A comparative study of the support verbs *faire, prendre, donner* in French; *make, take, give* in English; and wɔ, tsɔ, na in Ewe

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Abstract
This paper compares three semantically equivalent support verbs in French, English and Ewe (A Ghanaian language from the Kwa sub-group of the Niger-Congo languages). It presents data that shows that support verb constructions in the three languages share some syntactic and semantic similarities. However, the support verb tsɔ in Ewe seems to differ syntactically and semantically from its counterparts prendre and take. We conclude that although the notion of a support verb is a universal phenomenon, their choice is based on the nature of the noun predicate and the appropriateness of that particular support verb to the noun predicate in question. Differences that arise for the same noun predicate may be due to the way the individual languages under study view the world and how they use language to express their conception of the world.

1. Introduction
Verbs that actualize nominal predicates have been studied under the term *support verbs* in several languages including French (Daladier 1978, Giry-Schneider 1987, Ibrahim 1996, Gross 2010) and *light verbs* in English (Jespersen 1954, Kearns 2000, Butt 2003). However, as far as we know, there has been no systematic study of this phenomenon in Ewe. Furthermore, it has been observed that the existing comparative studies do not include any study of light verbs that involves the Ewe language. Butt (2003:18), who has researched on light verbs, presents a list of verbs that are susceptible to be light verbs cross-linguistically. These verbs are *come, go, take, give, hit, throw, rise, fall, do/make*. This paper presents three of these verbs: *do, take, and give* in English and their semantic equivalents in French and Ewe. In this paper, we shall refer to the verbs in question as *support verbs* and constructions in which such verbs appear as *support verb constructions (SVCs)*. Our research is based on the notion that the support verb is a universal phenomenon and is a category that is common to several grammatical traditions even though some of these traditions may not have taken note of this phenomenon (Ibrahim 2010). With reference to the general characteristics of support verbs as they are described in the lexicon-grammar framework (Gross 1975, Ibrahim 2003, Daladier 1996), the purpose of this paper is to investigate the syntactic and semantic similarities and differences and aspectual implications of support verbs in constructions in the three languages. We hypothesize that even though the support verb is likely to be a universal phenomenon, there are likely to be differences in its
manifestation and in its syntactic and semantic roles. The paper is organised as follows. The theoretical framework for the analysis which is the lexicon-grammar framework and the notion of a support verb are briefly outlined in section 2. Section 3 presents the data of the three support verbs in French, English and Ewe respectively while Section 4 discusses the various syntactic and semantic similarities and differences among the support verb constructions in the three languages. Section 5 is the conclusion.

2. The lexicon-grammar framework

We base our paper on the lexicon-grammar framework of Maurice Gross (1975). Based on the assertion that each verb is unique, this framework affirms that there is “...a parallelism between, on the one hand, the differential that enables us to formally distinguish between two verbal entries, based on their syntactic or grammatical functions, and on the other hand, that which differentiates them, but this time with regards to the semantic interpretation given to it by the users of the language”. (Ibrahim 2003: 101). According to this theoretical framework, one cannot dissociate semantics from the formal mechanisms of grammar – mechanisms from which the language creates predication. Within this framework, it is affirmed that: “...language functions as a lexicon-grammar and it is a triple error theoretically, methodologically and practically to have distinct levels of analysis, not to say independent, of vocabulary, syntax and semantics. Thus one cannot say anything well-grounded on vocabulary without having explored the grammar of each word and there are no grammatical rules that are totally independent of lexical particularities of the units to which they are applied”. Ibrahim (2003: 102).

In other words, there is a very close link between vocabulary, syntax and semantics of any language when we are undertaking linguistic analysis and there is no need to separate these three levels of analysis. The lexicon-grammar framework solves this problem of linguistic analysis since it comprises both a conception of the language and a programme for analyzing it. Our choice of this theoretical framework is based on the fact that this framework responds to our observation that grammar and semantics cannot be dissociated when one is undertaking linguistic analysis.

2.1 The support verb

The notion was first presented by Jespersen (1954) as a light verb and later as an operator by Harris (1988) and Gross (1975). These types of verbs were closely linked to nominalizations. This term was renamed les verbes supports (support verbs) by Daladier (Daladier 1978). We choose to maintain the term support verbs since it is currently widely used in both French and English literature and will also help avoid confusion with other definitions of the term ‘light verb’.

More recently the term support verb has been defined as:

« Tout terme plus ou moins délexicalisé ou désémantisé, effaçable au cours d’une restructuration, qui s’associe dans un énoncé à un terme avec lequel il entretient une relation d’appropriation et qu’il actualise en lui donnant une valeur prédicative... » (Ibrahim 2000:85)

This definition is translated as follows:

Any term that has been more or less delexicalized or desemantisized, which can be removed during a restructuring, which in a statement associates itself with another term with which it has a relationship of appropriation and which it actualizes by giving it a predicative value...
Eg. Paul gave a laugh = Paul laughed
Le bébé a fait un rot = le bébé a roté (The baby burped)

One principal characteristic of support verbs within the lexicon-grammar framework is that they actualize noun predicates and thus do not have a predicative function of their own. As a consequence of this first characteristic, they also provide aspectual information concerning the noun predicate. (Gross 1996)

3. Presentation of data
The data presented represents five serial verb constructions for each of the support verbs under consideration, which makes forty-five constructions altogether. In this paper, we concentrate on support verb constructions for which we can have a distributional verb that is equivalent to the noun predicate. For example: To take a bath = to bath.

3.1 Support verbs in French
3.1.1 The support verb faire (to do)
1) Kofi faisait un rêve dans lequel il était un prince (rêver)
2) Le bébé a finalement fait un rot (roter)
3) Le vice-président a fait l’annonce du décès du président (annoncer)
4) Les chercheurs font des analyses des données (analyser)
5) Les pirates font le partage du butin (partager)

3.1.2 The support verb donner (to give)
6) La fille a donné l’alerte immédiatement après le viol (alerter)
7) Le roi a donné l’ordre de verrouiller le portail (ordonner)
8) Le prêtre donne toujours la bénédiction avant de partir (bénir)
9) La secrétaire veut donner sa démission (démissionner)
10) Tom lui a donné des conseils (conseiller)

3.1.3 The support verb prendre (to take)
11) La banque a pris l’engagement de rembourser les clients (s’engager)
12) Il a pris la décision d’épouser la fille (décider)
13) Le directeur veut prendre le contrôle de l’entreprise (contrôler)
14) Les voleurs voulaient prendre la fuite (s’enfuir)
15) J’aimerais prendre une douche maintenant (se doucher)

3.2 Support verbs in English
3.2.1 The support verb make
16) He made the admission to being a secret agent (admit to)
17) Esi made an enquiry at the bank (enquire)
18) The University has made some new appointments this year. (appoint)
19) The couple made arrangements to celebrate Valentine’s Day together (arrange)
20) The couple made preparations for their wedding (prepare)

3.2.2 The support verb give
21) She did not give her consent to the marriage (consent)
22) The entrepreneur has given his backing to his protégé (back)
23) My father gave me a fitting rebuke (rebuke)
24) The story gave comfort to the grieving child (comfort) (Only inanimate subject)
25) Teachers may give advice to their students (advise)

3.2.3 The support verb take
26) We must take action immediately (act)
27) The drivers are taking huge risks with their lives (risk)
28) The supervisors took note of her positive attitude (note)
29) I don’t want to take part in this discussion (participate)
30) We must take another look at this matter. (look)

3.3 Support verbs in Ewe
3.3.1 The support verb wo (to do)
31) Mensa tsɔ aha atukpa deka wo akpedada na ame-wo (da akpe)
32) Asitsala-wo wo takpekpe nyitsɔ (kpe)
33) Amegbetɔ wo vodada dẹ Mawu ȵu (da vo ɖe)
34) Me wo tsadidi yi danye gbɔ le Keta (di tsa)
35) Nyṇuwo wo bablá dẹ wo-srɔ-wo ȵuti (blá)

3.3.2 The support verb na (to give)
36) Maria na kaklá be ye ɖzo (klá)
37) Tɔuoɗɔla na tohehe tɔxeade fiafi ɖa (he to na)
38) Hotsuitɔa na kpekpeŋu ɖekakpuia (kpeŋe ɖu)
39) Yao natsɔsɔke Atsuʃi (tsɔ ke)
40) Mawunyala na ȵusɛdodo ahosia (do ȵusɛ)

3.3.3 The support verb tsɔ (to take)
41) Kwabla tsɔ kutrikuku ɖgɔ dodokpɔa (ku kutri)
42) Kluvi-a tsɔ bubu na e-fe afetɔ (bu)
43) E tsɔ moveviɖoŋo wo ɖo-ɔ (ɖo mevevi)
44) Yohanes tsɔ ɖokuiəbɔbɔ subɔ e-fe afetɔ (bɔbɔ ɖeŋkui)
45) Nyṇu-a tsɔ konyiʃafa yi afe-me (fa konyi)

The data presented above are the examples that we will be using for our analysis and discussion and references to any numbers will be directly related to the order of numbering of the data. Other examples not captured in the data but arising from it will have alphabets attached to the original number to differentiate it from the original. For the sake of space, translations are not provided for the raw data but will be given for French and Ewe examples when these are cited in the analysis and discussion session.

4 Analysis and Discussion
This section presents some semantic and syntactic similarities and differences in the manifestations of the three support verbs that we have selected with regards to particular linguistic phenomena, namely determination, differences in choice of support verbs, the nature of noun predicates actualized by the support verbs, the use of prepositions, the deletion of the complement, the issue of appropriateness and the removal of ambiguity.
4.1 Abbreviations
We briefly present below the various abbreviations and the meanings assigned to them in our syntactic description and analysis.

Ø – empty or null set
N-pred – Noun Predicate
V-sup – Support Verb
N-nr – Unrestricted Noun (Any noun that is not human)
Pro – Pronoun
Det – Determinant
+ – Or
V – Verb

4.2 Determination
It is observed that determination differs across the three languages. Whereas most natural occurrences of support verb constructions in English or French may take definite article, indefinite, partitive or zero articles (19,20,24 and 25), SVCs in Ewe seem to occur naturally without definite or indefinite articles. The zero article seems to be the natural state of SVCs in Ewe. This does not mean that there is no determination in SVCs in Ewe for it is possible to have constructions like:

32) Asitsala-wo wɔ takpekpe ADE nyitsɔ (kpe) – The traders had a CERTAIN meeting two days ago.
41) Kwabla tɔɔ kutrikuku YA nɔ dodokpɔɔ – Kwabla wrote the exam with THIS determination
45) Nyɔnu-a tɔɔ konyifa fa yi afe-me (fa konyi) – The woman went home with THAT sorrow

The absence of definite and indefinite articles in naturally occurring SVCs in Ewe may be due to the fact that it is not a language that is heavily dependent on determination.

Another point worth noting is that determination is not systematic across the languages and where determination occurs in one language it might not occur in the other languages even if there is semantic equivalence and an SVC is possible.

Eg. 10) Tom lui a donné des conseils – Tom gave him some advice

as opposed to:

25) Teachers may give Ø advice to their students

This difference may be due to the conception of the noun predicate in the given language. Whereas the notion of advice may be considered countable in French and thus can be used in the singular and plural forms: un conseil, le conseil, des conseils, it seems to be considered uncountable in English and even though they use the same semantic verb – to give, in English, the best that one can do is give A PIECE OF advice.

4.3 Differences in choice of support verb by noun predicates
One of the observations made is that support verbs differ across languages.
Even though the three verbs occur in all the three languages as support verbs, they do not actualize the same noun predicates.

For example:

French: *La banque m’a fait un prêt de 500 euros*

English: *The bank gave me a loan of 500 euros.*

Ewe: *Banka do 500 euros nam.*

We observe that while *faire* (to make) is used with a loan in French, the support verb used in English is *give*. However, it is not possible to have an equivalent support verb alternative in Ewe but rather a construction with the verb being the predicate. We also see other examples like *faire un rêve* which has the alternative *have a dream* but has an Inherent Complement Verb *ku dre* in Ewe. However, there are also situations in which the same nominal predicates choose the same support verb across the three languages, for example: *make an announcement≡faire une annonce≡wᴐ gbefaɖeqe.* This demonstrates that the choice of a support verb by a noun predicate reveals a type of relationship of appropriateness which varies across languages. It is not uniform across languages and depends largely on the way a particular language perceives a particular concept. This will explain why for example, the French will say *Avoir 20 ans* (HAVE 20 years), the English will say *BE 20 years old* and the Ewes will say *X跛 fe 20* (RECEIVE 20 years).

4.4 The nature of noun predicates actualized by the support verbs

On the whole, when we consider the nature of noun predicates actualized by the support verb in the three languages, we see certain similarities. With the exception of examples 41 to 45 (see page 4), the noun predicates in the sentences in the data gathered are verbal nouns (*rêve – dream, partage – share*), (*appointment, rebuke*) and (*tohehe – punishment*). Typically, the complement of these noun predicates is composed of a preposition and a noun. However, when it comes to the constructions with the support verb *tsᴐ*, the noun predicates are followed by verbs. For example:

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N-hum   V-sup   N-pred   V   N-nr
41)   Kwabla   tsᴐ   kutrikuku   ηɖ   dodokpᴐ
  KWABLA TAKE DETERMINATION WRITE EXAM
  Kwabla wrote the exam with determination.
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In this context, we can say that support verb constructions with *tsᴐ* play different syntactic and semantic roles. The nature of the noun predicates in our examples (*kutrikuku – determination, bubu – respect, movevidoɖo – seriousness, dokuibᴐbᴐ-humility, konyifafa-sorrow*), are such that when combined with the support verb, they behave like adverbs in English and in French. We may call them *support verbs of manner* in that we could either have equivalent transformations in English and French using the connector *with (avec)* or an adverbial form of the noun predicate.

For example:

44a) *Yohanes tsᴐ dokuibᴐbᴐ subᴐ e-fe aʃe ᐧ*
44b) *Yohanes subᴐ e-fe aʃe KPLE dokuibᴐbᴐ*

Yohanes served his master WITH humility
Yohanes served his master HUMBLY

45a) Nyɔnu-a tsɔ konyifafa yi afe-me
45b) Nyɔnu-a yi afe-me KPLE konyifafa
The woman went home WITH sorrow
The woman went home SORROWFULLY.

We posit that when it appears in a construction as a support verb, tsɔ plays the role of connecting a secondary predicate to the primary or main predicate. We could therefore consider the two examples above as compound constructions which could be broken down as follows:

44c) Yohanes subɔ e-fe afe-tɔ (Yohanes served his master)
E bɔbɔ eŋɔkui (He humbled himself)

45c) Nyɔnu-a yi afe-me (The woman went home)
E nɔ konyifam (She was sorrowful)

4.5 The use of prepositions
Prepositions are widely used in support verb constructions to introduce the complements of the noun predicate whereas in constructions with distributional or lexical verb equivalents, these prepositions are not used or disappear altogether. For example:

3) Le vice-président a fait l’annonce du décès DU président
3a) Le vice-président a annoncé Ø le décès du président
4) Les chercheurs font des analyses DES données
4a) Les chercheurs analysent Ø les données
5) Les pirates font le partage DU butin
5a) Les pirates partagent Ø le butin
24) The story gave comfort TO the grieving child
24a) The story comforted Ø the grieving child
25) Teachers may give advice TO their students
26) Teachers may advice Ø their students

This phenomenon seems to occur naturally for the SVCs in English and French. However, our data in Ewe does not seem to admit prepositions (which are usually after the noun). The few occurrences that we have, where prepositions occur seem to be similar to some of the cases in English and French where the prepositions cannot be deleted because they form an integral part of the lexical verb and thus even in a non-support verb construction, these same prepositions appear:
For example:

20) The couple made preparations FOR their wedding
20a) The couple prepared FOR their wedding
31) Mensa tsɔ aha atukpa deka wɔ akpedada NA amewo (Mensa gave thanks TO the people with a bottle of hard liquor)
31a) Mensa da akpe NA amewo kple aha atukpa deka (Mensa thanked the people with a bottle of hard liquor)

33) Amegbetọ wọ vodada ðE Mawu ŋu (Man has committed sin AGAINST God)

33a) Amegbetọ da vo ðE Mawu ŋu (Man has sinned AGAINST God)

4.6 Deletion of Arguments
One of the characteristics of support verb constructions is that the compulsory direct object complement of a distributional transitive verb can be deleted in the corresponding support verb construction. For example:

A) Le vice-président a fait l’annonce Ø hier (The vice-president made the announcement yesterday)
   Le vice-président a annoncé LE DECES du président (The vice-president announced THE DEATH of the president)
B) The University has made some new appointments Ø this year.
   The University has appointed some NEW LECTURERS this year.
C) Maria na kaklá Ø be ye dzo (Maria took leave)
   Maria klá EFOA be ye dzo (Maria took leave of her BROTHER)

4.7 The question of appropriateness
One cannot talk about support verb constructions without raising the issue of appropriateness. This is because the noun predicate selects the support verb that is most appropriate to it. Once again, this may differ from language to language and whereas a particular noun predicate may select more than one support verb, others may accept a more specific counterpart of a generic verb or accept both options.
For example:

10b) Tom lui (A DONNE + *OFFERT) des conseils – Tom (gave+offered) him advice
25b) Teachers may (GIVE + OFFER) advice to their students
41b) Kwabla (TS+K) kutrikuku nǓ dodɔpɔa – Kwabla (took + took) determination to write the exams

It is evident that while it is completely acceptable to offer advice in English, with offer being considered a synonym of give, the same cannot be said for French and therefore the predicate conseil only accepts donner. With the example in Ewe too, it is possible to interchange tsɔ and kɔ since they are synonyms and both mean take. In some instances too, a particular language may use a generic form of the support verb while another language may use a more specific or specialized form. For example:

33) Amegbetọ wọ vodada ḋe Mawu ŋu

can be literally translated Man has DONE sin against God. However, French and English do not use Faire or DO/MAKE as the actualizers of the noun predicate SIN. They both use the specialized verb COMMETRE and COMMIT respectively. A possible explanation for this, based on our research so far is that the Ewe language
seems to contain fewer verb forms than English and French have and therefore more notions are represented by generic verbs whereas French and English seem to have more verb forms and, as a consequence, more options when choosing the most appropriate verbs to actualize their noun predicates.

4.8 SVCs and the removal of ambiguity
One other observation we can make from our data is that sometimes, the use of support verb constructions tend to remove ambiguity in certain instances where the distributional verb can lead to nuanced interpretations. For example:

1a) Kofi faisait un rêve dans lequel il était un prince
1b) Kofi avait un rêve : être un prince
1c) Kofi rêvait d’être un prince

A semantic interpretation of example 1a will give us the idea of Kofi dreaming while asleep while examples 1b and 1c will give us the idea of Kofi imagining, day-dreaming, or having the ambition to become a prince one day. Therefore we can say that 1c is the reduction of 1b but we cannot say that 1 is the reduction of 1c since they are not semantically equivalent. In English, we can use the support verb HAVE for the noun predicate DREAM but we cannot use MAKE to actualize DREAM. We can therefore say:

1d) Kofi had a dream that he was a Prince.

This will be understood as an event that occurred while Kofi was asleep. However, one of the most famous speeches in American history: I have a dream by Martin Luther King Junior is definitely about an ambition or a hope for the future. Let us also consider the following example:

27) The drivers are taking huge risks with their lives
27a) The drivers are greatly risking their lives.

When we compare 27 and 27a, we observe that the semantic interpretation likely to be given for the former is that the drivers are being foolhardy with their lives. However, the latter is more likely to give us either the first interpretation or a second interpretation of the drivers heroically laying down their lives for others. This same phenomenon occurs with examples

13) Le directeur veut prendre le contrôle de l’entreprise (The director wants to take control of the company)
13a) Le directeur veut contrôler l’entreprise (The director wants to inspect the company)
39) Yao na tsɔtsɔke Atsuﬁ (Yao gave + offered Atsuﬁ forgiveness)
39a) Yao tsɔ Atsuﬁ fe nucwo kee. (Yao forgave Atsuﬁ her sins)
39b) Yao tsɔ awua ke Atsuﬁ (Yao gave + offered the dress to Atsuﬁ as a gift)
In 13a, we see that a change from the SVC to the lexical verb leads to a complete change of meaning. In examples 39, 39a and 39b, we notice that when the support verb construction is used in 39, the noun predicate can only mean FORGIVENESS and thus the sin is implicit. However, when the lexical verb is used, the complement has to be specified to distinguish between giving or offering a GIFT and forgiving SIN. We can therefore posit that the use of SVCs can help reduce or remove ambiguity from a given set of information. However, the particular the syntactic and semantic mechanisms vary across languages.

5. Conclusion
This paper has studies three main support verbs and their occurrence in English, French and Ewe. It has been demonstrated that these support verbs share certain universal characteristics. However, there are some differences as far as the choice of a support verb by a given noun predicate is concerned. Secondly, support verb constructions seem to play different semantic and syntactic roles. For example, it has been observed, concerning the support verb tsɔ, that there are marked differences in the syntactic and semantic roles as opposed to take and prendre in English and French.

This paper, which is part of an ongoing doctoral thesis, provides perspectives for further research. First of all, we hope to consider some other verbs that appear as support verbs in all the three languages and compare and contrast these with those verbs that appear as support verbs in one or two of the languages but not in all three languages. We also hope to carry out further studies on the support verbs that appear different in their semantic role, for example, the support verb tsɔ in Ewe. Finally, we envisage proposing how understanding the nature and role of support verb constructions can enhance foreign language teaching and learning.

Bibliography