. **Kòku dọ̀ [àsón sọ̀ yì àxì wẹ̀]**
 Koku at crab taking going market PROC
 'Koku is bringing a crab to the market'

In 26 the second verbal constituent is outside of the phrase headed by *wẹ̀* and the clause is not grammatical.

26. ***Kòkú dọ̀ [àsón sọ̀ wẹ̀] yì àxì**
 Koku at crab taking PROC going market
 'Koku is bringing a crab to the market'

In contrast, the verbal phrase can be outside the constituent headed by *wẹ̀* as is shown in 27.

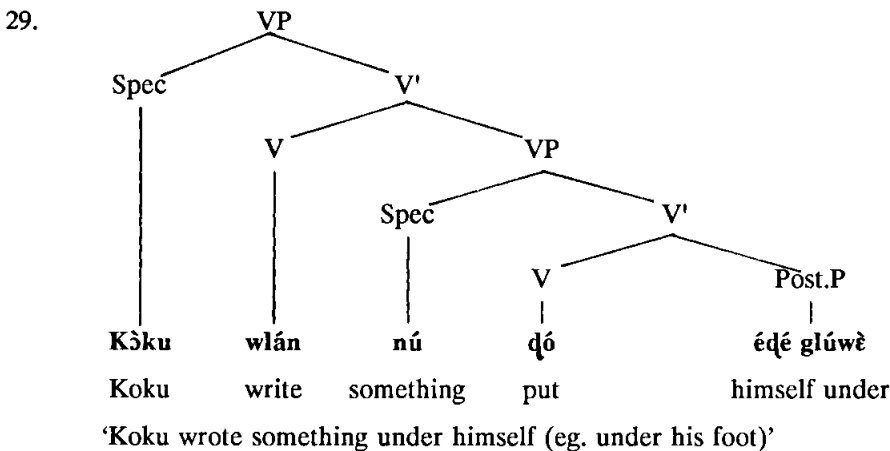
27. **Kòkú dọ̀ [hwẹ̀ wá wẹ̀] sín àxì**
 Koku at house coming PROC from market
 'Koku is coming to the house from the market'

The grammaticality of 27 directly follows if the prepositional phrase is adjoined to VP as in 23.

Third, in structure 23, the subject of the clause does not c-command the prepositional phrase. Hence the configuration should not allow for a sentence such as 28.

28. ***Kòkú wlán nú dọ̀ édé glúwẹ̀**
 Koku write something at himself under
 'Koku wrote something under himself'

Interestingly enough there is a closely related serial construction involving the verb *dọ̀* 'put', in which 'himself' is c-commanded by the subject of the clause. In this configuration, the reflexive is licensed (cf. Lefebvre, 1989).



The contrast in grammaticality between 28 and 29 supports the suggestion that prepositional phrases are adjoined to VP.

Similar data obtain for *kpóḍo* 'be together' and *sín* 'from'. Consider the following additional data for *sín*. This preposition occurs with verbs such as *gọ̀ sín* 'come from', *té sín* 'get down from', *lé sín* 'come back from', *sé sín* 'go away from', *tón sín* 'come out from', *wá sín* 'come back from' (Seguroola, 1963). Whether the verb that selects a *sín* phrase also selects a direct object, the same extraction facts obtain. In 30a the verb has

no other argument than the prepositional phrase introduced by *sín* 'from'. The complement of *sín* can be extracted as in 30b. When the *sín* phrase is extracted, it has to leave a lexical trace as in 30c. 30d, where there is no lexical trace, is not grammatical.

- 30a. *Kòkú wá sín àxì*
Koku return from market
'Koku returned from the market'
- b. *àxì wè Kòkú wá sín*
market FO Koku return from
- c. *sín àxì wè Kòkú wá sín*
- d. **sín àxì wè Kòkú wá*

We would expect 30d to be grammatical if the *sín* phrase were in the direct argument position of the verb since the trace would be properly governed by the verb. Furthermore the distribution in 30 parallels that in 31 in which the verb selects a direct object and the *sín* phrase is clearly adjoined to VP since there is no other position for it. The complement of *sín* can be fronted as in 31b. The *sín* phrase can also be fronted leaving a lexical trace. 31d is ungrammatical for the same reason as 30d is.

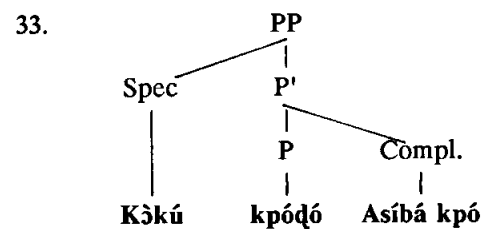
- 31a. *Kòkú wá hwé sín àxì*
Koku return house from market
'Koku returned home from the market'
- b. *àxì wè Kòkú wá hwé sín*
- c. *sín àxì wè Kòkú wá hwé sín*
- d. **sín àxì wè Kòkú wá hwé*

The parallelism between the data in 30 and 31 supports that analysis that *sín* phrases are adjoined to VP.

The above analysis accounts for the position of the prepositional phrases in 1, 2a,b and 3. What is the position of the prepositional phrase in 2c, repeated here as 32?

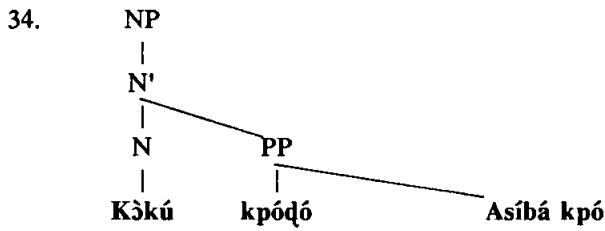
- 32. *Kòkú kpódó Asíba kpo yì àxì*
Koku with Asiba with go market
'Koku and Asiba went to the market'

Three options present themselves which I will discuss briefly. The first possibility would be a structure in which the first noun occupies the specifier position of the prepositional phrase headed by *kpódó*, as in 33.



In this structure the NP in the specifier position of PP is the subject of P, not a likely structure. If 33 were the structure for 32, the subject of the clause in 32 would be a PP, which is not a welcome result.

A second possibility is to analyze the prepositional phrase headed by *kpódó* as the complement of the first noun, yielding the structure of 34.



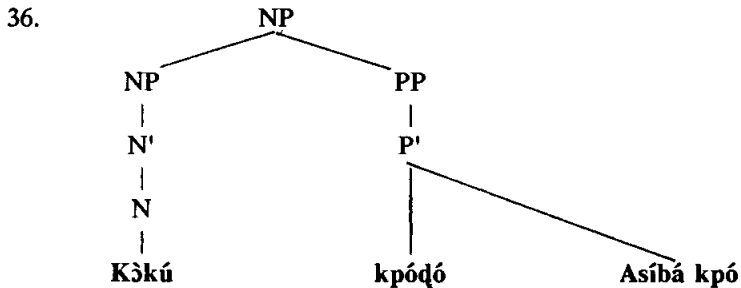
This is an unlikely structure since prepositional phrases headed by *sín* and *qò* do not occur as complements of nouns (35).

35a. **sìgà sín gbáví ́*
cigarette from box DET
'The cigarette from the box'

b. **nú wlán qò dò ún ́*
something writing at wall on DET
'The writing on the wall'

If the *kپóqó* phrase were in the complement position of the noun, it would be the only prepositional phrase to occur as a complement of a noun in Fon.

A third possibility is that the phrase headed by *kپóqó* is adjoined to NP as in 36.



This structure accounts in a natural way for the fact that the prepositional phrase can occur freely next to the subject NP or at the end of the clause as in 37a and b respectively.

37a. *Kòkú kپóqó Asíbá kپó yì àxì*
Koku with Asiba with go market
'Koku with Asiba went to the market'

b. *Kòkú yì àxì kپóqó Asíbá kپó*
Koku go market with Asiba with
'Koku went to the market with Asiba'

This analysis also explains the potential pause between the subject and the phrase headed by *kپóqó* in a, which reflects the fact that the complex *kپóqó...kپó* phrase is not a mere conjunction. Finally, if 36 is the correct structure for 32, an interesting generalization about prepositional phrases in Fon can be made: all three are adjuncts.

3. A UNIFIED ANALYSIS OF *qò*

In sections 1 and 2, we saw that in sentences of type 38 (=1), *qò* 'at' is a preposition and that the prepositional phrase headed by *qò* is adjoined to VP.

38. **Kòkú wlán nú ðò távò jí** LOCATIVE
 Koku write something at table on
 'Koku wrote something at the table'

As mentioned in the introduction, **ðò** also occurs in locative clauses (39a) and in progressive constructions (39b). In both these clauses **ðò** is the main predicate.

- 39a. **Kòkú ðò távò glúwê** LOCATIVE
 Koku at table under
 'Koku is under the table'
- b. **Kòkú ðò nú wlán wè** PROGRESSIVE
 Koku at something writing PROC
 'Koku is writing'/'Koku is at writing'

We mentioned that Segurola proposed that while **ðò** is a preposition in 38, it is the verb 'be' in 39. The facts that might lead to this conclusion are the following.

First, while the **ðò** phrase occurring as an adjunct shows no external argument of its own as in 40a, the **ðò** phrase occurring as an independent predicate exhibits an external argument as in 40b and c.

- 40a. ***Kòkú wlán nú Kòkú ðò távò jí** ADJUNCT
 Koku write something Koku at table on
 'Koku wrote something at the table'
- b. **Kòkú ðò távò jí** LOCATIVE
 Koku at table on
 'Koku is on the table'
- c. **Kòku ðò wíwlán wè** PROGRESSIVE
 Koku at writing PROC
 'Koku is writing'

Second, while the **ðò** phrase in adjunct position cannot be preceded by a tense marker, the **ðò** phrases occurring as independent predicates can.

- 41a. ***Kòkú ná wlán nú ná ðò távò jí** ADJUNCT
 Koku FUT write something FUT at table on
 'Koku will write something at the table'
- b. **Kòku ná ðò távò jí** LOCATIVE
 Koku FUT at table on
 'Koku will be on the table'
- c. **Kòkú ná ðò wíwlán wè** PROGRESSIVE
 Koku FUT at writing PROC
 'Koku will be writing'

In spite of these differences, I argue that there is only one **ðò** with a unified analysis in all contexts where it occurs. I claim that **ðò** is always a preposition. First, I consider the shared properties of **ðò** in all three contexts. Second, I provide an analysis which accounts for the facts.

3.1 PROPERTIES OF **ðò** IN ALL THREE CONTEXTS

There are a number of properties shared by **ðò** in all three contexts. First, **ðò** has a single phonological representation. It bears a low tone which contrasts with the high

tone on a cognate verb **ḍó** 'put' (cf. sect.4 for a discussion of this minimal pair). Second, as a consequence of **ḍò** occurring as an independent predicate, coordination of the **ḍò** clause with another clause is possible as in 42.

- 42a. **Kòkú wá b̀̀ é ḍò hwégbé**
Koku come and he at home
'Koku came and is at home'
- b. **Kòkú ḍò àxì mè b̀̀ é jè ǹ̀n t̀̀n jí**
Koku at market in and he fall mother his on
'Koku is in the market and he encounters his mother'
- c. **Kòku ḍò wémàn wlán wè bó ḍò sín nú wè**
Koku at letter writing PROC and-he at water drinking PROC
'Koku is writing a letter and he is drinking water'

Third, when the complement of **ḍò** is fronted, the same pronominal lexical trace is found in the extraction site. As noted in Sect. 1, this fact contrasts with extractions out of VPs which leave a phonologically null trace (cf.13).

- 43a. **[távò jí]; wè Kòkú wlán nú ḍò è;**
table on FO Koku write something at it
'It is at the table that Koku wrote'
- b. **[távò jí]; wè Kòkú ḍò è;**
table on FO Koku at it
'It is on the table that Koku is'
- c. **[wìwlán]; wè Kòkú ḍò è;**
writing FO Koku at it
'It is at writing that K. is/It is writing that K. is doing'

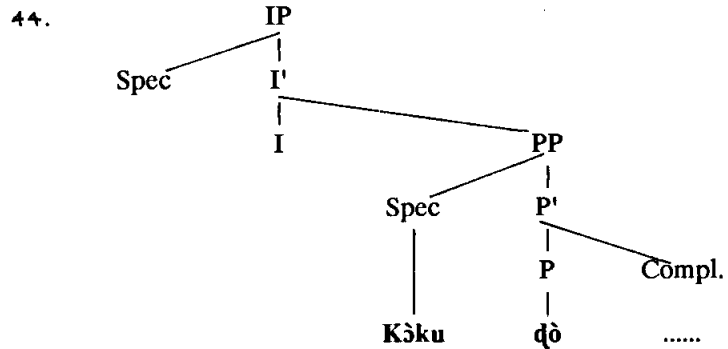
Fourth, in all three contexts, **ḍò** has the locative meaning 'at'. That it appears in the progressive construction should be no surprise to those who have read Anderson (1973). Anderson provides examples from several languages (eg. Scottish, Gaelic, Irish etc.) exhibiting a relationship between the progressive aspect and a locative predicate. In these languages, progressiveness is expressed by a locative particle and a verbal noun. For example, Irish has 'John is at killing of the rabbit' (Anderson, 1973:18)¹¹. This is exactly how progressive is expressed in Fon, a locative element and a nominalized verb, as in 40c. While the combination of locative **ḍò** 'at' and a phrase headed by **mè** 'in', **jí** 'on' etc. locates an object in space, its combination with a phrase headed by **wè** (in the progressive construction) locates an event in a particular point in time. Anderson's definition of aspect expresses clearly the locative property of aspect: 'Aspect...is concerned with the relation of an event or state to a particular reference point: it is located before (retrospective), after (prospective), around (progressive) or simply at (Aorist) a particular point in time' (p 39, 40). In this view, the semantic unity of **ḍò** becomes apparent, and there is no need to differentiate between locative and progressive **ḍò** on the basis of meaning.

¹¹ In Modern English the grammaticality of sentences such as 'He was working an hour ago and I guess he's still at it' (Bolinger, 1971:246) shows that the locative preposition **at** has not entirely disappeared from the progressive construction in English.

On the basis of these four sets of facts I conclude that there is only one $\text{d}\hat{o}$ and that in all three environments where it occurs, it is a preposition. How can the fact that $\text{d}\hat{o}$ 'at' may occur as an independent predicate (cf.42) be accounted for?

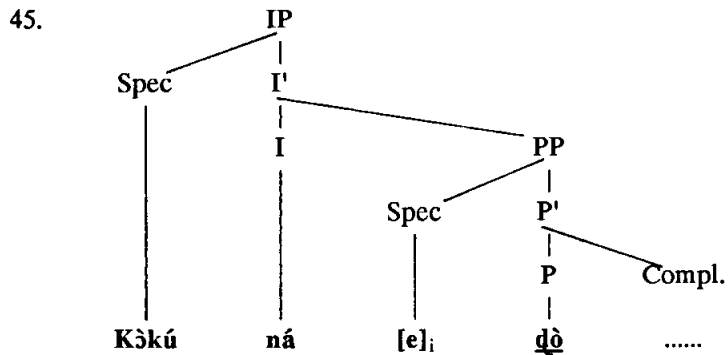
3.2 ANALYSIS

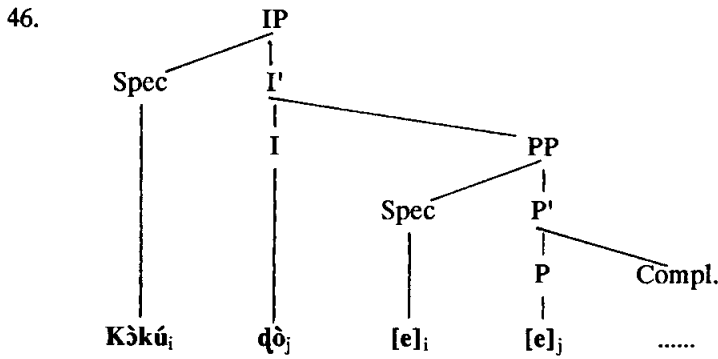
I propose that in Fon as in other languages, INFL selects predicates. The $\text{d}\hat{o}$ phrase is a predicate (locative) and hence the PP headed by $\text{d}\hat{o}$ is selected by INFL in the same way that verbal predicates are selected by INFL. This yields a structure of type 44.



This structure and the general principles of linguistic theory (as in Chomsky, 1981 and related work) account for all the facts described above. The NP in Spec of PP raises to Spec of IP in the same fashion as a NP in Spec of VP raises to Spec of IP.

By virtue of the theory which requires that heads of projections have to be filled at some level of representation (Chomsky, 1981), if there is no tense marker in the head of IP, $\text{d}\hat{o}$ will move to that position, in the same way that verbs raise to that position. The resulting S-Structure will then be as in 45 if the clause contains a tense marker (this accounts for 41b and c), and as in 46 if the clause does not contain a tense marker (this accounts for 39a and b).





The above proposal is supported by a phonological argument. In Fon, the subject and the lexical element occurring in head of INFL, form a tonological domain: the high tone of the subject is propagated onto the predicate as illustrated in 47.

47. /Kòkú yì/ -> [Kòkú yì] 'Koku left'

We observe the same type of high tone propagation when dᵒ fills the head of IP.

48. /Kòkú dᵒ/ -> [Kòkú dᵒ...] 'Koku at...'

For a clause to be a proposition, a Tense operator and a predication relationship between a subject and a predicate are required. Under the assumption that dᵒ, but not kpóᵒᵒ nor sín, is a two place predicate (having a subject in addition to having an object), we derive the fact that dᵒ, but not kpóᵒᵒ nor sín, may occur as the main predicate of the clause.

When dᵒ heads a PP which is adjoined to VP, it is not selected by INFL and consequently it cannot cooccur with a tense marker. This explains the ungrammaticality of 41a. In the same context the subject of dᵒ cannot move to Spec of INFL since the dᵒ phrase is not selected by INFL. This accounts for the ungrammaticality of 40a. I suggest that in this context, the subject of dᵒ is identified with that of the clause and therefore it is not spelled out. The argument supporting this proposal is that the understood subject of dᵒ occurring as head of an adjunct can only be interpreted as being coreferent with that of the main predicate of the clause. Hence the interpretation of 49 can only be 'Koku wrote something (while he was) at the table'; it cannot mean 'Koku wrote something (and something was written) on the table'.

49. Kòkú wlán nú dᵒ távò jí
 Koku write something at table on
 'Koku wrote something at the table'

The analysis presented above makes Fon on a par with other languages where INFL may select a PP in addition to selecting a VP. Hence in these languages locative constructions of type 1a are rendered by means of a prepositional phrase as exemplified in 50 from Haitian Creole.

50. Jan nan cham li a
 John in room his DET
 'John is in his room'

In this section I have argued for a unified analysis of dᵒ 'at' on the basis of four arguments involving, 1) identity of phonological shape, 2) possibility of coordination, 3) the nature of the trace left by extraction of its complement and, 4) meaning. I proposed an analysis which accounts for the differential properties of dᵒ, whether it occurs as a

main predicate or as an adjunct. These differential properties can be naturally derived if in one case **dò** is selected by INFL and if in the other it is not.

4. EVIDENCE FOR CATEGORIAL REANALYSIS OF VERBS AS PREPOSITIONS?

In the light of the data discussed so far, I come back to the more general issue addressed at the beginning. Is there evidence that the prepositions of Fon constitute cases of reanalysis from verbs. Throughout this paper I have shown that in all contexts in which they occur, **dò** 'at', **kpódó** 'with' and **sín** 'from' are prepositions. There is no evidence from the data presented so far that these prepositions are cases of reanalysis from verbs. In this section I consider additional data showing that even when Fon prepositions are semantically related to cognate verbs, they are not a categorial reanalysis of them. I will discuss each in turn.

4.1 **dò** 'AT' AND COGNATE VERB **dó** 'PUT'

dò 'at' is semantically related to the cognate verb **dó** 'put'. Both are locative. Seguro (1963) insists that no movement is involved in the semantic representation of **dò** 'at'. Thus the verb **dó** 'put' is in direct contrast with the preposition **dò** 'at'. **dó** 'put' involves a change of location (Lefebvre, 1989). This meaning contrast is illustrated in 51 and 52.

51. **Kòkú wlán nú dò távò jí**
Koku write something at table on
'Koku wrote something at the table'

52. **Kòkó wlán nú dó wémán jí**
Koku write something put paper on
'Koku wrote something on the paper'

While the meaning of 51 is 'Koku wrote something while he was at the table' (not *'Koku wrote something, the writing was put on the table'), the interpretation of 52 is 'Koku wrote something, the writing was put on paper'. Though both **dó**'s are phonologically similar and involve location, they are distinguishable by at least two features. Phonologically, they bear different lexical tones (low and high respectively). Semantically, one involves no movement, while the other involves a change of location. From a syntactic point of view, **dò** 'at' exhibits the properties of prepositions, while **dó** 'put' shares all the properties of the second verb occurring in a series (Sect. 1). Furthermore, in Sect. 2, it was shown that **dò** 'at' heads a projection which is adjoined to VP when it occurs as a second predicate in a clause, while **dó** 'put' occurs as a second verb in a series within a complex VP (cf.29).

Such distribution shows no evidence that the preposition **dò** 'at' constitutes a case of categorial reanalysis from **dó** 'put'. It rather shows that the two constitute two separate lexical entries in the lexicon distinguished by their underlying tone, their categorial features and their respective meaning.

4.2 **kpódó**, 'WITH'

Lord (1973) reports on a corresponding word in Yoruba, **kpèlú** 'be included among', which she analyzes as a verb. She claims that this verb has been reanalyzed as a preposition. She suggests that: 'Since Fon is a serializing language, and the function and properties of the preposition parallel those in Yoruba and Ewe, it is likely that this preposition (**kpódó**) too evolved from a verb in a serial construction' (Lord, 1973:285). Is there evidence for this claim?

kpóḍo is a complex lexical item formed from the locative preposition **ḍò** 'at' and the preposition **kpó** 'with'. Literally it means 'with at'. The choice of **ḍò** 'at' rather than **ḍó** 'put' as the source item for **kpóḍo** is motivated by the semantics of **ḍò** discussed in 4.1. While **ḍò** 'at' involves no movement, **ḍó** 'put' involves a change of location. Since **kpóḍo** involves no movement, it must involve the preposition **ḍò** rather than the serial verb **ḍó**. Why then a high tone on **-ḍó** in **kpóḍo**? Brousseau (1988) has shown that the tonal pattern high low in two syllable words in Fon is not a legitimate tonal pattern for native words¹². She shows that in similar cases, the high tone of the first syllable is propagated onto the second syllable producing a legitimate tonal pattern high high or high high-low, eg. **végó** 'focus of the vocal cords' which has an underlying tonal pattern /**végò**/.

kpóḍo occurs in combination with a postpositional phrase headed by **kpó** as in 53.

53. **Asíbá kpóḍo Kòkú kpó**
Asiba with Koku with
'Asiba with Koku'

I assume that **kpó** in **kpóḍo** corresponds to this postposition. The postposition **kpó** is cognate to the verb **kpò** 'to remain still' (listed in Seguro, 1963). Note, however, that the postposition **kpó** carries a high tone, while the verb **kpò** carries a low tone. **Kpóḍo** may also occur with a postpositional phrase headed by **kpán** 'with'. From my data, **kpó** and **kpán** appear to be equivalent in meaning.

54. **Asíbá kpóḍo Kòku kpán**
Asiba with Koku with
'Asiba with Koku'

The postposition **kpán** 'with' is also cognate with the verb **kpàn** 'to glue/be glued together'. Note again, however, the contrast in phonological tone between the postposition and the verb. These minimal pairs are of the same type as **ḍò** 'at'/**ḍó** 'put' discussed above.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above facts is that the postpositions which combine with the preposition **kpóḍo** are semantically related to cognate verbs. However, they differ from these verbs by the phonological tone they bear, the syntactic features that define them (cf. sect. 1) and their semantics. It thus appears that the prepositions and their cognate verbs are related in the same way as the French preposition **à travers** 'through' is related to the verb **traverser** 'to cross'. This relationship is not the type of argument that is required to show that a preposition has evolved through syntactic reanalysis of a verbal constituent.

4.3 **sín**, 'FROM'

Seguro (1963) also lists **sín** as a verb meaning 'to begin', 'leave', or 'take a leave'. The sole example he gives is 55.

55. **é sín jí tòwè**
it from top your
'It is your turn'

None of my informants accept this sentence. They all agree that a verb is missing from this clause. They give 56 as the correct version.

¹²The tonal pattern high low appears to be restricted to two syllable loan words such as **távò** 'table' borrowed from Portuguese.

56. é gó sín jí tówè
 it leave from top you
 'It is your turn'

I could not elicit any sentence where *sín* could be used as a verb with the meanings listed in Segurola. The only possible analysis for it is that of preposition.

5. CONCLUSION

I conclude that there is no evidence that these prepositions are cases of syntactic reanalysis from verbs, and claim that the syntactic category preposition is autonomous in Fon. This conclusion is in direct opposition to a proposal along the lines of Lord's that in West African languages, the lexical elements of the category P are all cases of reanalysis of verbs as prepositions and that the category P is therefore a recent development.

In establishing the existence of an autonomous syntactic category P, I have shown that prepositions have properties which clearly distinguish them from (serial) verbs. The phrase they head is either adjoined to VP or to NP, or it is selected by INFL if the head has an appropriate argument structure (eg. *qò* 'at'). The category P is autonomous in this language as it is in other West African languages (cf. Koopman, 1984, who argues for a category P in Vata and Gbadi). Consequently, if it can be shown that some verbs are being reanalyzed as prepositions, these individual cases should be considered to increase the number of lexical items belonging to the category P, rather than to create the category. The analysis proposed in this paper invalidates the widespread assumption that verb serialization is developed in order to compensate for the absence of the lexical category P in particular languages (cf. Bickerton, 1981:120ff).

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