

# TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF DIE VERBS IN AFRICAN LANGUAGES\*

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**Abstract:** This paper constitutes an essay in comparative lexical semantics and typology, comparing DIE verbs in nine African languages: Arabic, Tigrinya, Hausa, Dinka, Maa, Chindali, Kinyarwanda, Yoruba, and Akan. Cross-linguistically, DIE verbs, although referring to the same human event, differ in their aspectual structure. Primary DIE verbs, representative of Vendler's class of achievement verbs, provide not only an interesting case study of a single lexical verb, but also an excellent exemplar of the class type. The author proposes that the four types of DIE verbs identified also constitute the potential range of all achievement verbs.

## 1. Introduction

Although the experience of dying is common to all humans and, presumably, all natural human languages have at least one word to refer to this common experience, the concept of dying cannot be assumed to be encoded in exactly the same way across different cultures and linguistic communities. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to elucidate differences in DIE verbs across Africa. The reason for focusing on DIE, in particular, is that DIE verbs provide an excellent exemplar of a particular class of verbs, often referred to as inchoatives or achievements. Linguists have long wrestled with the problem of categorizing verbs into coherent classes based on the "aspectual" structure of the events they name. The most familiar and widely cited approach to such classification has been that of Vendler (1967), which recognizes four basic verb classes: states, activities, accomplishments, achievements. States comprise static, non-dynamic situations; all other categories refer to dynamic events. Activities essentially differ from Accomplishments and Achievements in that they are durative, inherently non-terminative (unbounded) events; both of the latter are telic (bounded), Accomplishments durative, Achievements punctual. Typical achievement verbs in English are *find* and *notice*. DIE, too, is typically classified as an achievement verb, i.e., a verb that typically names an event referring to a change in the subject as it makes a transition from one state to another [Dillon 1977, Freed 1980].

The common view of achievement verbs is that they have no temporal structure, i.e., they are "all culmination" and have no duration. Freed (1980), for example, states that "[a]n achievement essentially names an event that has no duration." Binnick (1991: 195), more specifically, states that "[a]n achievement is all culmination; though the achievement is possibly preceded by some activity...the verb refers only to the achievement phase, not to the preceding activity." In this paper, I demonstrate that this view is incorrect; the "achievement phase" of DIE verbs may or may not be preceded by an activity phase and it may or may not be followed by a stative phase. The analysis suggests four different structural types of DIE verbs. I propose that these four types constitute not only the potential range of DIE verbs, but also the range of potential types of achievement verbs. Furthermore, what a DIE verb or what a particular achievement verb encodes as part of its aspectual structure will depend on the particular language.

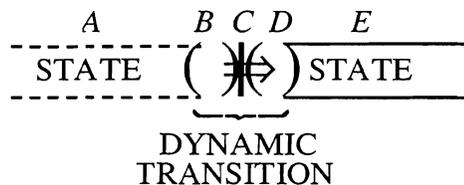
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## 2. The Phasal Analysis of DIE Verbs

The event of dying represents a physical change-of-state that may develop through various stages, as shown in (1). Stage A represents a (potential) state of prolonged illness or injury during which one could speak of a "state of dying". Stage B, on the other hand, represents the commencement of death, a more dynamic stage representing a relatively rapid decline when death is imminent, culminating in stage C, the point of transition to death. Stage D, the denouement of the event, represents entry into the state of death, a stage at which one still thinks of the deceased not as a corpse, but as a sentient person. Finally, stage E represents the ensuing state of death.

(1) Potential stages of the event DIE



[commencement—pivot—denouement]

Although conceptually I have identified five stages of a natural DIE event, it is more appropriate linguistically to analyze basic DIE verbs in terms of three general temporal phases. The crucial and core aspect of the DIE event is the pivotal transition point demarcating life and death. I suggest that all, or nearly all, languages have a basic or primary verb DIE that encodes this point, that is to say, all languages will have a DIE achievement verb. It is this fact that lends weight to the common misperception that achievement verbs such as DIE are "all culmination".

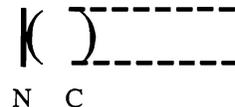
The shared, characteristic phase that all the primary DIE verbs encode is the transitional pivot, a more-or-less punctual pivot that we can treat as a point. This point will be referred to as the *nucleus*, following Freed (1980) and Botne (1983). A preliminary phase preceding the nucleus will be referred to as the *onset*; a postliminary phase following the nucleus will be referred to as the *coda*. Given these three potential distinctions in phasal structure, we arrive at four basic types of temporal fabric for primary DIE verbs, depicted in (2). Notice that the onset phase, as in (2b) may comprise either or both the state and dynamic commencement. Likewise, as in (2c), the coda phase may encode the dynamic denouement or the state of death.

(2) Potential temporal structures of (basic) DIE verbs

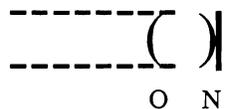
a. Nucleus alone: TYPE N



c. Nucleus plus a coda: TYPE Nc



b. Nucleus plus an onset: TYPE oN



d. Nucleus plus an onset, and a coda: TYPE oNc



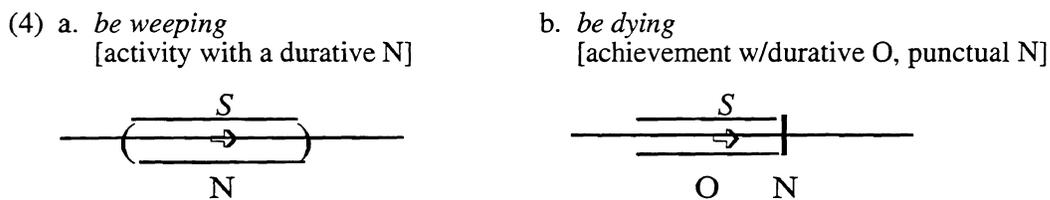
In the simplest case—that which represents the typical view of an achievement event—the verb refers only to the transitional nuclear pivot, as in (2a), which I label here Type N. That is, the verb encodes the event as a point with no perceived temporal duration. Typical examples in English are *find* and *notice*. In the second case, Type oN, the verb encodes not only the nuclear pivot, but also a durative onset phase that indexes the imminent coming-to-be of the inherent point of death and, optionally, a state of dying, as shown in (2b). The third structural type, Type Nc, shown in (2c), encodes the point of death and a coda phase, but no onset. The coda may comprise the initial dynamic postliminary stage of death (stage D above), the ensuing state of death (stage E), or both. Finally, all three phases may be encoded, as represented in (2d). I will demonstrate that all four of these temporal types are instantiated cross-linguistically in African languages.

Some languages have lexicalized various stages of the DIE event as separate verbs. In Kinyarwanda, for example, stage B is lexicalized as *gu-samba*, a verb which does not encode the transition point between life and death.

Before moving to the main discussion of DIE in African languages, it is useful to consider briefly the case of English *die*. Unlike *find* and *notice*, which are truly punctual achievements (and, hence, Type N verbs), *die* is representative of Type oN encoding; that is, the verb encodes an onset phase and nucleus. Evidence for this claim comes from several areas. First, *die* occurs in the progressive, unlike *find* and *notice*. That is, the progressive in English encodes a perspective at some point in the event prior to end of the nuclear phase. Hence, *The old man is dying* indicates a point in the onset phase leading up to the point of death (the nucleus of *die*). The use of the progressive with *die* differs from that with activity and accomplishment verbs in the type of entailment each permits.

- |        |                                |   |
|--------|--------------------------------|---|
| (3) a. | ACTIVITY<br>entails            | <i>The old woman is weeping.</i><br><i>The old woman has wept.</i>                                      |
| b.     | ACCOMPLISHMENT<br>entail       | <i>The old man is recovering (from an illness).</i><br><i>The old man has recovered somewhat.</i>       |
| c.     | ACHIEVEMENT<br>does not entail | <i>The old man is dying.</i><br><i>*The old man has died.</i><br><i>*The old man has died somewhat.</i> |

This difference in entailment follows directly from differences in the aspectual phase structure of these verb types and the function of the English progressive. Activities and accomplishments each have a durative event nucleus, whereas the achievement verb has a punctual event nucleus. The English progressive introduces a phase internal perspective prior to the final edge of the event nucleus. Hence, with activities and accomplishments, the aspectual perspective at R<sub>1</sub>, the deictic reference center (understood as S, the speech event, unless otherwise indicated), is somewhere in the event nucleus. With achievement *die*, it must be in the onset phase, since the final edge of the nucleus is the nucleus itself, a consequence of its punctual nature. These differences are schematically represented for *weep* (activity) and *die* (achievement) in (4). A Type N achievement verb such as *find* cannot occur with a semelfactive reading in the progressive because it comprises only a punctual nucleus and no onset phase, hence, there is no durative interval in which to introduce an internal perspective. Since *die* does not encode a coda phase, the state of death is indicated by use of the related adjective *dead*.



We turn now to DIE in African languages, beginning with Afroasiatic languages in the north-east, moving south to Nilotic and Bantu languages, and then shifting to West Africa for several other Niger-Congo.

### 3. Afroasiatic languages (Arabic, Tigrinya, Hausa)

#### 3.1. Egyptian Arabic (West Semitic)

In Egyptian Arabic, the root *mwt* behaves very much like English *die*. It occurs readily in a progressive construction (5a) just as non-achievement verbs do (5b).

- (5) a. *bi-y-muut.* 'he is dying.'  
 PROG-3S.M.PRES-die  
 b. *bi-yi-bki.* 'he is crying.'  
 PROG-3S.M.PRES-cry
- (6) a. *mat.* 'he died.'  
 die.PST.3S.M  
 b. *beka.* 'he cried.'  
 cry.PST.3S.M

In order to refer to the resultant state of death, Egyptian Arabic, like English, requires an adjectival form such as *mawayit* (7). Although *mawayit* 'dead' is clearly related to the verb root *mwt* 'die', just as *dead* is related to *die* in English, *mwt* cannot be used to refer to the state of death; only the adjectival form can do so. Hence, we can conclude that *mwt*, like English *die*, is a Type oN verb encoding an onset phase and a punctual nucleus, but no coda.

- (7) a. *mawayit.* 'he is dead.' / 'a dead person'  
 dead.3S.M  
 b. *kalbun mawayit* 'a dead dog'

### 3.2 Tigrinya (South Semitic)

In Tigrinya, the cognate root *moit* occurs in the progressive (8), like activity verbs. However, here it means just at this moment; it does not specify the onset phase leading up to the point of death. In matrix past constructions, whether affirmative or negative (9), the verb is interpreted as either dynamic *died* or stative *be dead*.

- (8) a. *ti-moit all-a.* 'she is dying (just now).'  
 3S.F-die be-3S.F  
 b. *ti-beḫi all-a.* 'she is crying.'
- (9) a. *(timali) moit-a.* '(yesterday) she died.' / 'she's dead.'  
 yesterday die-3S.F  
 b. *ai-mot-et-in.* 'she didn't die.' / 'she isn't dead.'  
 NEG-die-F.PST-NEG

The fact that *moit* has only an immediate reading in the progressive and either the dynamic or stative reading in the past suggests that it is a Type Nc verb, that is, one that encodes a punctual nucleus plus a postliminary coda phase. Additional support for this view is found in the examples in (10). In (10a), the speaker measures time of the state of death over five years. More specifically, in (10b), stative *be dead*—indexing a coda—is the obligatory reading of the first occurrence of *moit*, while the second, in a subordinate clause, must have a dynamic reading.

- (10) a. *kab ti-moit hamushte amit ger-a.*  
 from 3S.F-die five year do-3S.F  
 'she has been dead five years.'  
 [LIT. from her dying/death, five years she has done]
- b. *moit-a iy-a gin maʔas kəm zi mot-et ai-fəlit'-en iy-e.*  
 die-3S.F COP-3S.F but when as REL die-PST NEG-know-NEG COP-1S  
 'she's dead but I don't know when she died.'

### 3.3 Hausa (Chadic)

There are several verbs used to refer to dying in Hausa, the most common being *mutu*. However, in some dialects it is not commonly used for humans; rather, a more polite euphemistic expression is used. For the purposes of comparison, I have opted not to examine euphemistic forms, which appear

to behave at times differently from original verbs. Hence, I focus here on the verb *mutu*, a form cognate with the Arabic and Tigrinya verbs.

*Mutu* appears to behave more like its cognate *mwt* in Arabic than *moit* in Tigrinya. Like activity verbs such as *huta* 'rest' (11a), it occurs in a progressive Type N construction based on a verbal noun (11b). As in Arabic, this construction can be interpreted as the onset leading up to the point of death, not just the point of death itself, as in Tigrinya. More precisely, it refers only to Stage B in which death is imminent, usually within a few hours.

- (11) a. *yanà hutā-wà* 'he is resting.'  
3.M.CONT rest-VN
- b. *wannàn rāgō yanā mutu-wà ne* 'this ram is dying.'  
this ram 3.M.CONT die-VN ??

The completive construction (12) refers to the completion of the dynamic action of an event, hence, *he (has) rested* or *he (has) died*. A common translation of (12b) is *he is dead*; however, that seems to be an implication, rather than an encoded meaning. Evidence for this is found in the examples in (13)-(14) in which a stative form *màce* 'dead state' contrasts with dynamic continuous and completive forms.

- (12) a. *yā hūtā* 'he (has) rested.'  
3.M.CMPL rest
- b. *yā mutù (jiya)* 'he (or it) (has) died (yesterday).'  
3.M.CMPL die yesterday [→ 'he (or it) is dead.']
- (13) a. *nā tāraā-da (shi) yanā mutu-wà.*  
1M.CMPL find-GR.5 him 3.M.CONT die-VN  
'I found him dying.'
- b. *nā tāraā-da (shi) yā mutù.*  
1M.CMPL find-GR.5 him 3.M.CMPL die-VN  
'I found him (he) having died.'
- c. *nā tāraā-da shi à mâce*  
1M.CMPL find-GR.5 him PREP dead.state  
'I found him dead.'
- (14) a. *kō dà na iso yā mutù.*  
even when 1S.REL. CMPL arrive 3.M.CMPL die  
'even when I arrived, he had died (already).'
- b. *kō dà na iso yanà à mâce.*  
even when 1S.REL. CMPL arrive 3.M.CMPL PREP dead.state  
'even when I arrived, he was dead.'

Finally, as in Tigrinya, reference to the elapsed time since death occurred may be indicated with the verb *mutu*, but such a construction (15a) refers to the dynamic point of death; it does not "measure" the duration of a state. On the other hand, the construction in (15b) refers to the length of time in the death state.

- (15) a. *yā yi shēkarā biyaā dà ya mutù.*  
3.M.CMPL do years five since 3.M.REL.CMPL die  
'it has been five years since he died.'  
[LIT. he did five years since he died]
- b. *yā dadē à mâce*  
3.M.CMPL be.long.time PREP dead.state  
'he has been dead a long time.'  
[LIT. he has been long time in dead state]

In sum, Hausa *mutu* must be considered to encode a dynamic onset phase and nucleus, but no coda phase. Hence, it is a Type oN achievement verb like Arabic *mwt*.

#### 4. Nilo-Saharan (Dinka, Maa)

##### 4.1. Dinka (Western Nilotic)

Although the Dinka verb *thou* appears to have a progressive reading (16), this would be better translated as *he dies*. That is, it really doesn't refer to an onset phase as noted in Arabic and Hausa, but rather to the point of transition alone, as noted for Tigrinya.

- (16) (*tik*) *a thou*. 'she is dying (just now).'  
3S.F IND die

Furthermore, the data in (17)-(18) show that it does encode a stative coda phase. Note that *a-ci thou* (17a-b) means either *died* or *be dead*. It does not simply implicate *be dead*. This can be seen by the fact that there are two different negative forms (Nebel 1948). In (18a), we see that the stative reading takes *ci* as negative marker, but the simple dynamic past takes *kec*, whether for achievement or activity verb (18b-c). Hence, Dinka *thou* is a Type Nc verb.

- (17) a. *wər thaan tik a-cí thou*  
yesterday in.evening 3S.F IND-PST die  
'she died yesterday evening.'
- b. (*tik*) *a-cí thou*. 'she is dead.'
- c. (*tik*) *a-cí rak*. 'she milked.'  
3S.F IND-PST milk
- (18) a. (*tik*) *a-cì thou* 'she is not dead.'  
IND-NEG
- b. (*tik*) *a-kec thou* 'she did not die.'  
3S.F IND-NEG die
- c. (*tik*) *a-kec rak*. 'she did not milk.'  
3S.F IND-NEG milk

##### 4.2. Maa (Eastern Nilotic)

Maa presents an interesting case for two reasons: First, data from two dialects—Maasai and Camus—can be compared; and second, in each of these dialects there are complementary primary verbs.

###### 4.2.1. Maasai dialect

In Maasai (Tucker & Mpaayei 1955 and D. Payne p.c.), the root *-ye*, in comparison with the activity verb *-rany* 'sing' (19)-(20), does not easily accept the progressive suffix *-ita*. Rather, in order to express the onset to death, one must employ an auxiliary verb, as shown in (21), referring specifically to that phase. *-ye* can be used in the past (22), but has a punctual interpretation only and does not refer to the state of death.

- (19) a.  $\varepsilon$ -*yé* 's/he dies/will die.'  
3S-die
- b.  $\varepsilon$ -*rány* 's/he sings/will sing.'
- (20) a.  $\acute{\varepsilon}$ -*yé-ítà* 's/he is dying (just now).  
3S-die-PROG [rare; not accepted by all speakers; Doris Payne, p.c.]
- b.  $\varepsilon$ -*rány-ita* 's/he is singing.'

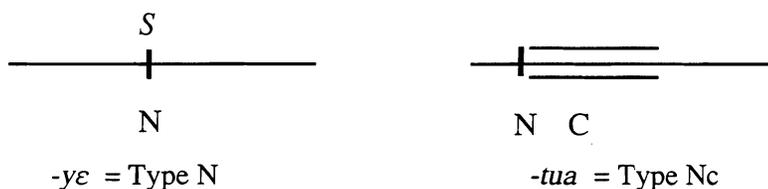
- (21) *k-é-gíra a-yé.* 's/he is dying.'  
DIS-3S-do.slowly INF.S-die
- (22) a. *n-é-ye te ínè.* 'it died just there (that instant).'  
?-3S-die PRT there
- b. *...nétòn aké náíkítójà ajó néjà, néye, néihúnyè.*  
the hare went on saying like that, she died, that is the end.'

In opposition to *-ye* is *-tua* (23). As shown by the examples in (24)-(25), it refers to the state of death.

- (23) *tua* 'die!, drop dead!'
- (24) *e-túá.* 's/he is dead.'  
3S-die
- (25) *k-e-tu-a olásúraí?* 'is the snake dead?'  
*èitù e-ye.* 'it is not dead [LIT. it did not die]'

In the Maasai dialect, then, we can say that *-ye* is punctual—consisting solely of a nucleus—and, hence, is a Type N verb (26a), while *-tua* encodes a punctual nucleus and stative coda, and, hence, is a Type Nc verb (26b).

- (26) a. *-ye* [achievement w/punctual N]      b. *-tua* [achievement w/punctual N, durative C]



#### 4.2.2. Camus dialect

Like the Maasai dialect, the Camus dialect (data from König 1993) also has two primary DIE verbs, *-tenja* (27) and *-tua*. Unlike its counterpart *-ye*, *-tenja* can occur with the progressive suffix (28). Notice as well, in (29), that in the past it does not mean *died*, but rather 'approaching death'. I suggest that these facts mean that *-tenja* is an accomplishment verb rather than an achievement verb. That is, the characteristic, or nuclear, phase is not a transitional point, but a durative interval, which has an inherent coda in death.

- (27) *k-ε-tenja táatá / táisére* 's/he is dying now/will die tomorrow.'  
PRT-3S-die now / tomorrow
- (28) a. *k-ε-tenj-íta* 's/he is (in the process of) dying.'  
PRT-3S-die-PROG
- b. *k-é-lép-ító n-kiteŋ.* 's/he is milking a cow.'  
PRT-3S-milk-PROG F-cow
- (29) a. *k-ε-tenja ŋolé.* 's/he would almost have died yesterday.'  
PRT-3S-die yesterday
- b. *k-ε-tenja apá kaké eitú ε-tenja*  
PRT-3S-die for.long.time but NEG 3S-die  
's/he was close to dying for a long time, but didn't die.'

*-tua*, on the other hand, appears to behave just as its cognate does in the Maasai dialect. It refers either to the point of transition, as in (30b-c) or to the state of death, as in (30a).

- (30) a. *e-twa* 's/he is dead.'  
 3S-die  
 b. *e-twa táata.* 's/he has just died.'  
 now  
 c. *e-twa ḡolé.* 's/he died yesterday.'  
 yesterday

We can conclude from these facts, then, that *-tenja* is an accomplishment with an internal structure such as that in (31a), while *-tua* is a Type Nc achievement verb having the structure in (31b).

- (31) a. *-tenja* [accomplishment w/durative N, inherent termination]  
 b. *-tua* [achievement w/punctual N, durative C]
- 
- tenja* = ACCOMPLISHMENT                      -*tua* = Type Nc

### 5. Niger-Congo (Kinyarwanda, Chindali; Akan, Yoruba)

Turning now to the Niger-Congo phylum, we examine first two eastern Bantu languages before moving to Defoid and Kwa languages in West Africa.

#### 5.1. Kinyarwanda (Bantu; Rwanda)

The primary DIE verb in Kinyarwanda is *-pfa*. Like several of the languages previously described, we see that, although *-pfa* occurs in the “simple present” construction (32) like activity verbs, it means either that death is occurring right at that moment or it will occur later in the day. Furthermore, with the progressive construction (33), it is ungrammatical. This indicates that *-pfa* does not encode an onset phase.

- (32) a. *Rwabugire a-ra-pfa.*  
 R. 3S-PR-die  
 ‘Rwabugire is dying (just now)/will die (later today).’  
 b. *Rusiya a-ra-hiinga.*  
 R. 3S-PR-hoe  
 ‘Rusiya is hoeing/will hoe (later today).’
- (33) a. *A-ri mu gu-hiinga.*  
 3S-is in to-hoe  
 ‘S/he is hoeing.’  
 b. \**A-ri mu gu-pfa.*

One can refer to the activity leading up to death, but only by using an auxiliary verb such as *-reenda* ‘be about to’ (34a) or a different verb (34b)-(35b). On the other hand, *-pfa* does encode the state of death, as shown in (35a); hence, it is a Type Nc verb with punctual nucleus and stative coda. The verb *-saamba* ‘lie dying’ refers to Stage B of DIE and is an activity verb here.

- (34) a. *Rwabugire ni indeembe, a-r-eenda gu-pfa.*  
 R. is dying.person, 3S-PR-be.about.to to-die.  
 ‘Rwabugire is terminally ill; he’s about to die.’  
 b. *Umwaana wa Rwabugire a-ra-reemb-ye.*  
 child of R. 3S-PR-become.deathly.ill-COMP  
 ‘Rwabugire’s child is dying/incurably ill.’

- (35) a. *Rwabugire a-ra-pfuu-ye;*  
 R. 3S-PR-die-COMP  
 'Rwabugire is dead;  
 b. *y-aa-pfuu-ye a-ma-ze imiinsi ibili a-saamba.*  
 3S-PST-die-COMP 3S-finish-COMP days two 3S-lie.dying  
 'he died after having lain dying for two days.'

### 5.2. Chindali (Bantu; Malawi)

Chindali *-fwa*, cognate with Kinyarwanda *-pfa*, differs in that it can reference an onset phase. In the present construction (36a), it may refer to the phase leading up to death, not just the moment of transition to death. The examples in (37) and (38) show that there is a difference between referring to the point of death (37) and to the state of death (38). Hence, we must conclude that Chindali *-fwa* is a Type oNc verb, encoding both an onset and a coda.

- (36) a. *a-kú-fw-a.* 's/he is dying/will die.'  
 3S-PRES-die-FV  
 b. *a-kú-lim-a.* 's/he is hoeing.'  
 (37) a. *a-aa-fw-ííle míumasuba.* 's/he died yesterday.'  
 3S-PST-die-COMP yesterday  
 b. *a-aa-lim-íte m' masuba.* 's/he hoed yesterday.'  
 (38) a. *a-fw-ííle* 's/he is dead.'  
 3S-die-COMP  
 b. *a-lim-íte* 's/he hoed (earlier today).'  
 3S-hoe-COMP

### 5.3. Yoruba (Defoid)

Yoruba *ku* does not permit use with the progressive marker *n* (39b) as do activity verbs; hence, it does not encode an onset. It can be used with an auxiliary verb (40) and in perfect and past constructions (41) to indicate that the transitional point is about to or has occurred. However, the state of death appears to be an implication rather than an encoded feature (42)-(43). Mention of length of time since death requires reference to the point of death, not to the current state (44).

- (39) a. *ó ñ kọrin* 's/he is singing.'  
 3S PROG sing  
 b. *\*ó ñ kú* (s/he is dying)  
 die  
 (40) *òun máa to kú.* 's/he will soon die.'  
 3S FUT sufficient die [LIT. she will reach point to die]  
 (41) a. *ó ẹ̀ẹ̀ẹ̀ kú.* 's/he has just died.'  
 3S just die  
 b. *ó kú lánàá.* 's/he died yesterday.'  
 3S die yesterday  
 (42) *ó ti kú, ó ti kú* 's/he has died (→ is dead).'  
 3S PF die

- (43) a. *òun kò kú.* 's/he did not die (→ is not dead).'  
           3S NEG die  
       b. *òun kò ti kú.* 's/he has not died (→ is not dead).'  
 (44) *ó ti kú láti ọdún méjì séhìn.* 'she has been dead for two years.'  
           3S PF die from year two past [LIT. she has died from two years past]

These facts for Yoruba, then, lead us to conclude that *ku* is a Type N verb.

#### 5.4. Akan (Kwa)

In Akan (Asante dialect), *wu*, cognate with Yoruba *ku*, may occur in the progressive (45b), when death is imminent, for example, when someone is critically ill or wounded. Hence, *wu* encodes a dynamic onset phase. In (46)-(48), we have evidence that it also encodes a stative coda phase. In the perfect construction (46), it has either the dynamic reading 'has died' or the stative reading 'is dead'. In some contexts, however, such as those in (47), it appears to have just the stative reading. Finally, in (48), the time adverbial 'two years' in the perfect construction provides a measure of the duration of the state, while in the past construction (48b) it provides a measure of the time since the transitional point occurred.

- (45) a. *ɔ-re-didi.* 's/he is eating.'  
           3S-PROG-eat  
       b. *ɔ-re-wu.* 's/he is dying (imminent).'  
           3S-PROG-die  
 (46) a. *w-a-dí.* 's/he has eaten.'  
           3S-PF-eat  
       b. *w-a-wu.* 's/he has died.' or 's/he is dead.'  
           3S-PF-die  
 (47) a. *me-hu-u no na w-a-wu* 'I found him/her dead.'  
           1S-see-PST 3S FOC 3S-PF-die  
       b. *w-a-wu nso me-n-nim bere a ɔ-wu-i-ε.*  
           3S-PF-die but 1S-NEG-know time which 3S-die-PST-COMP  
           's/he is dead but I don't know when s/he died.'  
 (48) a. *w-a-wu beye m-feε mienu ni* 's/he has been dead for about two years.'  
           3S-PF-die for.about PL-year two this  
       b. *o-wu-i m-feε mienu ni* 's/he died two years ago.'  
           3S-die-PST PL-year two this [LIT. s/he died two years this]

In sum, Akan *wu* must be considered a Type oNc verb, encoding a dynamic onset phase as well as a stative coda phase.

#### 6. Comparative summary

I have shown in the preceding discussion that primary DIE verbs, typically achievement verbs, come in four types. The cognate forms in Afroasiatic suggest a historical Type oN structure; those in Nilotic a Type Nc structure. The roots *-yε* and *-tɛnʒa* in the two Maa dialects appear to be later innovations and differ in type. Tigrinya Type Nc may have been influenced areally. Niger-Congo poses a mixed bag, although the four forms are all cognate. Perhaps \**ku* was historically Type oNc. Kinyarwanda, I believe, has been influenced by Nilotic sufficiently to have adopted Type Nc status for *-pfa*. On the other hand, I can't account for Type N status in Yoruba.

(49) Afroasiatic:

Arabic	<i>mwt</i>	Type oN
Tigrinya	<i>moit</i>	Type Nc
Hausa	<i>mutù</i>	Type oN

(50) Nilotic:

Dinka	<i>thou</i>	Type Nc
Maa:		
Maasai	<i>-tua</i>	Type Nc
	<i>-ye</i>	Type N
Camus	<i>-tua</i>	Type Nc
	<i>-tenja</i>	Accomplishment

(51) Niger-Congo:

Akan	<i>-wu</i>	Type oNc
Yoruba	<i>kú</i>	Type N
Bantu:		
Kinyarwanda	<i>-pfa</i>	Type Nc
Chindali	<i>-fwa</i>	Type oNc

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, my general claim is that all languages will have at least one DIE verb that encodes the transitional pivot (stage C) as part of its meaning. This verb I consider to be the basic or primary DIE verb, given more than one (non-euphemistic) DIE verb in a language. Languages will differ, then, in three ways: (1) which of the potential stages noted above the primary DIE verb encodes; (2) whether there are secondary DIE forms that refer to stages not encoded in the primary verb; (3) whether these secondary forms, where they occur, are verbs, verbal nouns, or adjectives.

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