

A FORMAL AND SEMANTIC STUDY
OF THE IGBO VERBAL PIECE

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN LINGUISTICS

by

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1978



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It will be self-evident, as soon as one begins to read this thesis, that I cannot escape obligations to many scholars on whose works the thesis has drawn very heavily. The previous works on the Igbo language, and the traditions established within the compass of linguistics by linguistics scholars constitute the veritable mine of information for the present study.

Many of these sources of information are acknowledged where they are recognised or remembered, but many a turn of phrase or argument may have been unconsciously incorporated without acknowledgement. For that reason, it seems appropriate to make a general acknowledgement to all and sundry who, by any manner of means, may have contributed to the growth and development of the thesis.

The steadfastness and boundless zeal and enthusiasm with which the study has been carried through have been generated in no small measure by the challenging, but inspiring, words of Carnochan and Belonwu (1963), "And today, the Igbo who has attained even the very highest of academic distinctions in the universities cannot be said to be properly educated if he is unable to make the best possible use of his mother tongue."

Only those who know with what contempt and scorn the majority of the "educated" Igbo people look on their mother tongue can appreciate the challenge and the inspiration carried by those words. In the course of the present research, I came across no fewer than three Igbo people in London who would not converse with me in Igbo because, according to them, they had difficulty in speaking the language!

On the other hand, however, I met many native Igbo speakers who showed unparalleled readiness and willingness not only to discuss, but also to answer, any questions about the language. To such Igbo people, who elucidated some problematic cases of usage, I owe particular indebtedness.

Specific indebtedness is due to Professor J. Carnochan whose incisive criticisms and extraordinary patience, interest and co-operation in our numerous sessions sustained my own interest from start to finish; Professor C. E. Bazell who with his diligence and scholarly attitude as well as what Dr R. Kempson has called "his unique wealth of experience" and knowledge made himself available to me at any time and place to answer my questions; Mr F. D. D. Winston from whose initial disagreements and subsequent agreements on specific points I benefitted immensely; Professor M. J. C. Echeruo who instilled in me the importance of further research; the Government of the then East Central State of Nigeria which gave me a grant for the research, and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka for granting me leave with pay for the purpose of the study.

ABSTRACT

The present research is the study of the Igbo verbs in general, and the Achi dialect in particular. It concentrates on the forms and meanings of the verbs.

It, therefore, makes original contributions to the linguistic study of the language from end to end, but especially in the areas of lexical and syntactic differences between the Achi dialect and the Onicha and Owere dialects, the semantic and serial classification of the infinitives and their uses, the five auxiliaries (Most works on Igbo have hitherto recognised only ga and na as the auxiliaries of the language. It is only Professor Carnochan (1966) who added ji to ga and na), the lexical structure in which is studied the polysemic and homonymous nature of the verbs on one hand, and the synonyms and antonyms on the other.

The study comprises an introduction and seven chapters.

The introduction sets out the peculiarities of the dialect from lexical, syntactic and semantic view points, and indicates that tone is a significant feature of the Igbo language.

Chapter I provides an insight into the morphology of the verb: roots and the affixes, and the serialisation of the suffixes.

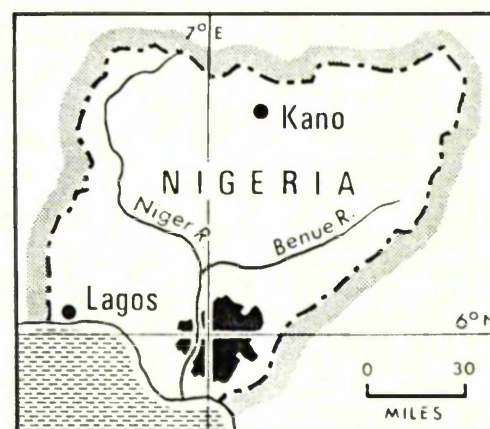
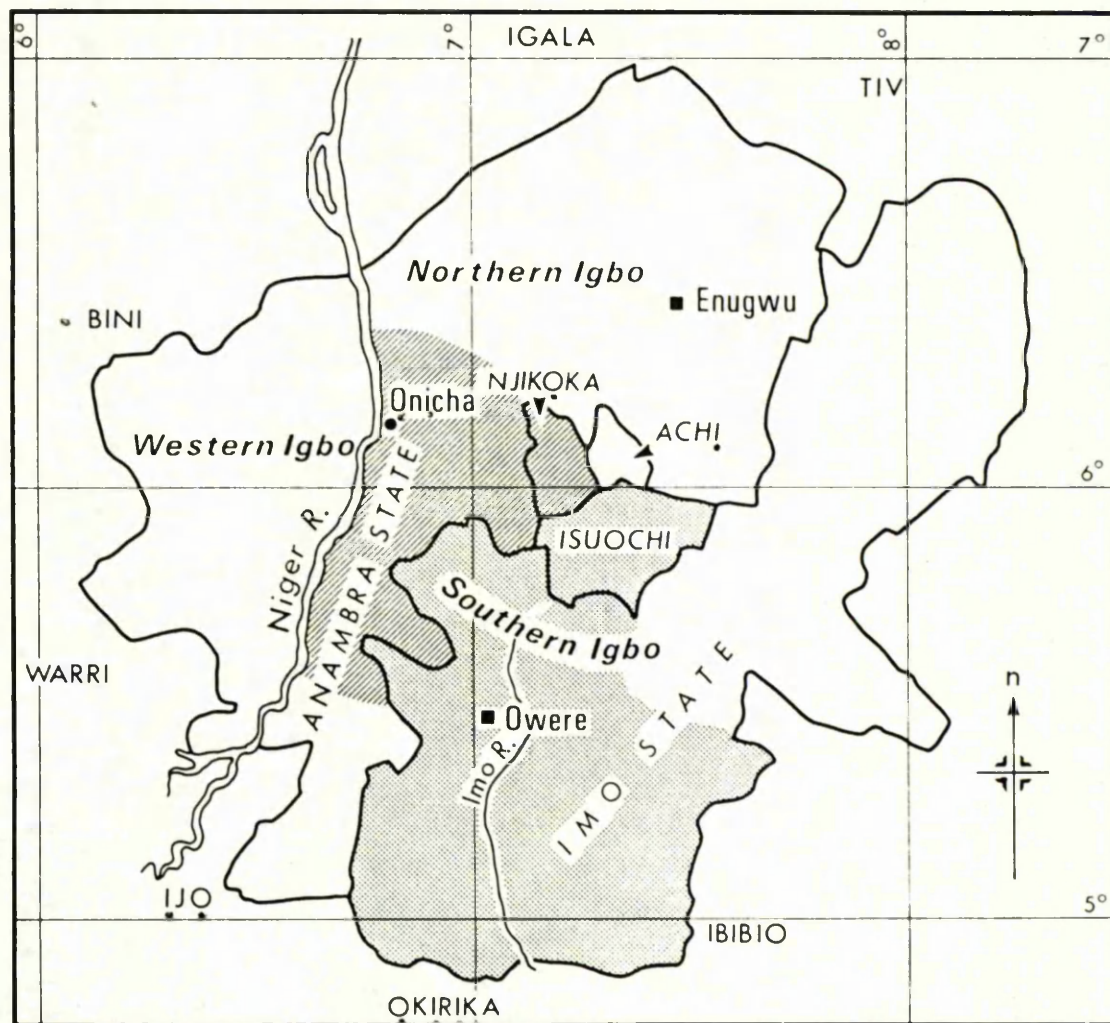
Chapter II studies the finite and non-finite verb forms and meanings. It embodies the uses of the infinitives, the distributional convergence and divergence between the infinitives and the gerunds, and the tonal differences between them.

Chapter III studies the auxiliaries and their uses, and shows that they can be used as full verbs.

Chapter IV deals with the verbs in terms of mood and tense in positive and negative sentences and paradigms.

Chapter V discusses the verb phrase in simple and complex sentences, and in special registers including idioms and "depejorativization",

Chapter VI deals with the lexical structure of the verbs exemplified by polysemy and homonymy; and Chapter VII continues semantic relations in terms of synonymy and antonymy.



The Igbo-speaking Areas of Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Verbal Piece, as used in the title of this thesis, is used in the same sense as Professor Carnochan (1970) used it in his Categories of the Verbal Piece in Bachama. It is intended to be a more comprehensive term than Verbal Phrase in that it makes allowance for the study of not only the verb word but also the "elements corresponding to terms in categories set up for" infinitival - and clause - types as on page 59 and in chapter 5. The exponents in these and some other sections of the thesis, as one will see, extend beyond the verbal phrase.

The study of the Igbo verbal piece in some respects equally extends beyond the present work. Igbo has many dialects. Although a standard Igbo dialect propped up by the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation and the Anambra and Imo States' Broadcasting Services is in use in the townships and educational institutions throughout Igbo country, the description set out in this study is based mainly on the Achi dialect. This is so because Achi is the dialect of the author. Apart from the examples taken from books and from speakers of other dialects, the main body of this work concerns the Achi dialect.

There are, therefore, three sources of information for the work:

- a) Books written on the Igbo language;
- b) Native speaker informants, and
- c) The analyst himself.

Achi has similarities with the Onicha and the Owere dialects which are spoken in areas adjacent to it (as can be seen from the map on page 6) and has also retained characteristics peculiar to itself.

I am here drawing attention to those characteristics which are in terms of negation, certain lexical items and tone.

Negation

In the Onicha and Owere dialects, the negative particles are: - ro/ - na, and - ghi/ - la respectively. In the Achi dialect, the respective negative particles are: - ha and - la. The following sentences exemplify the use of the negative particles in each of the dialects.

| ACHI | ONICHA | OWERE |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Ǿ dúhò</p> <p>It is not</p> <p>(available)</p> <p>Ǿ béhe</p> <p>It did not</p> <p>cry</p> <p>Ábíàlá</p> <p>Do not come</p> | <p>Ǿ díró</p> <p>Ǿ bérò</p> <p>Ábíàná</p> | <p>Ǿ díghì</p> <p>Ǿ bégghì</p> <p>Ábíàlá</p> |

Lexical Items

There are a few words used in the Achi dialect which are not met in the other dialects. Such words include:

| ACHI | OTHERS |
|--------------|-------------------|
| Èé? | Ònyé? |
| Who? | Who? |
| Kôlé? | Èbéé? |
| Where? | Where? |
| Njî? | Kedü? ----- What? |
| What? | Gîni? |
| Nnú? | What? |
| What? | |
| Èréle | Kîta à, ùgbú à |
| Now | Now |
| jí - husband | dí - husband |

Tone

Achi uses low-rising (LR) tone where other dialects use only high or low tone, and high-falling (HF) tone where other dialects use only high tone as exemplified by the sentences which follow:

| | ACHI | OTHERS |
|--------------|--|------------------------------|
| LR → L as in | <p>Ŏ dühò</p> <p>It is not (available)</p> | <p>Ŏ díró/ Ŏ díghì</p> |
| LR → H as in | <p>Ě re yà mü bìá?</p> <p>If it is sold shall I come?</p> <p>(= Shall I come when it is sold?)</p> | <p>É le / re yà mü bìà á</p> |
| HF → H as in | <p>Ô fuó!</p> <p>It has germinated!</p> | <p>Ó può/fuò!</p> |

These peculiarities of the dialect indicate that despite the impact the Onicha and the Owere dialects have made on Achi, the latter still retains features that constitute it as a separate dialect.

Tone Marking

There are five tone marks used in this study. They include:

1. The acute accent to indicate high tone.
2. The vertical mark to indicate a high tone in step down relation to a preceding high tone. The step down is not a tone, but a pitch relation between two successive high tones as opposed to a level pitch relation.
3. The grave accent to indicate low tone.
4. The circumflex accent to indicate falling tone.
5. The inverted circumflex to indicate rising tone.

It has been borne in mind throughout the study that "The semantic analysis of a given language must explain how the sentences of this language are understood, interpreted, and related to states, processes and objects in the universe."

(Bierwisch in Lyons. J. (ed) (Types of Complementation): 1970:

New Horizons in Linguistics.)

The present study, therefore, embodies and accounts for the fact that

- i verbal affixes enlarge the meanings, but narrow the application, of verbs to which they are attached.
- ii certain combinations of words have meanings different from the meanings of their components: $\acute{\text{ichi}} \text{ isi}$ - to rule -----> $\acute{\text{ichi}}$ - to collect and take, and isi - head.
- iii a verb can be polysemic: $\acute{\text{igba}} \text{ mmonwu}$ - to make a new masquerade; $\acute{\text{igba}}$ ngu - to make a new bed with palm fronds.

- iv a verb can be homonymous: *ígbà osè* - to plant pepper seeds;
ígbà osè - to contain too much pepper.
- v different verbs can have the same meaning: *íku* - to plant;
ídu - to plant.
- vi the meanings of some verbs are included in the meanings of others: - hyponymy
- vii some pairs of verbs are antonymic: *biá* - come/ *gá* - go

Although there are tree - diagrams here and there in the body of the work, the study is not based on the transformational grammar model. The trees are used, in the absence of a better illustrative sketch, to clarify grammatical points raised in the sections where they occur. The theory developed involves taxonomic analysis whereby attention has been focussed on such general problems of meaning as the relation between meaning and reference, between meaning and context, and between literal and figurative meaning.

CHAPTER I

The Structure of the Verbs

The structure of the Igbo verbs will be studied in two sections. Section (i) will discuss the broad categorization of the verbs into mono - and poly - syllabic components, and each component will be decomposed into constituents on the basis of its (a) grammatical status and (b) function. Section (ii) will treat of affixation in so far as it affects the verbs only. It will be shown whether the affixes have a definable and isolatable meaning, or whether they are devoid of identical content in themselves and only serve to form, with the rest of the item, a complete inflected word unity with its totality of specified meaning.

(i) Classification of the Verbs

For the purposes of the present study, the verbs can be classified into (i) monosyllabic, and (ii) polysyllabic, verb stems.

Monosyllabic verb stems

The monosyllabic verb stems are of the structure CV, and can be subclassified into high and low tone verbs¹ determined by the tone of their roots as exemplified by:

1. L.B. Swift, A. Ahaghotu and E. Ugorji (1962) in their Foreign Service Institute, Washington D.C., observe that there are three classes of verbs tonally: High, Low and High-Low verbs. Their classification reflects the situation in certain dialects of the language.

High Tone Verbs

- ǐgbù - to kill
 ǐchò - to want
 ǐrè - to sell
 ǐza - to answer

Low Tone Verbs

- ǐzù - to meet
 ǐmù - to learn
 ǐda - to fall
 ǐza - to sweep

Polysyllabic verb stems

In this study, polysyllabic verb stems include verbs of two or more syllables. They can be analysed into

- (a) verb + verb (V + V)
- (b) verb + suffix (V + suff)

A polysyllabic verb of the structure V + V is derived from two known independent verbs which may or may not be semantically related. If the verbs so juxtaposed are semantically related, the sentence in which they combine to form a lexical unit is derived from a multi-sentential source as exemplified by the verb kùwá - break, which is composed of kù - hit and wá - break.

Given a polysyllabic verb like (a) kùwá (with the semantically related components of kù and wá) in (1), it can be shown that (1) is derived from two underlying sentences, one of which contains the verb kù and the other, the verb wá. The combination of (2) and (3) will give rise to (1).

1. Ézè kùwara ite -----→
Eze broke a pot
2. Ézè kùruite (+instrumental) +
Eze hit a pot (with something)
3. Ìte wara.
A pot broke

The combination of (2) and (3) will produce

Ézè kùru ite + Ìte wara
Eze hit a pot A pot broke
1 2 3 4 5 -----→
1 2+5 3
Ézè kùwara ite

the condition being: 3=4

Observe (i) that the subject NP's of (2) and (3) are not in free variation, that is, whereas one can say

Ézè kùruite (ósisi)
Eze hit a pot (with a stick)

one cannot say

*Ìte kùru or
*Eze wara ite.

(ii) that one cannot kù alone as kù is a verb which requires obligatorily a direct object and an instrumental object.

Other verbs that exhibit this semantic relationship include:

- (b) Tùhù Ézè tùhùru égò -----→
Eze lost some money
Ézè tùru égò +
Eze threw some money
Égò hùru
Some money got lost

In (b) the two independent verbs that make up the lexical unit tùhù - throw away; cause to be lost, are: tù - throw, and hù - be lost. As in (a), the subject NP's cannot alternate.

However, whereas one cannot say *Eze wara in (a) above, one can say both: Ézè huru, and

Eze got lost

Égò huru

Some money got lost.

Similarly, Ézè can tù - throw as in (a) but Égò cannot tù.

(c) Dúhù -----> dú - lead + hù - be lost

Ézè dúhuru mụ ----->

Eze misled me.

Ézè duru mụ +

Eze led me

Mụ hùru.

I got lost.

In (c) the subject NP's are in free variation as the polysyllabic verb dúhù is a verb that obligatorily requires a human subject and object.

In the above examples, it should be observed that the objects of the verbs in the output sentences occur as subjects in the input sentences, and that the meanings of the verbs in some sentences are predictable from the components.

There are, however, cases where the components of the verbs in the output sentences are not semantically related and where the meanings of the verbs in the output sentences are not predictable from the components and the output sentences cannot be derived from a multi-sentential source. Such verbs include:

| | | |
|----------|--------|-------------------------|
| Gbághàrá | -----→ | gbá + ghàra |
| forgive | | run go past, abandon |
| Mé'í | ----- | mé + rí |
| win | | do eat |
| Mé'kò | ----- | mé + kò |
| unite | | do be scarce |
| Mákù | ----- | má + kù |
| embrace | | know gather wealth |

It has been seen that in (a) - (c) the objects of the output sentences become in the input sentences subjects. There are cases where the subjects are the same in both the output and input sentences. These result in what is referred to here as the same-subject interpretation, while (a) - (c) exemplify varied-subject interpretation. The following sentences illustrate the same-subject interpretation:

Kpòkù

ask for patronage

Ézè kpòkùru mụ -----→

Eze asked for my patronage

Ézè kporo mụ +

Eze called me

Ézè kuru mụ

Eze called me

Gbágbu

kill (by shooting)

Ézè gbágburu alu ----->

Eze shot dead an animal

Ézè gbára alu +

Eze shot an animal.

Ézè gbúru alu

Eze killed an animal.

Other verbs that involve the same - subject interpretation include:

gbábà (enter by running),

gáhè (go past)

dúzi (guide)

gbáfù (go out by running)

Like (a) - (c), the meanings of the above verbs are predictable from the meanings of their components.

(ii) Affixation: Prefixes and Suffixes

Affixation will be studied here in so far as it affects the verbs only. It will be shown whether the affixes have a definite and isolatable meaning, or whether they are devoid of identical content in themselves and only serve to form, with the rest of the item, a complete inflected word unity with its totality of specified meaning.

One of the characteristics of the language is the extensive use of prefixes and suffixes with the verbs. Suffixes are used to either enlarge or alter the meanings of verbs; they are more numerous than prefixes.

Prefixes

The prefixes include the infinitival marker /i-/i-/ and /a-/ and /e-/. The infinitival marker /i-/i-/ harmonizes with the vowel of the verb root as follows

| <u>Infinitival Marker</u> | <u>Vowel of the Verb Root</u> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| i -----> | { u as in ígbù - to slip |
| | { ọ as in íbọ - to cut into pieces |
| | { i as in ífí - to twist |
| | { a as in íbá - to enter |
| i -----> | { u as in ígbù - to kill |
| | { o as in ígbò - to part |
| | { i as in ífí - to rub |
| | { e as in ígbè - to crawl |

The verbs may or may not occur with the prefixes /a-/ and /e-/ according to the syntactic environments into which they enter.

In the following example narrative sentences, for instance, it is only the introductory verb which occurs with a prefix; the subsequent verbs occur without prefixes.

1. Ànyí èruó, fù ndí ọbía kelé hà.

We arrived, saw the visitors and , greeted them.

2. Ùgo abíá kwe jí ya lá aka.

Ugo came (and) shook hands with her husband.

3. Ábía m, fù yá jùọ yá ihe ọ chọọ.

I came, saw him (and) asked him what he wanted.

4. Ndu ahù arúsia orù wée làba.

The people finished the work (and) went home.

In the past tense, the verbs occur without prefixes except with the 1st sg. and 3rd pl. personal pronouns as indicated in the following paradigm:

1st sg. M̂ ruru.

Eruru m.

I arrived.

2nd sg. Í ruru.

You arrived.

3rd sg. Ó ruru.

HE/she/it arrived.

1st pl. Ànyí ruru.

We arrived.

2nd pl. Úlù ruru.

you arrived.

3rd pl. Há ruru.

Eruru ha.

They arrived.

Sometimes the verb without a prefix is repeated without a prefix in the added clause to increase the dramatic effect of a description by repetition.

- 1st sg. M̃ chuó, chuó.
 Áchuó m̃ chuó chuó.
 I chased and chased.
- 2nd sg. Ĭ chuó, chuó.
 You chased and chased.
- 3rd sg. Ò chuó, chuó.
 He/she/it chased and chased.
- 1st pl. (a) Anyi chuó, chuó, chuó.
 (b) Anyi àchuó, chuó, chuó.
 We chased and chased.

(Observe that in (a) the tonal structure of the pronoun, anyi, is LL and the verb is prefixless, whereas in (b) where the tonal structure is LH the first chuó is with a prefix.) The same tonal movements can be observed in 2nd pl.

- (c) Ulu chuó, chuó, chuó.
 (d) Ulù àchuó, chuó, chuó.
 You chased and chased.
- and 3rd pl. (e) Hà chuó, chuó, chuó.
 (f) Há àchuó, chuó, chuó.
 They chased and chased.

The vowel prefixes occur in the la-form constructions as can be seen in the paradigms which follow:

Affirmative la-form paradigm

- 1st sg. M̃ mā abiã.
 Álā m̃ abiã.
 I am coming

| | | |
|---------|--------------|----------------------|
| 2nd sg. | Í là abíá. | You are coming. |
| 3rd sg. | Ó là abíá. | He/she/it is coming. |
| 1st pl. | Ànyí là abíá | We are coming. |
| 2nd pl. | Úlù là abíá. | You are coming. |
| 3rd pl. | Há là abíá. | They are coming. |
| | Álà ha abíá. | |

Negative la-form paradigm

| | | |
|---------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1st sg. | M mà abíáhà. | I am not coming. |
| | Álà m abíáhà. | |
| 2nd sg | Í là abíáhà. | You are not coming. |
| 3rs sg. | Ó là abíáhà. | He/she/it is not coming. |
| 1st pl. | Ànyí alá abíáhà. | We are not coming. |
| 2nd pl. | Úlù alá abíáhà. | You are not coming. |
| 3rd pl. | Há alá abíáhà. | They are not coming. |
| | Alà abíáhà hà. | |

Suffixes

A suffix can be a vowel alone, or a combination of consonants and vowels. The suffixes which are added to the verbs will be studied here in these two categories.

i) Vowel Suffixes

Vowel suffixes give rise to verb expansion. The expansion is a feature of certain tenses only, for certain verbs. The vowels /e/, /a/, /o/ and /ɔ/ are used as verbal suffixes as follows:

| A | | B | | |
|----|---|----|-----------------|------------|
| i | + | e | as in ji - é | (endure) |
| i̇ | + | a | as in chi̇ - á | (laugh) |
| e | + | e | as in be - é | (cry) |
| a | + | a | as in bà - á | (enter) |
| o | + | o | as in zo - ó | (hide) |
| ȯ | + | ȯ | as in chȯ - ó̇ | (want) |
| u̇ | + | ȯ | as in fu̇ - ó̇ | (go out) |
| u | + | o | as in vù - ó | (grow fat) |

The vowels in set (A) are verb root vowels, and those in (B) are the possible vowels which can be used with set (A) respectively in verb expansion. It can be seen that /i/, /i̇/, /u̇/ and /u/ cannot be so used.

The vowel suffixes cannot colligate with other suffixes of the structure cons + vowel or vowel + cons + vowel. For instance, whereas a structure such as: verb root + suff + suff + suff + suff + suff as exemplified by *biá' + ghàchí' + gwo + kwa + lụ* (has come back + politeness) exists, a structure of the type: verb root + vowel + suff + suff + suff etc does not exist in the language. Thus, the following starred structures are unacceptable while the non-starred are acceptable:

* *Ó jù' + ọ + kwa ajuju.*

Ó jù' + kwa ajuju.

He has asked a question.

* *Fù + ọ + kwa ezi.*

Fù + kwá' ezi.

Please go outside.

* *Ó bẹ' + e + debe akwa.*

Ó bẹ' + debe akwa.

She has stopped crying.

Verbs with vowel suffixes do not colligate directly with the auxiliaries; they are used with the auxiliaries only when the verb *ibia'* or *ije'* interpose between the auxiliaries and the expanded verbs. (In the rest of this discussion, the verbs with vowel suffixes will be referred to as the expanded verbs.)

The odd man out here is the auxiliary ji which can be used directly with an expanded verb or indirectly with bia or je.

The occurrence of the verbs and the auxiliaries can be illustrated as follows:

| Auxiliaries | Colligation |
|-------------|--|
| <u>ga</u> | <p>Ó gà abia chia ochi.</p> <p>He will come and laugh.</p> |
| <u>la</u> | <p>*Ó gà achia ochi.</p> <p>Ó là abia chia ochi.</p> <p>He comes and laughs.</p> <p>(The more natural construction is:</p> <p>Ála ó bia, o chia ochi - It is a habit</p> <p>with him that when he comes, he laughs).</p> |
| <u>ka</u> | <p>*Ó lá achia ochi.</p> <p>Ó ká abia chia ochi.</p> <p>He would have come and laughed.</p> |
| <u>cho</u> | <p>*Ó ká achia ochi.</p> <p>Ó gà lá àchó íbia chia ochi.</p> <p>He will be wanting to come and laugh</p> <p>(= He will form the habit of coming</p> <p>and laughing).</p> |
| <u>ji</u> | <p>*Ó gà lá àchó àchia ochi.</p> <p>Màka yá kà mú ji chia ochi.</p> <p>Because of him that I hold come and</p> <p>laugh (= It was because of him that I</p> <p>came and laughed).</p> |

It should be observed that in place of the expanded verbs used in the above constructions, the infinitives can be used. The expanded verbs indicate some presumption on the part of the speaker that what he says will certainly take place. The use of the infinitive will, on the other hand, merely express the wish of the speaker who does not take any responsibility for the occurrence of what he has said. The difference of meaning of the constructions is illustrated by the following sentences:

Expanded verb (a) Ànyí jèrè ruó orú.
We went and worked.

Infinitive: (b) Ànyí jèrè írú orú.
We went to work.

The (a) sentence implies that we went and that we certainly worked; in (b), however, it is not certain that we worked on arrival at the place; it requires further clarification as to whether or not we worked apart from going there.

In (a) above, the "pastness" is indicated by jèrè and remains unchanged. In some cases, the "pastness" is signalled by the repetition of the expanded verb as shown by the following sentences:

Ò chiá, chiá, chiá, chiá.

He laughed, laughed, laughed, laughed.

(= He laughed and laughed).

Ò kpoo, kpoo, kpoo, kpoo.

He called, called, called, called.

(= He called and called).

These verbs, when repeated, cannot be used to refer to any other tense except the past. For this reason, the following constructions are semantically and syntactically deviant.

Present Tense: **Ō* *chì*, *chì*, *chì*.

Present Perfect Tense: **Ō* *chìgwó*, *chìgwó*, *chìgwó*.

Present "la-form" showing progressive or habitual action:

**?Ō* *là áchì*, *là áchì*, *là áchì*.

Past Perfect Tense: **Ō* *chìgwóri*, *chìgwóri*, *chìgwóri*.

Future Tense: **Ō* *gà áchì*, *gà áchì*, *gà áchì*.

But, when they are not repeated, the expanded verbs imply present perfect tense as in:

Ō *chíá* *ochì*.

He has (just) laughed. (Signs of laughter can still be seen on his face).

Ō *bée* (*akwá*).

She has (just) cried. (It is still possible to hear the cry).

Ō *bée*.

It has (just) perched. (And it is still where it has perched).

Observe here that the tone of the pronoun subject varies with the tone of the verb root.

Some of the verbs even when expanded cannot be repeated. They are verbs which indicate some culmination of action or state. Take for instance the verbs *rú* - reach, and *yí* - resemble, both of which are expandable, but cannot be repeated to indicate a past situation. Thus,

**Ō* *ruo*, *ruo*, *ruo*, *ruo*.

**Ō* *yie*, *yie*, *yie*, *yie*.

are unacceptable because when one reaches a destination one would not be expected to go further. Similarly, resemblance is a static state; for, when one resembles another, one is so all the time. Other verbs that fall into this category include:

fú - see; zù(íkè) - rest; biá - come; fù(lá anya) - love;
sí - say; jú - refuse; lú - hear; lú - marry; zò - forget;
bido - start; bè - perch (on).

The expanded verbs occur in commands and conditional sentences.

Commands:

Jèé ngwa ngwa.

Go quickly.

Zuó iké.

Have a rest.

Chíá ọchì.

Laugh.

Conditional Sentences

Ànyí laa, ọ ga abíá?

If we go, will he come?

Ó zuo ori ò jé ñga.

If he steals (something) he will go to jail.

Vowel suffixes cannot occur more than once with the same verb as is the case with some suffixes of the structure: cons + vowel. Thus, whereas there exist in the language such constructions as:

Ó biákwakwa.

He has (really) come again.

Ó suk¹wakwakwakwa.

It has unexpectedly really started again.

Há bí²ácháchachacha.

Let all (+ emphasis) of them come.

there is no construction such as:

* O bee e.

* O fuoo.

... ..

ii) Combined Suffixes

Under this heading are suffixes other than the vowel suffixes.

They will be studied according to (a) vowel harmonization, and

(b) whether they are grammatical suffixes or (c) meaning - modifying suffixes.

(a) Vowel Harmony

The present study has shown that only a few of the suffixes harmonize with the vowel of the preceding syllable. The following table shows the harmonizing and non-harmonizing suffixes which are met in the language. The meanings of the suffixes are given in the section that deals with meaning - modifying suffixes.

| Harmonizing | Non-harmonizing |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| -há/hé/hó/hó | -fù |
| -lá/lé | -kwàra |
| -rá (Benefactive) V | -bèle |
| -tá/-té | -kéle |
| -rà (Time) V | -ghàchí |
| | -àgá |
| | -ká |
| | -chá |
| | -débe |
| | -fúte |
| | -riri |
| | -lòó |
| | -rita |
| | -kata |
| | -gwódu |
| | -gwó |
| | -kwuó |
| | -kwú |
| | -ruó |
| | -lù |
| | -rú |

(b) Grammatical Suffixes

The grammatical suffixes are -gwó, gwóri, -duóru, -rà, -bé/-bá, -té/-tá, -lá, -zila, -débe, -ruó, -bèle and há.

They are more widespread than meaning - modifying suffixes, and they occur regularly with the verbs. They give the verbs some grammatical meaning as can be seen in the examples which follow:

- (a) $\hat{O} \text{ v} \hat{u} \text{ t} \acute{e} \text{ mmiri}$ (-te, motion).

He has brought some water (and one can see him bringing it).

- (b) $\hat{O} \text{ b} \acute{i} \text{ a} \text{ b} \acute{a}$ (-ba, beginning).

He has started to come (and he is seen doing so).

Similarly,

- (c) $\acute{E} \text{ z} \acute{e} \text{ a} \text{ c} \acute{h} \text{ i} \text{ t} \acute{a} \text{ n} \text{ k} \acute{u}$ (-ta, motion).

Eze has collected, and is bringing, some faggots.

- (d) $\hat{O} \text{ c} \acute{h} \text{ i} \text{ b} \acute{e} \text{ m} \text{ k} \text{ p} \acute{u}$ (-be, beginning).

She has started to shout (and is still shouting).

As these suffixes contain some semantic content in them other than grammatical as shown in the last paragraph, they will be discussed further under the rubric of meaning-modifying suffixes below.

(c) Meaning-Modifying Suffixes

"It is true that the suffixes are important modifiers of meaning" (Green (1964)). The suffixes have special meanings.

They, therefore, not only fit the verbs into syntax, but also enlarge their meanings.

Suffixes and their Meanings

- i) The suffix $-\text{f} \acute{u}$ means 'out'.

$\acute{A} \text{ k} \text{ w} \acute{u} \text{ k} \text{ w} \acute{o} \text{ w} \acute{u} \text{ a} \text{ d} \text{ a} \text{ f} \acute{u}$.

Your book has fallen out.

$\text{V} \text{ u} \text{ f} \acute{u} \text{ i} \text{ h} \acute{e} \text{ a}$.

Carry out this thing.

$\text{G} \text{ b} \text{ u} \text{ f} \acute{u} \text{ i} \text{ s} \acute{i} \text{ y} \text{ a}$.

Cut out (off) its head.

- ii) If the action referred to by the speaker is motion towards him, the suffix *-te/-ta* is affixed to the verb.

Ó là evútè mmiri.

He is bringing water.

Ézè choro ìlùta nwānyị.

Eze wants to marry a wife.

Jèé gbùté afifia.

Go and cut grass, and bring it.

- iii) *-kàtá* connotes unpleasant duration.

Ó yakàtá, wée nwuq.

He was ill, for a long time, and then died.

Ó bekàtá wée rāhụ.

He cried for a long time, then slept.

- iv) *-be/-ba* (commencement, continuity)

Jèbé!

Go away! (=Start to go away).

Kwùbé.

Continue to talk.

Òkéké gwàra yá kà ó biaba.

Okeke told him to be coming.

- v) *-hú* This implies involuntary action.

Ó ká(gwo)⁽²⁾

He has grown old.

Ó ré(gwo).

It has decayed.

Ó nwú(gwo).

It has died.

(2) The addition of *gwo*, the perfective marker, after *hu* is optional. When it is added, it reinforces the completeness of the action.

vi) -kó (together)

Kpòkó hà ọ̀lù.

Gather them together.

Kúko hà ọ̀lù.

Mix them together.

Biàkòlù ọ̀lù.

Come together.

vii) -hè (across, in)

Vúhè yà .

Carry it across.

Dúhè yà .

Lead it across.

Kpúhè yà .

Lead it across by the rope.

viii) -ká (too much);

-gbí (too much)

Ọ́ lá èjéká ọ̀zú.

He is always busy, doing something.

Ọ́ lá èriká nri.

He eats too much food.

Ọ́ lá ebégbu ọ̀nwe yà lá akwa.

She cries too much.

ix) -chá (emphatic completion, all)

Ọ́ gwúcha.

It has finished completely.

Há dùchá mmá.

All are good.

Há biàchá.

Let all of them come.

Ô rúcha yà.

He has finished all the work.

x) -kwuó (again, also)

Nyèkwuó mü.

Give me more.

Biàkwuó gunwà.

Come also, yourself.

Vùtékwuó ñke áhù.

Bring that one also.

xi) -gwódu (first)

Biàgwódu.

Come here first.

Áchòro m ka mú nyegwodu ñkéle.

I want to give this first.

Íhe agà emégwodu bù íjè be ha.

The thing to do first is to go to their house.

xii) -gwóri (already)

This suffix forms the past perfect tense as will be seen under Verb Forms in Chapter IV.

Î biàgwóri!

You have already come!

Há `eméchagwóri túfu ànyì eruó.

Há `eméchagwóri túfu ànyì eruó. before we arrived.

xiii) -gwó (completion)

This is the present perfect tense marker, which will be discussed in Chapter IV.

Ude ábiágwo.

Ude has come.

Anyi èjégwo

We have been there and come back.

Ô rúshigwo.

He has finished the work.

xiv) -kwá (emphasis)

Ríkwa ya .

Do, eat it.

Ô là aráhukwa urá.

He is really sleeping.

Ô là abiákwa.

He is really coming.

xv) -kwú (also, too)

Ô là ejékwú be ha.

He also goes to their house.

Éze, ô la arúkwu orú?

Does Eze also work?

xvi) -lù

This is the imperative plural marker, and will be dealt with under Imperative Forms in Chapter IV.

xvii) -lú ("after all, concession with respect to initial disapproval"⁽³⁾). This suffix is usually used with "ńgwa".

ńgwa, jèbélú.

Well, go now (as you insist on going in spite of my disapproval)

(3) Paul and Inge Meier and John Bendor-Samuel: 1975.

Ngwa, m^él^u ère nd^ù w^u mma.

Well, do as you please. (I am, however, under constraint to concede).

xviii) -ru (benefactive, to do for someone)

M^éru yà eberè.

Have mercy on him.

Vùt^éru m̐ ya.

Bring it to me.

Gbu^éru m̐ eg^hu.

Kill me a goat.

xix) -d^ùru (impatience)

Kèd^ù ihe i mèd^uru ka^à?

What did you (then) do there?

Kèd^ù ur^ù ó gà ábàd^uru hà?

What (on earth) will it profit them?

(Observe the change of tone from low to high in the interrogative sentence).

The suffix implies that the questioner is superior to the person to whom the question is put. The questioner has the right and authority to know the answer, and can mete out punishment as a result of the answer he will get.

xx) -d^ébe (stop doing)

Ó gwàra m^ú sidebe àsi.

He told me to stop lying (=telling lies).

Kwùd^ébe okw^ù.

Stop talking.

Úlu gà ejédebe là Enugwu.

You will stop at Enugwu.

xxi) -ruo (stop doing, tentatively)

The difference of meaning between -débe and -ruó is that, in the case of the former, the final stage of the action is reached; whereas -ruó suggests that a certain point has been reached but not the final goal. In other words, -ruo implies an accidental point reached in the process.

Hà jéruo la elu ugwu ka ha nzuru íkè.

They reached the top of the hill where they rested. (But the journey had to continue).

Mbè ejékàtá, jéruo là bé agaji nwányi.

The tortoise walked and walked, and reached the house of an old woman. (That was not his destination).

Há èkwuède okwu, kwuruo ihe dụ kà

They talked and talked until five o'clock
atañu isè.

(They could have continued to talk, but for tiredness).

xxii) -lá harmonizes

-zila does not harmonize

These are suffixes used to form a negative imperative.

-zila indicates that some activity has been going on, which the speaker wants to stop. -lá, on the other hand, indicates that the action has not begun, and the speaker does not want it to begin.

- Compare Émèzila yá.
 Stop doing it.
- with Émèle ya.
 Don't do it.
- And Éjèzila kàá.
 Don't go there any more.
- with Éjèle kàá.
 Don't go there.
- xxiii) -kwàra (refutation of a previous statement) as in:

A: Ò nwere ée mbiàra?

Did anyone come?

B: Ò nwéhe.

Nobody.

C: Ò bukwa así, o nwèkwara.

It is a lie, there was someone (who came).

Ò jukwara la nyá alá agaha.

(Don't mind what he said) he refused to go (there).

In questions, -kwàra implies a previous question; the second one in which it occurs reinforces the dramatic effect of the first.

Ì gwara yá là í gà abíá?

(Hesitation) Did you tell him you would come?

Ì gwakwara yá là í gà abíá?

Did you (in fact) tell him that you would come?

Ò mutakwara íhe a kùziere yá?

Did he understand what he was taught?

(He didn't).

Ò kwukwara ézi okwù?

Did he tell the truth? (He didn't; consequently, the result).

-kwàra in questions, therefore, implies that the questioner expects a negative answer, which he does not like.

xxiv) -bèle;

-bèkwala⁽⁴⁾

These suffixes are used to construct negative imperatives as in the following example sentences:

Ágbabele egwu

Never dance.

Ékwubèle nkélè.

Never say this.

Ábiábèkwala.

Never come, on any account.

Ásibèkwala asi.

Never, on any account, tell a lie.

xxv) -há

This negatives a habitual idea either in a main clause or in a subordinate clause referring to present or past situations.

(4) For the use of this suffix in negative irony, see Chapter V.

Ọ̀ là abíàhà kalà.

He does not come here.

Ọ̀ là abíàgwohò kalà.

He usedn't to come here.

(Observe that - ha harmonizes with the vowel of the preceding syllable. This is treated further in Chapter IV).

XXvi) -àgá (too much, too often); (skilful or bad taste).

Ó là abíààgá kalà.

He comes here too often.

Ó là ekwúàgá okwù.

He talks a lot (and, therefore, bores his hearers).

Ézè la agbààgá mgbà.

Eze is good at wrestling.

Ùgo amáàgá akwùkwò.

Ugo is well educated.

xxvii) -kéle (please, so)

This suffix is used only in polite questions; it has a friendly undertone as exemplified by the following sentences:

Ọ̀ bíàgwokele?

(Please) has he come?

Ì rúchagwokele?

Have you (please) finished the work?

Ì máhakele mụ?

So, you don't know me? (I am pleasantly surprised that you don't know me).

When used with -ri, the question in which the suffix occurs, connotes some surprise.

Ò biágwokeleri?

Has he already come? I am surprised.

Ì rúchagwokeleri?

Have you finished the work?

What a surprise!

xxviii) -ghàchí (back again)

Ó gà alághàchí echí.

He will come back tomorrow.

Ágà m ezíghàchí yà àzú.

I shall send it back.

Ùgo gà alághàchí la ụlò ákwúkwọ.

Ugo will go back to school.

xxix) -dèbé (near)

This suffix is highly restricted with regard to the syntactic environments where it can occur. It is used with only two verbs: biá - come; and Kpú - pull. The adverb nsó - near, frequently co-occurs with it.

Kpúdèbé nsó.

Come near(er).

Biádèbé nsó.

Come near(er).

xxx) -lọ́ọ́ (uncertainty)

Njii(lọ́ọ́) onyè mbiaralọ́ọ́ kalà?

Who on earth came here?

Njii(lọ́ọ́) onyè mmerelọ́ọ́ ihelè?

Who must have done this?

The suffix can be attached either to the interrogative word or to the verb (or to both in very careful speech).

xxxi) -rírì (must)

Ó mèrírì yá.

He actually did it!

Ànyí gà ejerírì kà áhú.

We will actually go there.

We must go there.

Ó gà abúrírì Obù mere(-ie) yá.

It must have been Obu who did it.

xxxii) -fúte (ability)

Ágà m eméfute yá.

I shall be able to do it (= I can do it).

Ó là ábiáfute kalà?

Can he come here? (He must have been sick or busy).

Ó mefutere.

He satisfied everyone.

xxxiii) -ríta (reciprocity)

Ànyí là akóríta akukò.

We tell stories to each other.

Há là ejeríta be ibè há.

They visit each other.

Úlu la afuríta onwe ulù?

Do you see each other?

xxiv) -duòru (used to)

This suffix is used to form the past tense of stative verbs. (Stative verbs are discussed in Chapter IV).

Ô nwere éǵò.

He has got some money.

-----→ Ô nweduoru éǵò.

He used to have money.

-----→ Ézè vuru ívù.

Eze is fat.

-----→ Ézè vuduoru ívù.

Eze used to be fat.

Ô mara mǵà.

She is beautiful.

-----→ Ô maduoru mǵà.

She used to be beautiful.

The Uses of Suffixes

It can be observed that suffixes play a big role in the determination of the meanings of verbs where they occur. Each suffix has a range of associated meanings assigned to it.

Their main semantic uses are:

1. To enlarge the meaning of a verb root as in

vú - carry vúǵǵá - carry too much

bíá - come bíǵkátá - come too often

nwé - has nwékwù - has also...

bíá - come bíǵkéle - please come

(Observe that the inherent tone of bíá which is high has become low in bíǵkéle).

2. To alter the meaning of a verb root. By this is meant that suffixes are used to negative verbs and also to form antonyms.

Negation

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Ô biara. -----> | Ô biàha. |
| He came. | He did not come. |
| Beé. -----> | Ébéle. |
| Cry. | Do not cry. |
| Ô zùgwó. -----> | Ô zùho. |
| It is enough. | It is not enough. |

Antonyms

| <u>Verbs</u> | <u>Antonyms</u> |
|--------------------|------------------|
| dúte - lead in | dúfu - lead away |
| dúzi - direct well | dúfió - mislead |
| ròté - remember | ròzó - forget |
| mézi - repair | mébi - damage |

Sequence of Suffixes

The following tables illustrate the order in which the suffixes occur in sentences. When a meaning-modifying suffix and a grammatical one occur in the same word, the meaning-modifying suffix precedes the grammatical one. The only exception to this rule is the suffix kwa.

Since the order of occurrences differs in terms of tense, and whether a sentence is positive or negative, and because positive suffixes are different from negative ones, the tables will show the sequence in indicative and imperative sentences on one hand, and in present, past and future tenses on the other. The tense names used, which for the purposes of the present study have been adopted for the Igbo language, are discussed in great detail in Chapter IV under the rubric of Tense.

Positive Sequences

| Name of Tense | V-Root | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | English |
|----------------------------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|-----------------------------------|
| <u>PRESENT</u> La-form | bíá | kwa | | | | | coming really |
| | bíá | cha | kwa | | | | coming all really |
| | bíá | cha | kwa | lụ | | | coming all (+ Emphasis) really |
| Progressive without <u>la</u> | bíá | ba | | | | | coming |
| | bíá | ba | kwa | | | | coming indeed |
| | bíá | ba | gwo | | | | has begun coming |
| | bíá | cha | ba | gwo | | | have all begun coming |
| | bíá | cha | ba | gwo | kwa | | have indeed all become coming |
| | fụ | tá | cha | ba | kwa | | have all begun coming out |
| Present Perfect Tense | bíá | gwo | | | | | has come |
| | bíá | cha | gwo | kwa | | | have all really come |

Past Tense

| Name of Tense | V-root | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | English |
|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----|----------------|----------------|---|---|
| Simple Past Tense | b _i à | ra | | | | | came |
| | b _i à | cha | ra | | | | all came |
| | b _i à | cha | kwa | ra | | | all really came |
| | b _i à | cha | kwa | ra | l _u | | all really came (said with politeness) |
| | b _i à | b _e | re | | | | came once or so |
| | b _i à | chà | be | re | | | all came once or so |
| | b _i à | chà | be | kwa | ra | | all came once or so really |
| Habitual Past Tense | (5) -b _i à | gwo | | | | | used to come |
| | -b _i à | gwo | kwa | | | | really used to come |
| | -b _i à | cha | gwo | kwa | | | really all used to come |
| | -b _i à | duoru | | | | | used to come |
| | -b _i à | cha | du | gwo | (6) | | all used to come |
| Past Perfect Tense | b _i à | gwo | ro | | | | had come |
| | b _i à | cha | gwo | ro | | | had all come |
| | b _i à | cha | gwo | kwa | ra | | had all really come |
| "Pluperfect" | b _i à | gwo | ro | r _i | | | " " " " |
| | b _i à | cha | gwo | ro | r _i | | |

(5) Where a dash occurs in the V-root position, it stands for the ga-a which precedes the root in the future tense, eg. há g_a abiágh_achí (they will come back).

(6) Observe that where duoru and gwo co-occur, the rearrangement gives du gworu.

Future Tense

| Name of Tense | V-root | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | English |
|--|--------|--------|-----|-----|-----|---|--|
| Simple Future | -biá | ghàchi | | | | | will come back |
| | -biá | ghàchi | te | | | | will come pack (emph) |
| | -biá | ghàchi | te | kwa | | | will come back really (emph) |
| | -biá | ghàchi | te | cha | kwa | | will all come back really (emph) |
| Future Progressive Tense | --biá | kwa | | | | | will be really coming |
| | --biá | cha | kwa | | | | will all be really coming |
| | --biá | ghàchi | te | cha | kwa | | will all indeed be coming back |
| Future Tense in the Past | -biá | cha | kwa | | | | would all come |
| Future Perfect Tense in the Past | -biá | gwo | ri | | | | would have come |
| | -biá | cha | gwo | ri | | | would all have come |
| | -biá | cha | gwo | kwa | ri | | would all have come really |
| Future Perfect Progressive Tense in the Past | --biá | gwo | ri | | | | would have been coming |
| | --biá | cha | gwo | kwa | ri | | would all have been coming really (+ emph) |

Negative Sequences

| Name of Tense | V-root | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | English |
|---------------|--------|-----|-----|----|-----|---|---------------------------------|
| La-form | -biá | há | | | | | does not come |
| | -biá | há | kwa | | | | does not come really |
| | -biá | kwí | te | he | kwa | | does not come to (visit) really |
| | -biá | fú | te | he | kwa | | is unable to come as a habit |

| Name of Tense | V-root | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | English |
|-----------------------------------|---------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------------------------------|
| La-form | là-abiá | fù | te | cha | ha | kwa | are all unable to come as a habit |
| | là-abiá | kwù | te | fu | ho | kwa | is unable to come as a habit (+ emph) |
| Present Perfect Tense | kà biá | ha | | | | | has not come |
| | kà biá | ha | kwa | | | | has not really come |
| | kà biá | cha | ha | kwa | | | have not all really come |
| | kà biá | be | he | | | | has not yet come |
| | kà biá | be | he | kwa | | | has not yet really come |
| | kà biá | cha | be | he | | | have not all yet come |
| | kà biá | cha | be | he | kwa | | have not all yet really come |
| | kà biá | ghachi | che | ha | kwa | | have not all really come back |
| Present Perfect Progressive Tense | kà biá | ba | ha | | | | has not begun coming |
| | -biá | ba | be | he | | | has not started coming yet |
| | kà biá | cha | ha | ha | | | have not all started coming |
| | kà biá | cha | ba | he | he | | have not all yet finished coming |
| Simple Past Tense | biá | há | | | | | did not come |
| | biá | há | kwa | | | | did not really come |
| | biá | chá | ha | kwa | | | did not all come really |
| | biá | bè | he | | | | never came |
| | biá | bè | he | kwa | | | never indeed came |

| Name of Tense | V-root | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | English |
|------------------------|--------|-----|----|-----|-----|---|-------------------------|
| Habitual Past Tense | -biá | gwó | ho | | | | used not to come |
| | -biá | gwó | ho | kwa | | | used not really to come |
| | -biá | chà | ha | gwo | | | used not all to come |
| | -biá | chà | be | he | gwo | | never used to come all |

Future Tense

| Name of Tense | V-root | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | English |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--------|-----|-----|----|----|-------------------------------------|
| Simple Future Tense | (7) (lá)biá | ha | | | | | will not come |
| (há) | (lá)biá | ha | kwa | | | | will not certainly come |
| " | (lá)biá | cha | ha | kwa | | | will not all come really |
| Simple Future Tense | (lá)abiá | ghàchi | hó | | | | they will not come back |
| (Há) | (lá)abiá | ghàchi | te | hé | | | they will not come back |
| (Há) | (lá)abiá | ghàchi | te | be | hé | | they will never come |
| (Há) | (lá)abiá | ghàchi | te | cha | há | | they will not all come back |
| (Há) | (lá)abiá | ghàchi | te | cha | be | hé | they will never all come back |
| Future Tense in the Past | -biá | há | | | | | would not (have) come |
| | -biá | chá | ha | | | | would not all (have) come |
| | -biá | chá | cha | ha | | | would not all certainly (have) come |

- (7) Observe the high tone of the auxiliary which is used in the dialect to form the negative future tense. After há it has a step down.

Imperative Forms. Positive Imperative

| V-root | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | English |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|--|
| b _i á | r _i | | | | | Please come |
| b _i á | l _u | | | | | Please come (This is a more polite expression than with -ri) |
| b _i á | cha | l _u | l _u | | | Well, let all of you come |
| b _i á | cha | kwa | l _u | | | Come (+ emphasis) all of you |
| b _i á | cha | cha | kwa | l _u | | Come all of you without exception |

Negative Imperative

| Prefix + V-root | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | English |
|--------------------|-----|----------------|----------------|----|----------------|--|
| ábiá | la | . | | | | Don't come |
| ábiá | la | l _u | | | | Don't come, and see the consequence! (Mind you come!) |
| ábiá | la | l _u | | | | Do not come (+ pl. and emphasis) |
| ábiá | cha | la | l _u | | | Do not all come (Some are to come) |
| ábiá | cha | cha | kwa | la | l _u | Do not all come (+ emphasis) |
| ábiá | chà | be | kwa | la | l _u | Don't all of you come! (Some are to come) |

CHAPTER II

The Non-Finite Forms of Verbs

The verb forms operate in finite and non-finite verb phrases.
The non-finite verb forms in Igbo are the infinitive and the gerund.

The Igbo infinitive can be distinguished from the finite verb form in six ways:

- i) The infinitive has the prefix i/i always attached to it. Thus ígwá-gwa, íbia-bia; ígo-go, etc. The first of each pair is an infinitive, while the second is a finite verb form.

- ii) The finite verb asserts, and consequently, contains a truth - value; the infinitive cannot assert; it simply gives the idea of the activity (when used as a nominal) like an abstract noun without the relation required by a finite verb. The infinitive gives an idea not of an activity produced, but of an activity which can be produced. Thus, it is used to answer such questions as:
 "Kèdú ihe ì gá ímè?" (What are you going to do?)
 Íkò jí. (To make yam ridges); Ísì ohe; (to cook soup).

The finite verb, on the other hand, indicates and situates the action according to the categories of person, mood and tense.

- iii) The finite verb requires a grammatical subject, and may consist of one or more words - the infinitive is always one word with the prefix i/i - marker as exemplified by:

| Infinitive | English | Finite Verb form | English |
|------------|---------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Íjé | to go | Jé | Go |
| | | gà ejé | will go |
| | | là ejé | is going |
| | | ká èje | would go |
| | | gà lá ejé | will be going |
| | | àká lá èjé | would have been going |

- iv) The finite verb form only is used with the negative particle. The negative particle cannot be attached to the infinitive. Thus jéhe - go not (= not to go) is acceptable but not *íjéhe - to go not.
- v) The finite verb has tense distinction - past and present; the Igbo infinitive has no such distinction.
- vi) The finite verb can occur as the main verbal item of a main clause; the infinitive cannot occur as the main verb of a main clause.

Thus the finite verb operates as the predicator in clause structure while the infinitive can be used as such word classes as a noun, a verb, an adjective, an adverb, an interjection or a conjunction as exemplified below.

A representative sample of infinitives which enter into different syntactic positions is taken from three books written in Igbo:

Òmènúkó - a novel;

Mbediogu - an anthology of Igbo folk tales; and

Éleliá Nà Íhe O mère - a short story.

The examples used in this work do not include all the infinitives found in the three books used, because they are too many. It was discovered that the infinitives which function as nouns in their syntactic environments are 221, as adverbs, 218; as adjectives, 27 and as conjunctions, 1. To include all these infinitives here would make the work unnecessarily bulky. Those included are intended to illustrate the points raised in the sections in which they occur. The example will include infinitives from each of the three books used. I have followed the spelling used in the publications for these examples.

The first group of infinitives examined is seen in nominal function. This means that it can be the subject or object of a finite verb; the subject of an intransitive verb and the object of a preposition.

1. Infinitives used as subject:

- i) Índi ikwú ha nò ná àkwá mà íkwa akwa apùghì
 ime kà énweta hà ọzọ.

Their relatives were crying, but to cry

(crying) could not cause them to be back again.

- ii) Elel¹ia w¹ee j¹ua ma o bu na igbu anu ndi a bu
ihe di¹ri ndi ala ha na nso.

Elelia then asked them whether to kill those
animals was an abomination to their people.

- iii) Mb¹e lee¹ o¹lu ah¹u anya, kwe n'isi, si na ichiputa
ede ab¹ughi okuko ya.

The tortoise looked at the hole, nodded, and
then said that to bring out cocoyams did not
mean sowing all of them.

- iv) Isite na ebe ukwu ya di ruo ebe isi ya ga ewe
oje ije ihe di ka ubochi asaa.

To go from its stand (where it had stood) to
where its head lay would take a good walker about
seven days.

- v) Ihe oriri na izu onwe anyi na umuntakiri anyi
adighi.

Food and to sustain ourselves and our children
is not. (There is no food to sustain ourselves
and our children).

2. Infinitives used as objects of finite verbs:

They follow immediately the finite verbs of the sentences.

- i) Nna ya ukwu wee nye ya ihe o ga eji malita izu
ahia nke ya.

His master gave him something which he would use
to begin to trade on his own.

- ii) Mgbe ọtutu mmadu huru na o mutara izu na ire ahia ...

When many saw that he had learnt to buy and to sell things ...

- iii) O wee si mbè na ya na achó iga ije ná ama.

He told the tortoise that he wanted to go on a journey to some place.

- iv) Gwá ya kà o ghàrá ijide ya n'aka.

Tell him so that he will leave to hold it by hand.

- v) O choghi igwa oha mmadu.

He did not want to tell many people.

3. Infinitives used as objects of prepositions:

In the course of this study, it was discovered that a number of infinitives are governed by prepositions just as nouns are governed by prepositions. The majority of such usages occur in Oménukó.

- (a) Túpu hà ekwuó ihè bànyere ijekwuru District Commissioner.

Before they said anything concerning to go (going) to the District Commissioner.

- (b) Kà anyị kwe na o gà emé ozi di n'ulò nnà ya dika igbanwe ulò atani na ikpuchi ája mbara.

Let us agree that he will do domestic work like to change (changing) the thatched roof and to cover (covering) the compound wall.

- (c) Hà ñuó iyi kà ónye ọbùlà ghará ilà àzú nìme
okwu bànyére Omenùkó inyèghàchi Obíefùla "warrant".

They took an oath so that nobody would fail to
pursue the case concerning Omenuko's to give
(= giving) back the warrant to Obiefula.

- (d) Òzọ kwa ọ bù n'ìhì ìhù gị anya kà anyị jì weé sì
kà ókwu ahù diwa echí.

Again, it is because of to see (seeing) you that we
say that the discussion should be tomorrow.

4. Infinitives used predicatively:

The infinitives are also used predicatively. Some of the
examples of such usage taken from the books used for this study
include:

- i) Íhe ò m njo karísia bù ìhù nà Óhu Mbà na Isii
liri ónwu.

What pains me most is to see that the Ohu Mba na
Isii people defied death.

The above sentence shows that the infinitive, ìhù, can take
the syntactic environment of the subject íhe without in any way
altering the meaning of the sentence. The sentence can be
transposed thus:

- Ìhù nà Óhu Mbà na Isii liri ónwu (bù íhe)
ò m njo karísia.

To see that the Ohu Mba na Isii people defied death
pains me most.

- ii) Ó dighi ùtó na ntì ínù ihe di òtú à.

It is not pleasant to the ear to hear such a thing.

- iii) Ó bù ọlụ ndị ná akuzi nkuzi ime kà ụmụákà mata akuko ọbulà banyére mbe.

It is the duty of the teachers to make the children know all the fables concerning the tortoise.

- iv) Nání ọlụ ha bù iza ezi.

Their only work was to sweep the compound.

- v) Ọ nwéghì ike ime ihe ọbulà ọzọ, mà ọ bughì inanwu obi, òbi, n'ìhì ọbì mgbawa.

She was not able to do anything else than to live in sorrow, due to heart-breaks.

5. Infinitives used as determiners:

As a determiner, the infinitive can be used as part of a phrase to qualify a noun or pronoun. When so employed, it enlarges the meaning, but narrows the application, of the noun or pronoun.

- i) Kùtéré mụ mmiri ikwo aká.

Bring me water to wash (for washing) hands.

- ii) Águù ila ọbodo ébe amụrụ yá nà agù Omenùkọ.

The desire to return to the place where he was born worries Omenuko. (= Omenuko longs to return to his birthplace.)

- iii) \acute{O} $\acute{s}i$ na ya ga emere ya $\acute{o}gw\grave{u}$ inweta ego.

He said he would make for him medicine to get money.

- iv) N'ikpéazu, \acute{o} were tífùó echiche banyére ebe imuta nwa di.

At last, he lost thought concerning where to get children was. (= He stopped thinking about getting children.)

- v) Mgbe íke inú mmai gwurú há ...

When the ability to drink wine finished them ...

(= When they could no longer drink ...)

Some infinitives are so attached to the preposition nà that it is not easy to subcategorize them. They are then never used as either subjects or objects of finite verbs. Functionally, they are equivalent to English gerunds preceded by prepositions such as: by doing ..., in saying ... The Igbo examples taken from the books include:

- (a) Nwátà na enyére ya aka n'izu nà n'irè ahia ya.

The child was helping him by to buy (by buying)

and by to sell (by selling) his commodities.

(The child was helping him in his buying and selling.)

- (b) \acute{O} nwèrè $\acute{u}ch\grave{e}$ n'ikwu okwu.

He had sense by to talk (in talking).

- (c) Élélíá sí na yá m̀àrà ̀úzó ǹkè yá g̀à ejí gbuo
nà abughì n'igba egbè.

Elelia said that he knew a way he would follow
to kill which was not by to shoot (by shooting)
the gun ...

- (d) Ó bù ólu ndi òzizi itiwanye ajujú nà ńkòwa site
n'iso ńkpuru òtu ésì jú ndi òzò.

It is the duty of those who teach to increase the
questions and the answers by to follow (by following)
the examples of the others which have been asked.

- (e) N'igbòchi anya ndi òzò kà ó ghàrá inwè onye òzò
gà enwe àmamihe òtu yá ònwé yá nwèrè.

By to prevent (by preventing) others so that nobody
else would have as much wisdom as he had.

The infinitive can be used in an independent clause but, more
often, in a dependent clause.

- (1) In an exclamatory sentence expressing a strong denial or
vehement protestation, surprise, anger or wish, the
infinitive replaces the verb in the clause.

It is generally preceded by an interrogative word or an accentuated
nominal.

1. Gini? Ije ebe ahù kita!

What? To go there now!

2. Gini? Ikwu ogu ego m̀àka ofú akwà!

What? To pay £1.00 (one pound) for a piece of cloth!

3. Ògbó yá ika nka etù à!

A man of his age to be so old!

4. Múnwà ibido izizi!

I, to begin first!

5. Nyanwà ibudà onwé yá ime ihe di etù à!

Himself, to condescend so low as to do such a thing!

6. Anyi ije ukà!

We, to go to church!

In the last three examples, the notion of person is indispensable in the sentences and the infinitive, being unable to express person by itself, is preceded by a nominal phrase, which does. The nominal does not form a grammatical unit with the infinitive, and it is separated from it in writing by a comma, and in speech, is strongly accentuated.

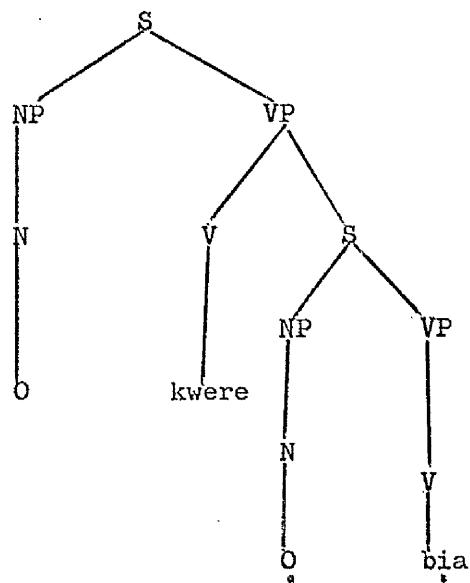
In dependent clauses, the infinitive is subordinated to the following conditions:

- i) The subject of the infinitive is the same as that of the principal verb. This is true of both transitive and intransitive verbs.
- ii) The subject of the infinitive is the same person or thing as the object of the principal verb.

Ó kwèrè ibia.

He agreed to come.

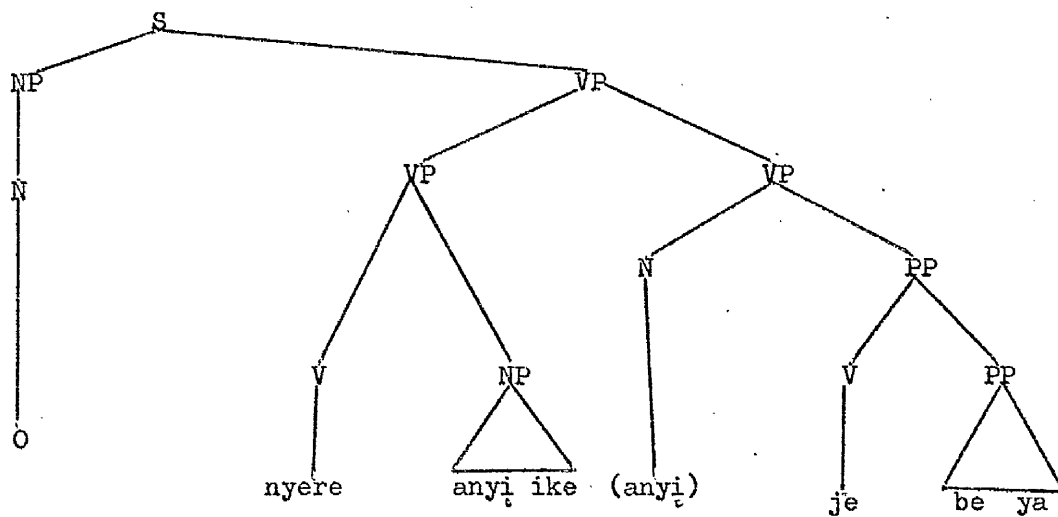
The subject, Ó, of the principal verb, kwèrè, is also the subject of the infinitive, ibia. This can be illustrated in the following tree diagram.



Ó nyèrè anyí ike ijè be ya.

He permitted us to go to his house.

The object of the principal verb, nyèrè, which is anyí, is also the subject of the infinitive, ijè. This is illustrated in the tree which follows:



The majority of the infinitives were found to be used together with other verbs. When so used, they either modify the meanings of the other verbs, or serve to indicate purpose, reason or result. The omission of the infinitives in such sentences renders the sentences meaningless. The example sentences follow:

- (a) Íhè ahíà m gàrà ígwùsì kpam kpàm.

All my articles of trade would have gone to
perish (would have perished) completely.

- (b) Ó gàrà írù gì àhù.

It would have gone to touch
(would have touched) you (= you would have felt it).

- (c) Óbìohà na àñùrì nà ókùwù hà nà achó inwè isi.

Obioha was rejoicing that their word was wanting to
have a head. (= Obioha was rejoicing because their
plans were coming to a head.)

It is not easy to assign the infinitive, inwè, to a functional category. The verb, íchò, is a transitive verb and, as such, must have an object which follows it. One is, therefore, tempted to infer that inwè in the sentence is the object of the verb. But, whatever noun put in place of the infinitive in the sentence fails to make the construction have sense. It seems that, in such a construction, inwè and isi are inseparable as an idiomatic expression. For that reason, it is reasonable to infer that inwè (isi) enlarges the meaning of, and narrows the application of, the verb achó. (See also the use of íchò as an auxiliary in Chapter III.)

- (d) Ndi ahù átu¹ghi egwù ígà za òku.

Those people did not fear fear to answer the call.

- (e) Ó nwé¹ghi ike ile yá anya n'ihù.

He had not ability (was not able) to look him in the face.

- (f) Nánì¹ òbara yá m gà eghéri pùrù ímè m kà m' ghòró kwà nwa ohù.

His blood alone which I will fry is able to make me become a new-born baby.

Another set of infinitives is used as infinitives of purpose.

This set differs from the set that modifies a whole verbal phrase in that, whereas the verb phrase infinitival complement is essential to the understanding of the sentence as a whole, the infinitive of purpose can be deleted and yet the sense of the sentence will remain intact. Most of these infinitives tend to explain the why and wherefore of an action; for that reason, they have been subcategorized into infinitives of purpose. The following examples contain infinitives of purpose:

- i) Há wée¹ gáwa íhù D.C.

They then went to see the D.C.

- ii) Mgbe há jíkere ílaghàchi, Oménukó gwàrà ndi ahù ka há chere ndi ijè ndi òzò.

When they got ready to return, Omenukò told those people that they should wait for the other travellers.

iii) Ọ kpòrò ha íjù ha mà ọ nwere íhe ha nwèrè íkwù.

He called them to ask them if they had anything to say.

iv) Ọ díghì mmadu obulà biara inyere yá aka ilusi ndi ahù ọgu.

There was nobody who came to help him to fight those people.

v) Ngwere weé gbabà n'otù ónu dí n'akuku úzo izere mmiri.

The lizard scurried into a burrow beside the road to keep away from the rain.

An infinitive is used in a way that neither suggests a purpose or reason of an action nor simply complements the verb phrase. In one sense, it is an infinitive of reason; in another sense, it is an infinitive of result.

Kà mbè ghará inwé ike ipùta ọzọ idi ndù.

So that the tortoise will not have power to (cannot) come out again to live.

In this sentence, there is a tight relationship between purpose and result as manifested by the infinitive. It would appear that, if the coming out of the tortoise can be equated with his living, his surviving, the infinitive clearly shows the consequence of such coming out. If, on the other hand, the aim of the tortoise is to come out to live, then the infinitive is a purpose one. In this sense, the tortoise could as well be alive where he is before coming out; it is no longer a question of surviving on coming out.

The only infinitival conjunction found is used in Omenuko in the following sentence:

Ó di anyí mmà karia anya anyí ihu nti anyí.

It is better for us than our eyes to see our ears.

This is an exceptional use of an infinitive, in Igbo, as a conjunction. The exception may be accounted for, by the fact that the expression in which it occurs is a proverb.

Some infinitives have been clothed so much with the characteristics of nouns that one hardly perceives their original nature of verbs.

Such are called substantivized infinitives, and they include:

ije, (to travel ----- travelling); ide, (to write ----- writing);
igbako, (to add ----- addition); ichu, (to hunt ----- hunting);
iko, (to tell ----- telling); ikpe, (to judge ----- judging).

In their verbal function, the infinitives occupy positions in sentences according to the type of the verb with which they are used. Causative verbs, such as ime - to make - and verbs of volition - icho - are followed by infinitives and non-infinitival clauses.

Ágà m emé yá ije ébe ahù.

I will make him go there.

Ágà m emé yá kà ó jee ebe ahù.

I will mak him that he go there.

Fá chòrò ifú onye isí.

They want to see the boss.

Fá chòrò ka fá fú onye isí.

They want that they see the boss.

Similarly verbs of opinion - iche - to think, and verbs of movement announcing the object of the movement (igba (oso); ije - (to go); ibia - (to come) are followed by both infinitives and non-infinitival clauses. But verbs of perception such as inu (to hear); ifu (to see); imetu (to feel) are never followed by the infinitives in Igbo. Thus,

Ágà m afú nà ọ́ biàrà.

I will see that he (must) come.

But

*Ágà m afú yà ìbià.

I will see him to come.

Ànyị̀ nùrụ̀ na ọ́ gà abia.

We heard that he will come.

But

*Ànyị̀ nùrụ̀ yà ìbià.

We heard him to come.

Fá fùrụ̀ ka m nà abia.

They saw when I was coming.

But

*Fá fùrụ̀ m ìbià.

They see me to come.

Gerunds

Formation

The gerund expresses activity by indicating such and such circumstance relative to another verb of the sentence. The basic meaning of the gerund is derived from the lexical meaning of the verb from which it is formed.

The formation of the gerund is dependent upon whether the verb is monosyllabic or polysyllabic. In the case of monosyllabic verbs, formation is by the process of partial reduplication, and, in the case of polysyllabic verbs, the formation is by prefixation.

Reduplication

Reduplication occurs as follows:

- (a) i/i occurs where the vowel of the verb stem is

front (i, ɪ, e or a) as in

| | | |
|------|-------|-----------|
| rí - | òrírì | eating |
| sí - | òsísì | saying |
| dé - | òdíde | writing |
| zá - | òzìza | answering |

- (b) u/u occurs where the vowel of the verb stem is back

(u, ʊ, o or ɔ) as in

| | | |
|-------|---------|----------|
| gbú - | ògbúgbu | killing |
| hú - | òhúhú | seeing |
| tò - | òtuto | praising |
| kó - | òkúkó | guessing |

- (c) In addition, where the stem is rounded, the reduplication is also rounded, as in

nwé - ònwúnwe having
gwá - ògwúgwa telling

Prefixation

In the case of polysyllabic verbs, the gerund is formed by prefixation. By this is meant that either of the nasals /m/, /n/ is preattached to the root of the verb, and the resulting word is a gerund. /m/ is prefixed to labial consonantal roots, and /n/ is prefixed to the others. The following examples illustrate the process:

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------|
| í - gbàsà | íngbasà, spreading, dismissal |
| í - bido | ímbido, beginning |
| í - gbàkọ | íngbàkọ, adding |
| í - bibì | ímbibì, destroying |
| í - sògbu | ínsògbu, worrying |
| í - kwadebe | ínkwadebe, preparing |
| í - kùtè | ínkùtè, bringing (a child) |

In most cases, the gerund occupies the same position as the infinitive which is used nominally:

- i) (a) "Ídè akwukwọ̀ siri íke."
To write a book is difficult.
(b) "Òdide akwukwọ̀ siri íke."
Writing a book is difficult.
- ii) (a) "Ígbàkọ̀ ọ̀nụ̀ ọ̀gụ̀ dī ọ̀fẹ̀lẹ̀."
To add figures is easy.
(b) "Íngbàkọ̀ ọ̀nụ̀ ọ̀gụ̀ dī ọ̀fẹ̀lẹ̀."
Adding figures is easy.

iii) (a) "Ànyí achòrò izo àní."

We don't want to dispute over land.

(b) "Ànyí achòrò òzìzò àní."

We don't want disputing over land.

When used with the expression síté na, it expresses certain circumstances of an action marked by another verb of the sentence:

"Síté na okwukwé dí etu à ka ó siri nwé egò."

By believing like this, he got money.

"Síté na omumé dí etu à ka mmádù nchá jì wé fụ yà na anyà."

By thus behaving, everybody loved him.

The infinitive could be used here instead of the gerund.

Although gerunds and infinitives occupy the same syntactic environments generally, there is a difference in content between them. Gerunds tend to refer to fait accompli, whereas infinitives almost all the time refer to future activity, and hardly ever to past, eg.

1. (a) Ídú (infinitive) fa dù mma.

(To see them off is a good idea.)

It will be a good idea to see them off.

(b) Òdúdu hà dù mma.

Showing them out was good.

(The fact that they were shown out was good.)

It was a good idea to see them off.

2. (a) Íkpò onye isi dù mkpa.

To invite the boss is necessary.

(b) Òkpúkpo onye isi dù mkpa.

Inviting the boss was necessary.

3. (a) Íjé' ebe ahù ga ábà úrù.

To go there will be profitable.

- (b) Òjije ebe ahù bara úrù.

Going (the fact that someone went) there was profitable.

When, however, the gerunds are expressly used to refer to the future, the action expressed by them is taken for granted. Òkpúkpo onye isì dù mkpa. Inviting the boss is necessary. By this sentence is understood that there is a consensus that the boss should be invited. If an infinitive were substituted for the gerund, the sentence would mean a mere suggestion that the boss ought to be invited.

Apart from the difference in the linguistic organisation of the gerund and the infinitive, there is yet the distributional distinction between them. The functional range of the infinitive covers the functional range of the gerund, and more. The gerund only serves as a nominal by naming a state or action, or occurrence of activity; the infinitive, on the other hand, is equatable with most word classes, that is, it can be used where a noun, verb, or verbal phrase, etc. could be used, but not instead of a preposition or a pronoun. And whereas the gerund can take the determiners - a, áhù, nnúnwà, nníí (this, that, this here, that there (respectively)), the pure infinitive never goes with a determiner. However, some infinitives, as already pointed out, have been so clothed with the semantic characteristics of nouns that they are used with the determiners. For example, it is acceptable to say:

Íkpé à ajókà - this to judge (judging, judgment)

is very bad;

Íjé ahù dọ lóòmma - that to travel (that travel/
journey was very successful).

There is also a tonal difference between the infinitive and the gerund. Tone has a semantic effect on gerunds in that, if a gerund is low, low, high at one time, and at another low, high, high, it will have two different meanings, for example:

Òmumé (behaviour) òmúme (doing) ònyinyé (gift)

ònyínye (giving)

On the other hand, tone has a lexical effect on the infinitive. With regard to high tone verbs, a high tone falls on the i - prefix of the infinitive, while the radical carries a tone which is high but not as high as the prefix. In other words, infinitives of high tone verbs exhibit the downstep tone system. If the tones are high, the heights are so graded that one tone must not be as high as the other. In regard to low tone verbs, the tone on the i - prefix is high while that on the radical is low. Examples of high tone verbs are:

Íjé (to go), Íbiá (to come), ígà (to go), íkwù (to say).

Low tone verbs are such verbs as:

Íbò (to cut meat into pieces), ípù (to go out),

íke (to share), írò (to dream), íze (to protect oneself),

íku (ume) (to breathe).

Thus, tone marks out these infinitives from the nouns in the language which have the same linguistic organisation as the infinitives. For example: íkè, íkù, íbà, ígà, íjé and íbò are lexically distinct from íke (strength), íku - ányà (eyebrow), íbà (a type of food), ígà (chains for prisoners), íjé (travelling) and íbò (two) respectively, only because

of the movement of the tones. Apart from íjè (travelling); the latter words have no semantic relationship with the infinitives and, even though íke has the same shape and tones as íke (buttocks), it cannot be said that both have the same etymological history.

Therefore, since these words, which have the same shapes as infinitives, have neither semantic bearing on, except for íjè nor etymological connection with, the infinitives, it must be concluded that the only effect which tone has on them is lexical.

Green and Igwe, in their treatment of "verbal nouns", observe that there is a class of "verbal nouns" formed by using a special form of a verb (o-/ò + root) with its cognate. The examples furnished by them include:

| <u>Agent</u> | <u>Cognate</u> | <u>Genitive</u> | <u>Noun</u> | <u>Agent</u> |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Òvú | ívú "to carry" | ívu "load" | òvú "carrier of load" | ívu |
| Ògbá | ígbá "to divine" | àja "oracle" | ògbá "diviner" | àja |
| Òtá | ítá "to eat" | ùkwà "breadfruit" | òtá "breadfruit eater" | ùkwa |

What they omit to say as regards these expressions, which are numerous in the language, is that their formation is not confined to the combination of verbs and nouns only; they are also formed by using the verb forms with adverbs as in:

íjé 'to go': o-/o- + root ----> òjé: òjé ----> NP/ ---- Adv.

that is, òjé ñgwa ñgwa, one who walks fast.

ímé 'to do': o-/o- + root ----> òmé: òmé ----> NP/ ---- Adv.

that is, òmé òsìsò, one who does everything quickly.

íjé 'to go': o-/o- + root ----> òjé: òjé ----> NP/ ---- Adv.

that is, òjé nà nwáyò, one who walks very slowly.

íri 'to eat': o-/o- + root ----> òrí: òrí ----> NP/ ---- Cl.

that is, òrí ihe edèbere ónye òzò, one who eats what is reserved for other people.

There are other similar expressions such as:

"Òjé èbe akpòhò yà".

One who goes to where one has not been invited.

"Òzá òku ákpòhò yà".

One who answers a call that is not meant for one.

The expressions are not always used happily; more often than not, they connote sarcastic meaning. Nobody would like to be regarded as one who goes to where one is not needed, or to be an eater of others' food. On the other hand, one who eats the food kept for another person may be a pathetic fellow who, through ill-luck, has become a scapegoat of some sort. Similarly, a person who goes to where he is not wanted, will draw pity from us because, due to ignorance on his part, another person's ill-luck has befallen him.

However, there are similar expressions in which there is no doubt at all as to what they mean. For instance, ògbú' éfi (one who kills cows), ògbú' águ (one who kills tigers), òtú' ùgo (one who wears the feather of the eagle), always show the bravery or achievement of those who go by these names. But these may not be the real names of these people; they are additional names which put in a nutshell the outstanding performances of the people.

'Ògbú' águ' suggests that the person, in the past, killed several tigers and performed feats; in some cases, he can still do these things. 'Ògbú' éfi' (killer of cows) shows that the person is rich, and 'Òtú' ùgo' connotes an excellent dancer, one who leads others in dancing. These are, therefore, reminiscent of what achievements the individuals, who go by these titles, may have attained.

CHAPTER III

The Auxiliaries

The auxiliaries are verbal elements which, when present, carry the grammatical meaning of the verb phrase, while the main verbs carry the lexical meaning. Although "hardly any two grammars agree on the total list of auxiliaries, or upon their detailed classification", because they are "classified in connection with a precise and detailed treatment of the structure of the verb phrase"⁽¹⁾, for the purposes of this study, the following have been recognised as auxiliaries in Igbo: gà - will; là - be, will; kà - would (have); jí - do, and chó - be about to.

These verbs have been recognised as auxiliaries because

- (a) They are used in conjunction with other verbs and show grammatical relation with them.
- (b) They either mark the time or manner of action of another verb.

(1) Gleason, H.A. Jr. (1965) Linguistics and English Grammar
New York.

Chó is used in place of gà as an auxiliary of periphrasis to "assist in expressing emphatic forms of speech".⁽²⁾ Compare for instance:

(a) Mmírì lá agá ijò.

Rain is going to fall

with

(b) Mmírì lá achó ijò.

Rain is wanting to fall.

(Rain is about to fall.)

Sentence (a) does not imply any degree of certainty that it is going to rain, while (b) indicates that the chances are that it is certainly going to rain.

Compare also:

(c) Ánwù là agá imù.

Sun is going to shine.

(= The sun is going to shine.)

with

(d) Ánwù lá achó imù.

Sun is wanting to shine.

(= The sun is about to shine.)

Chó occurs as an auxiliary only in a positive sentence in which là or gà can combine. The effect of chó is to render the sentence more dramatic. It is not an auxiliary in the same way as the others; it always requires an infinitive as complement and loses its lexical meaning of "to want" when used as an auxiliary.

(2) O.E.D. (I)

In the sentence:

Ô chòrò ísì alù.

He wants/wanted to cook meat.

chòrò is not an auxiliary even though it is followed by the infinitive, ísì because neither là nor gà combines with it in that sentence.

Similarly, in

Ỗ chòhò ísì alù.

He wants not to cook some meat.

(= He does not want to cook any meat.)

chòhò is not an auxiliary.

It follows that in order to use chó as an auxiliary verb, the three conditions of

1. combination with là or gà;
2. the presence of an infinitival complement; and
3. the loss of lexical meaning of chó

must all be fulfilled.

As an auxiliary, jí always occurs in dependent clauses. When it occurs otherwise, it is a full verb exemplified by

(a) Gíní kà ó jí bíá?

What that he holds come.

(= Why did he come?)

(b) Ò jí jí là aka.

He holds a yam in hand.

(c) Éjí m maka yá bíá.

Hold I because of him

come. (= I came because
of him.)(d) Ò jí úmú ìtó.

She has three children.

(Observe that in deep structure, the main clause of (c) is "ḿ bíá(ra)" and the dependent clause is "éjí m maka yá.)

Like cho and gà, jí can also combine with the auxiliary là, but unlike the former, it is never followed by an infinitive.

Compare

(e) Gíní m̀ere há là éjí àbíá kalà?

Why do they come here?

and

(f) Gíní m̀ere há jí àbíá kalà?

Why do they come here?

and it will be seen that (e) is more emphatic than (f). But

*Gíní m̀ere há jí ìbíá kalà? in which the auxiliary, jí, is followed by an infinitive, is not acceptable.

Distribution of the Negative Particle with the Auxiliaries

The negators have two syntactic positions:

(a) Aux — V — Neg.

(b) Aux — Neg — V.

They occur immediately after the main verb with the auxiliaries,

là⁽³⁾ and kà as in the following sentences:

1. Ézè alá abíáha. Há akà bíáha.

Eze is not coming They haven't come.

2. Ézè alá abíàèhé.

Eze is no longer coming.

With the other auxiliaries, the negators come between the auxiliary and the main verb.

3. Mmírì agaha avu m ije be hà.

Rains will not stop me from going to their house.

4. Mmírì alá achóho izò.

Rain is not wanting to fall. (= It is not going to rain.)

5. Gínì mere ó jìho bíá?

What made he did not come? (= Why did he not come?)

There is a certain nuance between gà and kà. Kà suggests that the clause in which it occurs is negative because of an unfulfilled condition in the preceding or following conditional clause. Gà can be used in a simple independent sentence as in the case of a husband suggesting to his wife that it would be a good idea to go to Enugu the next day.

Anyí gà eje kwalu Enugu echí.

(I think) we shall go to Enugu tomorrow.

(3) In Inyi, which is a stone's throw from Achi, the negator occurs between the auxiliary, là and the main verb.

The woman will react by asking either,

Ímè gínì? Màka gínì?
 or
 To do what? Why?

Kà cannot be so used. If the husband said,

"Ànyí àká éje kwalu Enugu echi".

We would go to Enugu tomorrow.

the wife, knowing that nothing provoked the statement and that it was incomplete, would react by asking,

"Gínì wèé mezia?

And what happened (to prevent our going)?

Then, the husband would complete it.

Kà, therefore, enables us to predict a negative result; it suggests that a move will not be made because it has been forestalled by circumstances beyond our control. The following sentences exemplify its uses:

1. Kèdú íhe àká éme mà ọ́ buru la ọ́ biara?

What would have happened if he had come? (He did not come; something forestalled him; and nothing was done as a result.)

2. Ànyí àká àbiàha mà ọ́ buru là anyí m̀ara la ọ́ là alọhó la ulò.

We would not have come, had we known that he would not be at home. (Even though we have in fact come, our coming is of no avail because it has been rendered useless by his absence.)

3. Ébe ọ bù la ùlù áfùhọ ya lù ulò, ùlù àká
 éje ebe ọ là arú ọrù ichọ yá.

Since you did not see him in the house, you should
 have gone to his place of work to look for him.

4. Há àká àbía echi, mà ọ buru là í bìàha.

They would have come tomorrow if you had not come.
 (They won't come tomorrow, because the visitor's
 visit has forestalled their coming.)

For the second and third singular, kà is used instead of àká,
 but there is no change in the semantic content as either enables us to
 predict that some intention has been negated.

àká -----> kà/2nd and 3rd pers. sg.

5. Í ká énwé ego mà ọ buru là í là arúsi ọrù ike.

You would have got money (= would have been rich)
 if you had worked hard.

6. Ọ ká àbía mà ọ buru là ágwàrà yá.

He would have come if he had been told.

On the other hand, là and gà enable us to predict positive
 assertion. Là is partly used to show duration and partly to report
 activity.

7. Kèdú ihe ọ là emé?

What is he doing?

8. Ọ là agú akwúkwọ.

He is reading a book.

9. Èbéé kà í là ejé?

Where are you going?

10. Álà m ejé orù.

I am going to work.

11. Ó là ákò jì ogè m fùrù yá.

He was making ridges for his yams when I saw him.

12. Hálà égè nchì kítà.

They are listening now.

These sentences show instances of duration of activity. In other words, one neither knows the beginning nor the end of the activity, but just that the activity is going on.

Là reports about activity in the following sentences.

13. Udú mmiri là adú mmá là ahú.

The rainy season refreshes the body.

14. Ó là afú mfu.

He foresees the future.

15. Álà m afú yá ogè nchá.

I always see him.

16. Hálà eché ulò ákwùkwò nché.

They watch the school (against despoliation).

17. Ó là afú ụzò.

He sees.

But the use of là is not confined to expressing duration and reporting activity only; it is also used to show the future. This is dealt with under the rubric of:

The progressive is used to express future activity, etc. in Chapter IV.

Gà

Gà is mainly used to indicate the future, but, like là, its use is not confined to implying the future as will be shown later.

18. Ó gà ejé Enugu echi.

He will go to Enugu tomorrow.

19. Òkéké gà alù Mgbafò lá ahò ọzọ.

Okeke will marry Mgbafò next year.

20. Nwá m' gà ebido akwùkwọ la ahò itó ọzọ.

My child will start school in three year's time.

21. Ngozi gà áfùtá là nnukwu ụlọ ákwùkwọ la ahò à.

Ngozi will leave university this year.

22. Ónye ọbulà ga atú ụtụ ya la izù úkà ọzọ.

Everybody will pay their contribution next week.

Other uses of gà

Gà shows likelihood in:

23. Nkà à ga adú m' mmá.

This will suit me.

24. Nke áhụ ga ézù.

That will do.

25. Kà anyị jee là bé anyị, i ga éso?

Let us go to our house, will you follow (= come with us)?

Gà shows compulsion in:

26. Í gà emé yà.

You have to do it.

27. Í gà emé yà.

You must do it. (On no account will you fail to do it).

28. Ó gà abíá.

He must come.

The combination gà egbú is used to refer to a continuing state:

29. Nzuzu ga egbú yà.

Foolishness will kill him. (= He is very foolish.)

30. Ngára ga egbú yà.

He is very proud.

31. Égò ga egbú kwalụ nwọkè à.

He is awfully rich.

So it can be seen that gà conveys different messages depending upon its syntactic environment. Above, it has been used to indicate probable occurrence of activity, characteristic behaviour and immediate future as in sentence (25).

In summary, the auxiliaries are non-stative verbs which function as margins in complex VPs. They emphasise what is stated in the main verb. When followed by an infinitive, the auxiliary, gà, as in Ó gà íbíá, presents a near future activity as a prolongation of the present.

It presents this activity from the point of view of the present moment. It is opposed to Ó gá abia' in which the future is remote and is presented as detached, independent of the present. The auxiliaries serve as props to the main verbs; là and gà help the latter

- (a) to show tense;
- (b) to express habitual action;
- (c) to express continuity,

and chó and ji assist the main verbs,

- (d) to lay emphasis.

CHAPTER IV

Igbo Verb Forms

Nature of the Verb

The Igbo verb stem is primarily monosyllabic, consisting of a consonant plus a vowel. Stems which end in consonants are not found. It is the first constituent of a verb phrase and occupies the position V in any given Igbo sentence.

Given that an Igbo sentence is represented by the symbol S, the position of an Igbo verb can be indicated by expanding S as follows:

1. $S \longrightarrow NP + (NP) + VP$
2. $VP \longrightarrow (Aux) + V + (NP) + (PP) + (ADV)$

The two rules can be transformed into:

$$S \longrightarrow \underset{1}{NP} + \underset{2}{(NP)} + \underset{3}{Aux} + \underset{4}{V} + \underset{5}{(NP)} + (PP) + (ADV)$$

Given that the two rules transformed describe a basic Igbo sentence, they define as a verb any element that occupies the 2nd position in the structure. This proposition can be exemplified in the following sentences:

1. Ézè, biá.

1 2

Eze come.

2. Ézè nwere égó.

1 2 3

Eze has money.

3. Ézè 0 latara égò la ogè?

1 2 3 4

Eze he received money in time.

(= Did Eze receive money in time?)

Observe that in (3) the "0" is triggered as part of Q (question) in the deep structure.

In the above sentences, each item subscripted as 2 is a verb. It can be seen that a verb follows immediately the NP in initial position, that is, whatever follows the subject NP is the first constituent of the verbal phrase.

The Igbo verb seems in general to have by itself some sense in the text, without a complementary word to assist it to bring out its meaning. There are, however, some verbs which are always accompanied by the same nominal to express a particular meaning. In this study, such verbs are referred to as nominal-bound verbs. The complementary nominals form part of the verbal expression which carries the sense. Thus, some Igbo verbs are susceptible to having complementary nominals to which the action which the verbs express is directly transmitted. Some of the nominal-bound verbs are:

| | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| íchị (óchị), | to laugh (laugh) |
| ígbá (mgbá), | to wrestle (wrestling) |
| íbè (akwa), | to cry (cry) |
| ígè (ńchị), | to listen (ear) |
| ígbá (akpíri), | to kick the throat (= be greedy) |

The verb does not indicate an action in a pure and simple way, but "situates" it according to certain categories of which the Igbo language possesses three:

1. Person

Carnochan (1966) states that the category of person in Igbo applies "only to pronoun — verb structures". So that person is not expounded by the verb as there is only one form of the verb to express the action for the three grammatical persons both in the singular and the plural. The subject indicates who or what is the author of the action as exemplified in the paradigm which follows:

| | | | | |
|---------------|--------|----|-------|------------|
| Ḿ | bù/Àbù | m. | Ànyị́ | bù |
| I | am. | | We | are. |
| Í | bù. | | Úlù | bù. |
| You | are. | | You | are. |
| Ọ́ | bù. | | Há | bù/Àbù ha. |
| He/she/it is. | | | They | are. |

There is no inflexional change in the verb for it to agree with the subject in number, and, except for the 1st sg. and 3rd pl., where there are alternatives, the subject usually precedes the verb.

2. Mood

Igbo has five personal moods and one impersonal mood, the infinitive mood. The personal moods are: the indicative, the imperative, the subjunctive, the interrogative and the conditional.

The Indicative Mood

The indicative mood indicates that one executes a given action, either immediately or in the past or future. In a free clause, it is expounded by the structure sp(c)(a), in which s stands for subject, p for predicate, c for complement and a for adjunct. (1)

spa: Ọ̀ biàra ébè à.

He came here.

spc: Ọ̀ chiri mụ́ íhè.

He beat me.

sp: Ọ̀ gà abiá.

He will come.

In bound and linked clauses, the indicative mood is of the structure (a)(s)p(c)(a) as exemplified by the sentences which follow.

spa: Ọ̀ gà ejé mà ọ̀ rụsịa ọrụ́.

He will go when he finishes his work.

aspc: Ọ̀ bia, m gà agwá ya.

If he comes, I shall tell him.

spapc: Ọ̀ jèrè ụlọ ọgwù, weé jee afia.

He went to hospital, and then to market.

The Imperative Mood

The imperative mood is expounded by the structure, p(c)(a) in free clauses, and by (s)p(c) in bound and linked clauses.

(1) Adjunct is used here as "any word or words expanding the subject, predicate, etc., of a sentence". (The Shorter O.E.D.)

- p: Biá. Come.
- pa: Biá ebé à. Come here.
- pc: Bùté jí.
Bring yams.
- sp: Chínwè, biá.
Chinwe, come.
- spc: Chínwè, chítá jí.
Chinwe, bring yams.
- spca: Chínwè, chítá jí ebe à.
Chinwe, bring yams here.

These examples above have the feature [- plural]. If the subject of the sentence is plural, the suffix -lù/nù is attached to the verb so that it agrees in concord with the plural subject. This is exemplified in the sentences that follow:

- p: Biálù.
Come + plural.
- pa: Biálù ébé à.
Come + plural here.
- sp: Chínwè la Ézè, biálù.
Chinwe and Eze, come + plural.
- spc: Chínwè la Ézè, chítálù jí.
Chinwe and Eze, bring yams + plural.

In bound and linked clauses, the mood is expounded by the structure, (s) ap/pa.

- ap: Ógè í làtara, bìá.
 When you return, come.
- pa: Biá ógè í làtara.
 Come, when you return.
- sap: Chínwè, ógè í làtara, bìá.
 Chinwe, when you have returned, come.

In the progressive, the imperative mood is expounded by the structure, pc(c)(a) as in:

- pc: Lá èmé yá.
 Keep doing it.
- pcc: Lá èmére mù ya.
 Keep doing me it.
 (= Keep doing it for me.)
- pcc: "Ná ènyé anyí àchìchá òkà à ógè nínè."
 Keep giving us this bread always.

The negative imperative is expressed by the addition of the negative particle -la/-le to the verb, and prefixing the vowel to the radical to harmonize with that of the verb root.

- p -pl. Ábíàla.
 Don't come.
- pa -pl. Ábíàla ebe à.
 Don't come here.
- sp -pl. Chínwè, ábíàla.
 Chinwe, don't come.

spc -pl. Chínwè, áchítala jí.

Chinwe, don't bring yams.

spca -pl. Chínwè, áchítala jí ebe à.

Chinwe, don't bring yams here.

In the negative plural, the subject of the verb (which is invariably, in the absence of proper nouns, úlù or há) is always expressed.

The use of úlù or há is obligatory when the plural subject is not named, but optional when the latter is named. It is then used in apposition to the noun.

sp +pl. → Úlù ábiàla.

You don't come.

spa +pl. → Úlù ábiàla ebe à.

sp +pl. → Há abíàla.

Let them not come.

sp +pl. → Chínwè la Ézè, (há) abíàla.

Chinwe and Eze, let them not come.

If the subject of the verb is the first person plural, ànyí, the auxiliary, kà, followed by the subject and the negative verb, ghàrá, is used.

kasp → Kà anyí ghàrá ijé.

Let us not go.

The verb in the imperative mood is unlike the verbs in the other moods of the language in two ways:

- (i) The negative post-verbal particle -ha may not occur.
- (ii) It is the only mood in the language in which the number verb concord is operative.

The Subjunctive Mood

The subjunctive mood has the structure $\begin{pmatrix} \text{ka} \\ \text{ngwa} \end{pmatrix} \text{sp(c)}(a)$, that is, it consists of a subject NP followed by a predicator which, in turn, may optionally be followed by either a complement NP, or an adjunct, or both, all of which are preceded by one of the lexemes, kà or ngwa.

The subjunctive, like the imperative, expresses the will of the person speaking, but it has not the same semantic force as the imperative. It may introduce an affectionate nuance into the action, thereby bringing a certain volition. In some sense, the subjunctive is a sort of command, but it adds to the command a certain amount of pliancy and reservation. The imperative, on the other hand, is the short and imperious formula of command. The subjunctive can be regarded as the mood of supplication in which its *raison d'être* is expressed and understood.

In subjunctive constructions, the verb stem may occur with or without a vowel prefix, depending upon the semantic content of the sentence.

spc (expressing a wish or desire)

(1) Ngózi dìrì Chukwu.

Blessed be God (May God be blessed).

(2) Chùkwu nyèré wù aka.

God give you a hand. (= May God help you.)

In agentless passive constructions, an impersonal pronoun precedes the verb.

kapc (3) "Kà é mee uchè í nà uwa."

"Thy will be done on earth."

(4) "Kà é gbuo yà kità."

"That it be killed now."

(= Let it be killed now.)

When an active positive construction in the subjunctive mood is preceded by kà or ngwa, it marks consent, acquiescence or rarely request. (2)

kasp (5) Kà anyí jee.

That we go.

(= Let us go) since you have asked for it.

(6) Kà anyí ruo orù.

That we work work.

(= Let us do the work) You suggested it some time ago, and I was unwilling to work, now I have consented that we should do the work.

(7) Nyá jèé.

Let him/her/it go.

(2) In most cases, a request occurs with 'bíkò', please.

In negative constructions, the subjunctive is of the structure sp(c).

sp (8) Chúk₁wu ekwéle!

God not agree (= God forbid)!

spc (9) Ónwu₁ egbùle i.

Death not kill you. (= May death not kill you.)

In common parlance, the subjunctive construction is rendered negative by the use of the verb, ghàrá, followed by the infinitive.

kasp (10) Kà anyí₁ ghàrá₁ ijé₁ ebe ahù.

That we leave off to go there.

(= Let us not go there.)

(11) Kà ó₁ ghàrá₁ izù₁ íke₁ taà.

That he leaves off to rest today.

(= Let him not rest today.)

The Interrogative Mood

The interrogative mood is expounded by the structure, s(s)p(c)(a). The intonational features differ from those of examples concerning other moods.

If there is no interrogative word, one will have recourse to intonational features alone.

sp (12) Ó₁ biara₁ —————→

He came.

Ò₁ biara?

Did he come?

spc (13) Ó chítara jí —————→

He brought yams.

Ò chítara jí?

He brought yams? (= Did he bring yams?)

When an interrogative sentence occurs with a bound clause, the structure becomes asp/spa.

asp (14) Ógè ó mèsiri, ó biàra?

When he finished, he came?

(= Did he come when he finished?)

spa (15) Ànyị ga ejé mà é mesia?

We shall go when finished.

(= Shall we go afterwards?)

Interrogative Sentences introduced by the Interrogative Words

The interrogative words in Igbo are:

| | | |
|----------|-------------|----------|
| hjíí | (kèdú) | - how; |
| kólé | èbéé | - where; |
| èé | (ònyé) | - who; |
| nnù | (gíní) | - what; |
| màkànnù | (màka gíní) | - why; |
| njíìngbe | (kèdú ógè) | - when. |

Sentences in which an interrogative pronoun occurs:

- (16) Ònyé biàra?

Who came?

- (17) Ònyé kà í fùrù?

Whom did you see?

interrogative adverbs of place:

- (18) Ebéé kà í là agá?

Where that you are going?

(= Where are you going?)

an interrogative adjective:

- (19) Kèdú ebe í fùrù yá?

Which place you saw it.

(= Which place did you see it?)

- (20) Kèdú nwoké biàra ébe à?

Which man came here?

interrogative pronouns of purpose or reason:

- (21) Gíni kpàtara í jì jeé ebe ahù?

What caused you hold go there?

(= Why did you go there?)

- (22) Màka gíni kà ó jì biá?

Because of what that he hold come.

(= Why did he come?)

and an interrogative expression of time:

- (23) Mgbé òle kà ó biàra?

When that he came.

(= When did he come?)

So, (only) when introducing a question, is used to modify the subject NP as can be seen in the paradigm:

| Singular | Plural |
|--|--|
| 1. (Ọ bu) Sò mú bìàrà? Only I came? | (Ọ bu) Sò anyị bìàrà? (It is = is it) only we came? |
| 2. Sò gị bìàrà? Only you came? | Sò úlù bìàrà? Only you came? |
| 3. Sò nyá bìàrà? Only he came? | Sò há bìàrà? Only they came? |

Without the interrogative word, the pronoun of the noun subject is mentioned in spite of the presence of the latter in the sentence. It is obligatory to mention the pronoun which stands for the noun subject as it is impossible to ask a question in the language without using at the same time the corresponding pronoun. The interrogative system can be summarised as follows:

| N | PRO | AUX | V |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Ụchè Uche | Ọ he | ga will | abíá? or come? |
| 2. --- | Ọ He Ọnyé Who | ga will gà will | abíá? or come? abíá? come? |
| 3. Ẹze Eze | du is | áhò years | olé?(3) how many? (= How old is Eze?) |

- (3) Observe that the pronoun is not mentioned in (3) above because of the occurrence of the interrogative word olé.

The Conditional Mood

The conditional mood indicates essentially the eventuality of an action; it is used when one wants to express not a certain reality, but the potential.

The notion of eventuality can be expressed as:

1. The potential: The action is thought of as possible, and realisable either in the present or in the future. The potential construction has the structure, sp(c)(a), eg.

spa Mụ àkà àlọ ébe ahụ ifù gi, mà ọ buru là i biàra.

I would have been there to see you if you had come.

spca Mụ àkà árusigo oru erí ogè, ma ọ buru là m choro.

I would have finished the work since, had I wanted (to do so).

2. The unreal: The action is thought of as unrealisable. This characteristic of impossibility is attached to the notion of the past. It is because the occasion, or the condition of its realisation, is definitively lost that the action is not produced, eg.

spcc Ô ká áso m inwe ego, mà ọ buru là mụ nwere umu.

It would have pleased me to have money if I had children.

spa Mụ àkà émesigo(ri), ma ọ buru là i hafuru mụ.

I would have finished, if you had left me.

pa Á ká ejide yá, mà ọ buru là ô nwere ónye màtara yá.

One would have arrested him if it was that there had been who recognised him. (= He would have been arrested had there been somebody who recognised him.)

A nuance has been introduced into the unreal by the phrase: nwántinti (ogè); the action is given as not produced, but it almost was produced, eg.

aspc (a) Nwántinti, ò fu m.

A little he saw me. (= He almost saw me.)

asp (b) Nwántinti (kà) m ghàrá ibiá.

A little that I left to come.

(= I almost failed to come.)

In sentence (b) what was not produced was failure to come, not coming which, in fact, was effected.

The form of the conditional is distinguished from that of the affirmative indicative in two respects:

1. The conditional is more often than not preceded by the conditional elements, O buru, (if it was), which are absent in affirmative sentences.
2. The pitch pattern of the subject pronoun (where Ó buru is not used) is high, and the radical of the verb in the protasis is spoken on a high tone if it is a high-tone verb; the radical is said on a low tone if it is a low-tone verb. If the NP of the protasis is a noun, it retains its inherent tone, eg.

Compare sp Ó bia.

He comes (= See him coming)

in which the tones, although HH, are in step down pitch relation,

and sp Ó bia.

If he comes

in which the tones are again HH, but in level pitch relation.

Conditional Sentences

(i) True conditional: The hypothetical verb as well as the verb of the apodasis is put in the future. Eg.

aspc Ó buru là í gà abia, o gà adú mmà.

If that you will come, it will be good.

(= If you come, it will be all right.)

In the future in the past, only the verb in the apodasis is put in the future as in:

Ó ká abia mà ó buru là í gwàra yá.

He would (have) come if you told him.

(ii) Simple supposition from which a logical conclusion may be drawn. Eg.

aspc Ó zuo ori, ò búhò ezi mmadù.

He steals theft, he is not good person.

(= If he steals something, he is not a good person.)

spca Í bù ézigbo mmadù, ma ó buru là í kwuo eziokwù.

You are a good person if you tell good word.

(= if you tell the truth.)

(iii) The action expressed by the principal clause is subordinated to an uncertain future event expressed by the protasis. Eg.

Í choo í gà achóta.

You want you will find

(= If you seek, you will find.)

Í kuọ aká, agà eméyere gí.

You knock hands, it will be opened to you.

(= If you knock, it will be opened for you.)

(iv) Counter-factual supposition in which supposition is contrary to reality. Eg.

asp Ó buru là ézè échiho iwu à, nwókè ahù aká anwùho.

If the king had not made this law, the man would not have died.

Mú aká emèhe ya mà Ó buru là í biàha.

I would not have done it had you not come.

Tense

Tense is not the same "thing" as time. Time is a universal extra-linguistic concept which is divided into past, present and future. Tense is the correspondence between the form of the verb and the universal concept of time.

There are three tenses in Igbo which correspond to three extra-linguistic units of time: the present, the past and the future tenses. Each of the tenses diverges (as shown below) into "sub-tenses" to indicate precedence in time.

Given that T stands for tense, the three tenses and "sub-tenses" in Igbo can be represented by expanding T as follows:

- i) T → { Present }
 { Past }
 { Future }
- ii) Present → { Simple }
 { "La-Form" }
 { Perfect }
- iii) Past → { Simple }
 { Perfect }
 { Pluperfect }
- iv) Future → { Simple Progressive }
 { Perfect in the past }
 { Future in the past }
 { Perfect Progressive in the past }

The Simple Present Tense

The simple present tense is expressed by only one verb, without an auxiliary. It is used to demonstrate activity or state.

- i) Àkpo m̀yà asì.
I hate him.
- ii) Èkwuó m̀ là ọ̀ bù ónye óme njo.
I declare that he is a sinner.
- iii) Ò vu ívu.
He carries a load. (= He is carrying a load.)
- v) Èzi okwù bù ndù.
Truth is life.

It is used to indicate eternal truth as in:

- Mmádù ábuho nkù.
Man is not firewood.
- Úgùrù áduho mma là ahù.
The harmattan is not good on the body.
(= The harmattan disfigures the body.)
- Chúkwu dù.
God is. (= God exists.)

The present simple tense can be exemplified more fully in the following paradigm:

Simple Present Tense: Positive

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1st sg. | <u>Mú</u> <u>ènyé</u> jì. <u>Ènyé</u> m̀ jì. I give a yam. |
| 2nd sg. | <u>Ì</u> <u>nyé</u> jì. You give a yam. |

| | | |
|------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 3rd sg. | Ô nyé jí. | He/she/it gives a yam. |
| 3rd Indef. | Ê nyé jí. | A yam is given. |
| 1st plur. | Ànyí ònyé jí. | We give a yam. |
| 2nd plur. | Úlu ònyé jí. | You give a yam. |
| 3rd plur. | Há ònyé jí. | |
| | Ènyé hà jí. | They give a yam. |

The "La-Form" of the Verb

The "la-form" "as a finite verb showing some kind of habitual or progressive action (which may be in the present or past time according to a context, which in some way indicates the time)"⁽⁴⁾ is of the structure "La" + prefix (e/a) + root. The "la-forms" do not show any clear-cut distinctions of time; time is understood in them from the situations in which they are used, or indicated by such adverbial time-markers as kítaà, táà, óge ahù as exemplified by:

1. Ó là abíá.
He comes/He is coming.
2. Ó là abíá kítaà.
He is coming now.

(4) Ward, I.C. (1963)

It should be noted that sentence (1) may imply that the person has formed the habit of coming and, therefore, may not be coming at the time the utterance was made. It is only the situation in which the statement was made and such time-markers as kitaa (used in (2)) that can indicate definitely whether it is a question of habitual or progressive action.

The function of the "la-form" tense is to express a simple judgment or opinion given as such. It can, by the proper sense of the verb, indicate a sentiment:

Álǎ m atú egwù la ...

I am fearing that ...

Álǎ m achó kà ...

I am wanting that ... (= I want that ...)

The tense marks properly the concomitance of the action or the state expressed and the word which expresses them:

Álǎ m agwá wù ya.

I am telling you it.

Ó là egbú agwọ.

He is killing a snake.

The present "la-form" of the verb can be considered as localised in an instant; it is rare, however, that the action thus expressed could be expressed in a manner so exact. In the sentence:

"Gè nchì, álǎ agbá egbè".

Listen, guns are being fired.

the concomitance is seen in the instantaneity of igbá (to shoot, fire a gun). But in the sentence:

"Chéré nwanchinchi, ọ là arú ọrú".

Wait a little, he is working.

the verb là arú (is working) shows an action of which the real occurrence is extended far and beyond the present instant. The present "la-form" tense, therefore, marks either, as in this example, the duration of the action, or its non-temporal generality as in:

Óbù dú m ụchọ ebe ọ lọ; ọ là arúsi ọrú ike.

I am proud of him, he works hard.

This relative imprecision of the notion of the present "la-form" tense makes it possible to use this tense to mark a future event, when an adverbial - or time-shifter fixes the sense and avoids all ambiguity as shown below in (v).

The "la-form" tense is used to indicate "timelessness" as shown in the following illustrative sentences:

Sùgà la éde là mmírì.

Sugar melts in water.

Ánwù ala amùhọ la anyàsi.

The sun does not shine at night.

Óyì là atú la ụgùrụ.

Cold catches in the harmattan.

(= It is cold in the harmattan.)

Nkwù là enyé ànyị mmalụ.

The palm tree gives us oil.

It is used to show habitual action:

Ọ́ lá ẹ̀kwúká (okwu).

He talks talk.

(= He talks a lot.)

Ọ́ là agbá àsiri.

She kicks gossip.

(= She gossips a lot.)

Ọ́ là azú afià.

He buys market.

(= He is a trader.)

Ọ́ là ejé akwukwo.

He goes to school.

(= He is a schoolboy.)

The Progressive "La-Form"

The progressive "la-form" does not only indicate (in the case of the past progressive) that the action was produced in the past, but it expresses that the action is considered to be still going on and as not terminated yet at the time in the past to which the speaker refers.

The notion of continuity in the past progressive can be understood in several ways:

The action is considered as still going on, no matter the extent of its duration. It could be a state considered in its permanence, eg.

Á là akpó yà Ezè.

He is/was called Eze.

The "la-form" can serve to indicate the simultaneity of two actions in the past, one of which intervenes at a time when the other is happening.

Álā m égè nchì ọ̀gè ọ̀ là ekwé ùkwe.

I was listening while he was singing.

With certain verbs whose proper sense is to indicate an instantaneous action - fù - go out; bà - enter - the progressive is used not to mark simultaneity but the immediate succession in the past.

Álā m áfù àfù ọ̀gè ọ̀ bàtara.

I was going out when he entered.

The matrix sentence - álā m áfù àfù - is here used in the sense of álò m l'élù òfufu, I was on the point of going out. The action of ìfù - to go out, is seen and felt as some activity in which the person is involved.

The "la-form" can still indicate, by the extension of the notion of continuity, the habit of repetition of a certain action in the past:

L'áhó gara agà, álā m afù yà.

The year which passed past, I was seeing him.

(= I used to see him last year.)

Ọ̀ là abiá kalà kwa Nkwó l'ónwa gara agà.

He was coming here every Nkwo in the month which passed past.

(= He used to come here every Nkwó (market day) last month.)

The progressive operates in such a way that it evinces two parts semantically; the action is presented partly as accomplished and partly as non-accomplished, eg.

Òkéké là abíá.

Okeke (is) was coming.

The accomplished part or meaning of the sentence is that "Okeke is/was coming", that is "Okeke has started to come"; the non-accomplished is that he is still coming, he has not completed the action of coming.

(i) The Progressive with Results

- (a) Ô nwere ónye là ekpoghari ákwukwo m.

There is someone scattering my books.

(The result of that is that the books are still scattered.)

- (b) Kèdú onye là agho òromá à?

Who is picking these oranges?

(The question suggests that some oranges are missing.)

- (c) Álà m arú orú nza ututù.

I have been working since morning.

(The result of my having been working since morning is that I am tired now.)

- (d) Ó là azá mbàra nza ututù.

He has been sweeping the compound since morning.

(Now, he is showing signs of being tired.)

(ii) Progressive showing Broken Activity

(a) M̐ mà ejé akwukwò.

I go to school.

(b) Òkékè là edé akwukwò.

Okeke is writing a book.

The two sentences (a) and (b) express an action which occurs intermittently.

(iii) Progressive showing Unfinished Activity

(a) Ó là esí ohè ogè m̐ biàra.

She was cooking soup when I came.

Compare this sentence with:

Ó sìrì ohè ogè m̐ biàra.

She cooked soup when I came.

(b) Ó là ebé akwà ogè ñne yà làtara.

She was crying when her mother returned.

Again, compare this with:

Ó bèrè akwà ogè ñne yà làtara.

She cried when her mother returned.

(iv) The "la" Progressive Form is used in a Habitual Sense

(a) Ó là azú afià.

He is a trader.

(b) Ó là emé ngwa ñgwa.

He is doing (it) quickly.

(= He is quick at doing things.)

Compare (a) with (c):

(c) Ó là azútà afia.

He is buying something.

and it will be seen that whereas (a) indicates a habit, (c) indicates a limited action.

(v) The Progressive is used to express future activity, or state, or occurrence of activity

(a) Ànyí là abíá echì.

We are coming tomorrow.

Informants agree that Ànyí là abíá echì is more certain than Ànyí gà abíá echì: We shall come tomorrow.

(b) Ànyí là erí òriri bidò echì wée gaba.

We are celebrating a feast from tomorrow onwards.

But * Ànyí là ejé akwukwò echì.

(c) Ànyí là agbá osò echì la ụlò ákwukwò.

We are running a race tomorrow at the school.

But * Ànyí là emé sòm échi la ụlò ákwukwò.

We are doing arithmetic tomorrow at the school.

The unacceptability of the starred sentences indicates that, for the present progressive to refer to a future action, what is expressed by the verb must not be an everyday occurrence, eg.

* Ànyí là erí ihé echì.

We are eating food tomorrow.

We normally eat food every day; consequently, the present progressive cannot be used to refer to our eating tomorrow.

Anyí là erí 'oriri echí.

We are celebrating a feast tomorrow.

The feast comes round but once a year; therefore, the present "la-form" progressive can be used to refer to its future occurrence.

(vi) The Progressive shows sporadic action

Ógè nchá kà ó là akúwa afère.

He is always breaking plates.

Ó là ebé akwà m̀gbe l̄l̄lé.

He's crying all the time.

(vii) The Progressive indicates activity

(a) Ó là arú orú.

He is working¹₂

(b) Ó là agú akwukwò.

He is reading a book.

(c) Álà m akpú yà isi.

I am giving him a hair-cut.

(c) Kèdú ebe i là agá?

Where are you going?

(viii) Certain adverbials are also used to indicate duration with the "la-form" tense. They include:

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| <u>kwàdà</u> , | everyday; |
| <u>Kwà ùbòsi</u> , | everyday; |
| <u>óge lílè/óge dùm</u> , | every time; |
| <u>èrì ogologo óge</u> , | for some time; |
| <u>kwà anyási</u> , | every night. |

(a) Há là ejé afià kwàdà.

They are going to market everyday.

(= They go to market everyday.)

(b) "Ná ènyé ànyì àchichá nkà óge nínè."⁽⁵⁾

Keep giving us the bread all the time.

(c) Lá èmé osisò.

Keep doing it quickly.

(d) Lá àbiá kalà kwàdà.

Keep coming here everyday.

"La-Form" Paradigm

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Álà m abia | Ànyì là abia |
| M' là abia | We are coming |
| I am coming | Úlù là abia |
| Í là abia | You are coming |
| You are coming | |
| Ó là abia | Há là abia/Álà ha abia |
| He/she/it is coming | They are coming |

(5) Nde Dinwne Anya, Holy Ghost Fathers, Onicha 193-?

Progressive Meanings without the Auxiliary Là

The above examples are instances where the progressive meaning is expressed by using the auxiliary là followed by the main verb. There are other cases in which progressive meaning is expressed in Igbo without the auxiliary là. The following examples were all taken from Obi (1963).⁽⁶⁾

It is only the stem of the verb plus the tone that is used in the construction. In the example sentences which follow, -Vs- stands for verbal stem, and v pref stands for vowel prefix.

1. Há bù (-Vs-) mkpuru nkwù ndia à ejé (v pref-Vs) ahia taà.
They are carrying these palm fruit and going to market today.
(= They are carrying these palm fruit to market.)
2. Àdà kwò (Vs-) nwánné ha nwoke ahù n' azú.
Ada is carrying their brother on her back.
3. Nne hà nò (-Vs-) n' ezi.
Their mother is outside.
4. Òtútú umuntàkiri ndikòm na ndinyòm gaje (-Vs-Vs-) úlò ákwukwò.
Many boys and girls are going to school.

(The next sentence in the text used is of the la progressive form; it reinforces the continuity of (4)).

Há nà - agási iké n'ihì na átañu nà ádà.

They are walking fast because the bell is ringing.

(6) Obi, S.N.C. (Trans.) Okwu Igbo Nke Mbu
Official orthography edition, Longmans of Nigeria,
1963.

5. Há tí (-Vs-) uwé ulò ákwukwò.
They are wearing their school uniform.
6. Ọjì jì (-Vs-) ákwukwò ọhụrụ.
Oji is holding a new book.
7. Síté nà ahụ esighi ikè, O dinà n'akwa yá ogologo ubòchi.
Through her body not being strong, she is lying on her bed
all day long as a result of her sickness.
Nne hà guzo n'ákụkụ ubi ná ègbuji alaka osisi kpọrọ nkụ.
8. Nne hà guzo n'ákụkụ ubi ná ègbuji alaka osisi kpọrọ nkụ.
Their mother is standing beside the farm cutting down dead
tree branches.

The Present Perfect Tense

This tense, formed with the aid of the suffix -gwó/-gó is expounded by the structure V + gwo/go. The action implied by the verb has been accomplished, but the portion of time when it was produced still runs its course. The following sentences illustrate the point.

Ọ biágwo.

He has come (and is still here).

Ànyị èrígwó.

We have eaten (and are no longer hungry).

Ézè ebídogwo akwukwò.

Eze has started school (and he is still a schoolboy).

The past action can be thought of as being in some measure the logical cause of a present state:

Ô búrugwo orú m ifu là ó biàra.

It has become my duty to see that he comes.

(= that he should come.)

The perfect marks completion of an action, that is, the action is given not as situated at a given time in the past, but as being completed there in relation to the present instant.

Ô chógwo ogò.

It has grown up.

Ô sígwo iké.

It has become strong.

Anyí edégwo akwukwò.

We have written a letter.

Thus, it can be seen that the present perfect tense can be (a) retrospective, which looks upon the present as a result of what has happened in the past; and (b) inclusive, which is concerned with a state that is continued from the past into the present time. The sentences that follow illustrate the two present perfect tense distinctions.

(a) Òkó àbiágwo.

Oko has come.

(b) Òkó èbúgwo kalà ọnwá ilò.

Oko has lived here (for) four months.

(a) suggests that the action of coming has been completed in not too distant past; and (b) implies that the period of residence of Oko has not come to an end yet. (a) is the perfect tense in the sense of "indefinite past" which generally refers to the recent past. The "recentness" implied by (a) can be illustrated in the questions and answers which follow:

Q1 Òkó, ò biágwo?

Has Oko come?

Ẹyi.

Yes.

Q2 Mgbé Olé?

When?

Èréle.

Just now.

It would be ridiculous to answer Q2 with Ñnyáà - Yesterday.

Similarly, (b) is the present perfect tense which indicates that the result of an event is still in force.

The non-inclusive perfect tense can emphasise either the present or the past references associated with it. In (a), it is the present result that is emphasised, whereas in (c) below, it is the "pastness" of the event expressed by the verb that gets the emphasis.

(c) Òkó èjégwo fú Enugu.

Oko has visited Enugu.

The "pastness" is partly determined by the inherent properties of the verb, but it can be emphasised by the occurrence of an adverbial as in:

(d) Òkó èjégwò fù nne yá ònyáà.

Oko has visited his mother yesterday.

(= Oko visited his mother yesterday.)

(d) indicates that in some respects "perfects tend to become simple pasts". And this is borne out by the fact that a restricted set of adverbials can be used with both the perfect tense, and the simple past tense.

| Perfect Tense | | Simple Past Tense | |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Àfúgwò m yá | (là utútù à | Àfuru m yá | (là utútù à |
| I have seen him | this morning | | this morning |
| | (lá ahò à | | (lá ahò à |
| | this year | | this year |
| | (lá ọnwà à | | (lá ọnwà à |
| | this month | | this month |

The tendency of the "perfect to become simple pasts" ends in the use of these "past-referring point-of-time" adverbials which are compatible with both.

With regard to the establishment of reference points, the simple past tense is different from the perfect tense. Compare for instance:

(e) Òkó bùru kálà áhò abòò.

Oko lived here two years.

in which the period of residence has come to an end, with

(f) Òkó èbúgwo kalà áhò abòò.

Oko has lived here (for) two years.

in which is denoted that Oko still lives here.

The connotation of "complete event" in the remote past is inherent to the simple past tense while the completeness of event which the perfect tense can convey is most of the time associated with a recent past.

Present Perfect Tense Paradigm

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Ábiagwo m. | Ànyí àbiágwo. |
| I have come. | We have come. |
| Í biagwo. | Úlú àbiágwo. |
| You have come. | You have come. |
| Ó biagwo. | Há àbiágwo/Ábiagwo hà. |
| He/she/it has come. | They have come. |

Reference to a Past Situation: The Simple Past Tense

The verbal forms of this tense are of the structure V-rv, where V- stands for the verb stem syllable, and rv for the inflexional time suffix. The vowel of the suffix is the same as that of the root vowel.

The past tense indicates that an action was produced at a certain determined time in the past, and has no longer any direct relation with the present moment. It situates the action in time without any indication of duration. It gives past events simply an abstract mention without effect on the present. The speaker plunges the events concerned into the past and the "linguistic sentiment" does not envisage them to have living consequences, eg.

(a) Ézè jere áfia.

Eze went to market.

Ó roro la há là achọ yà.

He thought that they were looking for him.

Íke gwùru yá là ụzọ.

Energy finished him on the way.

(= He got tired on the journey.)

The above examples show the use of this tense in main clauses. In the following sections, examples are given of its use in various types of subordinate clauses.

(b) In subordinate clauses introduced by verbs of "saying", "thinking", etc.

Ó sìrì la yá fùru yá.

He said that he saw it.

Ézè kwuru íhe were mmadụ nchá anya.

Eze said something which everybody understood.

Ó roro la anyị biara.

He thought that we came.

Ó fùru la anyị kwuru éziokwù.

He saw that we had spoken the truth.

- (c) Clauses introduced by the conjunction óge - when.

Óge há fùrù anyị hà gbába ọsọ.

When they saw us, they began to run away.

Óge ó riri úgwò, ọ biàra.

When he got his pay, he came.

Óge anyị chọrọ yá, ọ biàra.

When we wanted him, he came.

- (d) Clauses introduced by óburu.

Ó buru là í jèrè, í ká afù ya.

If you went, you would see him.

Ó buru là ó rùrù ọrụ, ọ ká enwe ego.

If he worked hard, he would get money.

Ó buru là ó jèrè ákwụkwọ, ọ ká amà ihe nnukwú.

If he went to school, he would know a lot of things.

- (e) Clauses containing the relative nominal ñke.

Nwátà (ñké) biàra bù ézigbo nnwata.

The child who came is a good child.

Úlò ákwụkwọ ñke ó jèrè du ímá.

The school (which) he went to is good.

Úwè (ñke) mụ zùtara amáka.

The garment (which) I bought is very nice.

Nwókè ñké biàra chòro ógologo.

The man who came is tall.

Ébè (ñke) í jùrù ase yá tère áka.

The place (where) you asked about is far.

Ó jùrù nwátà (ñké) biàra ihe ọ là achó.

He asked the boy who came what he wanted.

Continuity and repetition can be expressed in the sentence by an adverb or a complement, but the verb by itself does not suggest any of these nuances.

Àlórò m ógologo ọdù.

I stayed a long time.

Ò buru kálà áhò gara agá.

He lived here last year.

Anyí chere maka wú ñnyáà lííle.

We thought of you throughout yesterday.

Simple Past Tense: Paradigm

M bíàrà/Abiàrà m.

I came.

Í bíàrà.

You came.

Ó bíàrà.

He/she/it came.

Ànyí bíàrà.

We came.

Úlù bíàrà.

You came.

Há bíàrà/Abiàrà ha.

They came.

The Past Perfect Tense

This tense is expounded by the structure V-gwóri, where gwóri is a tense suffix. The tense, the value of which is to mark the anteriority, in the past, of an action in relation to another, indicates the rapidity with which a certain action was accomplished, eg.

1. Là ntábù ányá, ọ meygwóri úzò.

In the twinkling of an eye, he had opened the door.

2. Túpu ànyí ábàtá, ọ meygwóri úzò.

Before we came in, he had opened the door. (It was not expected that he would be able, within a given time, to open the door.)

3. Túpu ò kwúsia okwú, Ezè áfùgwóri.

Before he finished talking, Eze had gone out.

4. Há àgbáchagwori égwu tupu ànyị erúte.

They had finished dancing before we arrived.

It should be noted that -gwó can be substituted for gwóri in each of the above sentences without rendering them unacceptable. But, when the substitution takes place, there is a subtle difference of meaning between a sentence with -gwóri, and one with -gwó as exemplified in:

- (a) Túpu ànyị ábàtá, ọ meyegwo ụzọ.

Before we came in, he had opened the door.

- (b) Túpu ànyị ábàtá, ọ meyegwori ụzọ.

Before we came in, he had opened the door.

(a) simply states a fact objectively. In (b), the implication in Igbo is that X opened the door whereas he should not; consequently he should be reprimanded. On the other hand, it could be that one of the things X had to do was to open the door, but none expected that he could do so at the time he opened it. In other words, he opened it much quicker than was expected of him. In this latter sense, the sentence implies some praise for him.

In some cases, the past perfect indicates notions of duration, simultaneity and repetition as the progressive tense.

Duration:

- (i) Ô ráhugworì úra rinnè, ihu ya gòsiri yá.

He had slept a lot, his face indicates it.

Simultaneity:

- (ii) Ârúsigwo m rì òrù mgbe Ô là ábatá.

I had finished the work when (as) he was coming in.

Repetition:

- (iii) Ô là emégworì íhe òdù ère áhù túpu mụ amàra ya.

He had been doing such a thing before I knew him.

Past Perfect Tense Paradigm

Âbiágwo m rì.

I had already come.

Î biágworì.

You had already come.

Ô biágworì.

He/she/it had already come.

Ânyí àbiágworì.

We had already come.

Úlù àbiágworì.

You had already come.

Há àbiágworì/Âbiágwo hà rì.

They had already come.

The Pluperfect

In general usage, "pluperfect" is another word for "past perfect". In this work, however, "pluperfect" is used to refer to a tense in Igbo which is related to, but not identical with, the past perfect. The pluperfect is of the structure V-buru, where -buru is a verbal root suffix. The tense indicates with force the anteriority of one action in relation to another. The posterior action is implied by a verb

the structure of which is V-gwo-lu, where -lu is an emphatic suffix by which the speaker reinforces the truth of what he had said before.

1. Í dàgwólú, agwàburu m wú.

You have failed, I (had) told you (that you would fail
(if you did not work hard?))

In the above sentence, if one said "... ágwagwo m wú", the anteriority (of telling in relation to failure) would be lost, and the opposition suggested by the "pluperfect" tense would be diminished.

2. Ọ́ yàbágwolu ọyà, á gwàburu yá erile nyabu nri.

He has now become sick, he had been warned not to eat
the food.

It should be observed that such expressions as là ntábù ányà, là ntúmadu, (in a twinkling), nwánchínchí ọgè, (a little while), which indicate instant occurrences in the past perfect cannot be used with the "pluperfect". These expressions show the rapidity with which the action was accomplished.

"Pluperfect" Tense Paradigm

Àbiágwolu m!

I had (then) come.

Í biágwolu!

You had (then) come.

Ọ́ biágwolu.

He/she/it had then come.

Ànyí àbiágwolu.

We had (then) come.

Úlú àbiágwolu.

You had (then) come.

Há àbiágwolu/Àbiágwolu hà.

They had then come.

Habitual Past Tense

The habitual past tense is expounded by the structure la-V-gwo. The structure is a combination of that for the "la-form" and the present perfect tense. The habitual past indicates that an action was accomplished several times in the past.

- i) Ó là abiágwo be ànyị àkàà.
He used to come to our house last year.
- ii) Àlà m afúgwo yá.
I used to see him.
- iii) Ézè la arúgwo orú kalà.
Eze used to work here.
- iv) Ézè la ejégwo bé ha.
Eze used to go to their house.

The Future Tense

The future tense has the structure ga/la-V. This form indicates properly that the action will take place at a moment ahead of that when one is speaking.

- (a) Kà mí gwa kwa wú, o gà abia.
Let me tell you, he will come.
- (b) Ànyị gà ejé Enugu echi.
We shall go to Enugu tomorrow.

Sometimes the future tense is used to indicate a probable event, a conjecture made at the present moment, but which can be revealed exactly in the future.

(c) Ònyé là akú aká?

Who is knocking?

Ó gà abú Ezè.

He will (may) be Eze.

(d) Ònyé nwè íhe à?

Who has this thing?

Ó gà abú Ugo.

It will (may) be Ugo (who has it).

This construction is met especially with the verbs íbù (to be) and ínwè (to possess).

The future can take the value of the imperative;

Compare Ì ga abíá? You will come? (= Will you come?)

with Í gà abíá? You will come?

where the tone on 2nd is high. Therefore, the sentence, Ì ga abia is susceptible of two nuances according to the pitch with which it is said. It could be a very discrete invitation or a suggestion weaker than the imperative. In the latter case, the particle -lu- is often attached to the verb as a suffix.

Ì ga abíá (lu)?

(You will (then) come?)

But, whether the sentence means a discrete invitation or a suggestion the future indicates that one is not expected to take account of the volition of the interlocutor; the latter is either considered to accept without answer the authority of the speaker, or that one counts on his amicable sentiments.

The forms of the future tense occur in main clauses, either by standing by themselves or preceded by some sort of conditional clause.

Ágà m abiá.

I shall come.

Ó buru la ò biá, agà m agwá yà.

If he comes, I shall tell him.

The use of this tense in such cases seems to imply certainty or necessity.

Future meaning can also be implied by verbal forms which occur in conditional or temporal clauses referring to the future. Such clauses are generally introduced by the elements:

Ó buru,

Ógè and

Mgbe or without them, when tone alone is used, eg.

Chí _____ gbáa, gwa m.

When the sun reaches overhead, tell me.

Ó buru la ò biá echi, ekwukwálara ya okwú.

If he comes tomorrow, do not talk to him.

Mgbe Ó kwùru ókwú, amára ihe agà así yà.

When he talked (= talks), it will be known the answer that will be given to him.

Ó bia ànyị ejéé.

He comes we shall go. (= If he comes, we shall go.)

In some cases, future meaning is implied by the combination of wée and ganye in sentences such as:

Chéré wée ganye la ò bíá.

Wait until he comes.

Ékwúle okwu, wée ganye la ò kwuó.

Don't talk, until he speaks.

Simple Future Tense Paradigm

Mù ga abia/Ágà m abia.

I shall come.

Í ga abia.

You will come.

Ó ga abia.

He/she/it will come.

Anyi ga abia.

We shall come.

Ulu ga abia.

You will come.

Há ga abia/Ágà ha abia.

They will come.

Future in the Past

The future in the past in the language indicates that two actions were to take place in the past, the accomplishment of one depending upon that of the other. The failure to carry out one action resulted in the failure to carry out the other. It is constructed with the auxiliary kà followed by the main verb. It occurs regularly in main clauses.

Ó ká abia ñnyáà ma ó buru là í gwara yá.

He would have come yesterday if you had told him.

Anyí àkà eje Enugu ònyáà ma ó buru là í nwèrè égo.

He would have gone to Enugu yesterday, if you had had money.

Future in the Past Paradigm

Mù àkà ábía/Àkà m ábía.

I would come.

Í ká ábía.

You would come.

Ó ká ábía.

He/she/it would come.

Anyí àkà ábía.

We would come.

Úlú àkà ábía.

You would come.

Há àkà ábía/Àkà há ábía.

They would come.

The Future Perfect in the Past

This tense, of the structure kà-V-gwóri, where kà, which has two phonetic forms kà/àkà, stands for the auxiliary, -V- for the main verb, and -gwóri for the time suffix, indicates that at a certain moment in the past an action would have been performed. It, however, was not performed due to the intervention of another action. That is why this tense is also designated as counter-factual.

Ó ká ábiagwóri, ma ó buru là ó luru yá.

He would have come had he heard it.

Anyí àkà émesigwóri, ma ó buru là anyí bidoro lá ogè.

He would have finished if we had started in time.

Mmírí àkà èjogwóri, mà ó buru là ánwù chiri.

Rain would have fallen, if the sun had shone.

Future Perfect in the Past Paradigm

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| {Mù ákà àbiagwòrì.} | Ànyí ákà àbiagwòrì. |
| {Ákà mú àbiagwòrì.} | We would have come. |
| {Mù | |
| I w _{ld} have come. | Úlú ákà àbiagwòrì. |
| I ká àbiagwòrì. | You would have come. |
| You would have come. | {Há ákà àbiagwòrì.} |
| Ô ká àbiagwòrì. | {Ákà ha àbiagwòrì.} |
| He/she/it would have come. | They would have come. |

Future Progressive

The future progressive is constructed with the two auxiliaries:

Gà + là,

followed by the main verb:

gà-là-V.

Á gà lá àgá la ihu.

We shall be moving forward (= We shall be making progress.)

Ànyí gà lá àbiá là bé ulù.

We shall be coming to your house.

Like the present progressive, the future progressive indicates:

Duration:

Há gà lá ezù íkè ahò ọ̀zo.

They will be resting next year.

Ó gà lá amù ákwukwò.

He will be learning.

Simultaneity:

Ó gà lá ezù íkè ọ̀gè anyí gà abíá.

He will be resting when we shall arrive.

Há gà lá ezù íkè ọ̀gè anyí là arú ọ̀rú.

They will be resting while we shall be working!

Repetition:

Ó gà lá àbiá ebe à kwadá.

He will be coming here everyday.

Há gà lá amù ákwukwo kwà úbòchi.

They will be studying everyday.

Future Progressive Paradigm

Mí gà lá àbiá/Ágà m lá àbiá. Ànyí gà lá àbiá.

I shall be coming.

We shall be coming.

Í gà lá àbiá.

Úlù gà lá àbiá.

You will be coming.

You will be coming.

Ó gà lá àbiá.

Há gà lá àbiá/Ágà ha lá àbiá.

He/she/it will be coming.

They will be coming.

Future Perfect Progressive in the Past

This tense is formed with the auxiliary (à) ká followed by the auxiliary là which, in turn, is followed by the main verb. It is similar in meaning to the future in the past but for the absence of continuity which the latter manifests.

Ô ká lá àbiá ebe à, ma Ó buru là í bù ézigbo mmadù.

He would have been coming here, if you were a good person.

Ànyí aká lá èmé ihé ndị à ma Ó buru là Ó nwèrè ónye kúziere anyí ha.

We would have been doing all this if there was someone who taught us them.

Future Perfect Progressive Paradigm

{Mù àká la àbiágwori.}
{Áká m la àbiágwori.}

I would have been coming.

Î ká la àbiágwori.

You would have been coming.

Ô ká la àbiágwori.

He/she/it would have been coming.

Ànyí àká la àbiágwori.

We would have been coming.

Úlú àká la àbiágwori.

You would have been coming.

{Há àká la àbiágwori.}
{Áká ha la àbiágwori.}

They would have been coming.

Negative Verb Forms

The negative is expounded by the addition of one of the negative post-verbal particles to the verb stem.

The particles comprise:

(a) -la, -ha (not), which harmonise with the vowel of the preceding syllable as exemplified in the table which follows:

-ha

| | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| biá-ha | dé-he | sí-ho | sí-ho | zù-ho | bù-ho | bó-ho | bó-ho |
| zá-ha | bè-he | rí-ho | chí-ho | bù-ho | chú-ho | chó-ho | gbó-ho |
| gá-ha | ré-he | chí-ho | mí-ho | gbú-ho | dú-ho | dò-ho | chó-ho |
| lá-ha | lé-he | bí-ho | pí-ho | chú-ho | fù-ho | gó-ho | dó-ho |
| tá-ha | té-he | lì-ho | sí-ho | dú-ho | gú-ho | mò-ho | hò-ho |
| dà-ha | kwé-he | hí-ho | rí-ho | fú-ho | ghú-ho | ló-ho | ghó-ho |
| bà-ha | bé-he | jí-ho | wí-ho | gwú-ho | vú-ho | sò-ho | vó-ho |
| gbá-ha | sè-he | zí-ho | yí-ho | zú-ho | zò-ho | nyò-ho | jó-ho |

-la

bà-la bé-le chí-le chí-la bú-le bò-la bó-le bú-la
 chà-la dé-le di-le ghi-la gbú-le gbó-la gbò-le gbù-la
 dà-la chè-le jí-le jì-la ghú-le chọ-la chó-le chú-la
 gá-la ghè-le lì-le nyi-la gwú-le dọ-la dò-le ghú-la
 ghà-la nyé-le mí-le mì-la nwú-le kwó-la jò-le nwú-la
 gwa-la jé-le sí-le lị-la kwú-le jọ-la nyò-le nyú-la
 nwà-la ñé-le rí-le sí-la vú-le sọ-la wò-le vú-la
 yà-la lé-le zì-le rí-la zú-le zọ-la sò-le zú-la

- (b) -zila, -debe (not to continue);
 -kwàla (not to do);
 -bèle (never); and
 -bèhe (not yet, never)

all of which are invariable as they do not harmonise with the vowel of the preceding syllable like -la and -ha.

In a compound VP, the negative particle is attached to the main verb, never to the auxiliary. Compare the positive sentence:

1. Ó là abiá.

NP AUX MV (Main verb)

He is coming.

with the negative transformation of the same sentence:

2. Ó là abiáha.

NP AUX MV Neg.P. (negative particle)

The negative particles occur as follows:

- (a) -lá, -dèbe, -bèle and -kwàla are used in imperative sentences.
- (b) -bèhe is used in questions and in answers to questions in which it occurs.
- (c) -ghàrá (which is a verb that can have its own negative forms) occurs in purpose clauses, and in negative main clauses which are used to emphasise the unpleasant consequences which may follow a non-performance of an action. In the latter sense, ghàrá occurs initially in the sentence

Ghàrá imé ya kà í fù.

Don't do it, and see what will happen.

Classification of Negative Forms

The negative forms are classified in (a) sentences showing the occurrence and meaning of each negative particle; and (b) a complete paradigm of each tense.

Reference to the Present

Ǿ zuho.

It is not enough.

Ǿ siho ike.

It is not hard.

Ànyí alá abíáhà.

We are not coming.

Ànyí akà lá àbíáhà.

We are not coming yet.

Há akà biábèhe.

They have never (or not yet) come.

Há àbiádebegwo.

They have stopped coming.

When the meaning of a construction is "no longer", "no more",
"not again", its structure becomes:

Ǿ là abiáèhé.

He no longer comes.

Ǿ là erièhé.

He is not eating any more.

Simple Present Tense

1st sg. { Ékwèhe m. }
{ Mú ekwèhe. }

I do not agree.

2nd sg. Ǿ kwèhe.

You do not agree.

3rd sg. Ǿ kwèhe.

He/she/it does not agree.

1st plur. Ànyí ekwèhe.

We do not agree.

2nd plur. Úlù ékwèhe.

You do not agree.

3rd plur. { Há ekwèhe. }
{ Ékwèhe hà. }

They do not agree.

"La-Form"

- 1st sg. M̃ là abiáha.
I am not coming.
- 2nd sg. Ĭ là abiáha.
You are not coming.
- 3rd sg. Ỗ là abiáha.
He/she/it is not coming.
- 1st plur. Ìnyí alá abiáha.
We are not coming.
- 2nd plur. Úlù alá abiáha.
You are not coming.
- 3rd plur. Há alá abiáha.
They are not coming.

Present Perfect Tense

- 1st sg. Ākà m biáha.
I have not come.
- 2nd sg. Ĭ kà biáha.
You have not come.
- 3rd sg. Ỗ kà biáha.
He/she/it has not come.
- 1st plur. Ìnyí akà biáha.
We have not come.
- 2nd plur. Úlù akà biáha.
You have not come.
- 3rd plur. Há akà biáha/Ākà biáha hà.
They have not come.

Present Perfect Progressive Tense

- 1st sg.9 \Akà m biábaha.
I have not set off coming.
- 2nd sg. \I kà biábaha.
You have not set off coming.
- 3rd sg. \O kà biábaha.
He/she/it has not set off coming.
- 1st plur. \Anyí akà biábaha.
We have not set off coming.
- 2nd plur. \Ulu akà biábaha.
You have not set off coming.
- 3rd plur. Há akà biábaha/\Akà ha biábaha.
They have not set off coming.

Reference to the Future

The future meaning is expounded by the same structure as the "la-form" which does duty for the present progressive tense, the addition of the negative apart:

Aux - V - Neg. M.

\Anyí alá abíaha echi.

We are not coming tomorrow.

\O lá abíaha kwá.

He will not (emphasis) come.

Há alá aruhọ ọrụ nwanne echi.

They will not work the day after tomorrow.

With 1st sg. the auxiliary *la* → *ma*, which is explicable by the process of regressive assimilation.

ǃ má abíàhá echí.

I shall not come tomorrow.

ǃ má ejehe Enugu lá ahọ ọjọ.

I shall not go to Enugu next year.

Simple Future Tense

1st sg. ǃ má abíàhá echí.

I shall not come tomorrow.

2nd sg. ǃ lá abíàhá echí.

You will not come tomorrow.

3rd sg. ǃ lá abíàhá echí.

He/she/it will not come tomorrow.

1st plur. ǃnyí alá abíàhá echí.

We shall not come tomorrow.

2nd plur. ǃlú alá abíàhá echí.

You will not come tomorrow.

3rd plur. Há alá abíàhá echí.

They will not come tomorrow.

Future Progressive Tense

1st sg. ǃ má abíabáhá echí.

I shall not be coming tomorrow.

2nd sg. ǃ lá abíabáhá echí.

You will not be coming tomorrow.

3rd sg. ǃ lá abíabáhá echí.

He/she/it will not be coming tomorrow.

1st plur. Ànyí alá abíabaha echí.

We shall not be coming tomorrow.

2nd plur. Ûlú alá abíabaha echí.

You will not be coming tomorrow.

3rd plur. Há alá abíabaha echí.

They will not be coming tomorrow.

Future (Perfect) in the Past

1st sg. Mù áká ábíaha.

Áká mù ábíaha.

I would not (have) come.

2nd sg. Í ká ábíaha.

You would not (have) come.

3rd sg. Ò ká ábíaha.

He/she/it would not (have) come.

1st plur. Ànyí áká ábíaha.

We would not (have) come.

2nd plur. Ûlú áká ábíaha.

You would not (have) come.

3rd plur. Há áká ábíaha.

They would not (have) come.

Future Perfect Progressive in the Past

1st sg. { Mù áká lá àbíáhá. }
 { Áká mù lá àbíáhá. }

I would not have been coming.

2nd sg. Í ká lá àbíáhá.

You would not have been coming.

3rd sg. Ȯ ká la àbiáhà.

He/she/it would not have been coming.

1st plur. Ànyí àká la àbiáhà.

We would not have been coming.

2nd plur. Úlù àká la àbiáhà.

You would not have been coming.

3rd plur. Há àká la àbiáhà.

They would not have been coming.

Reference to the Past

Reference to a past situation is realised by simply attaching the appropriate negative particle to the suffix of the verb (in the case of a verb with a suffix) or to the verb stem as can be seen in the following sentences:

Ȯ vùtehe yà.

He did not bring it.

Ànyí émecha-ha yà.

We did not finish it.

Há árucha-ha yà.

They did not finish (the work).

Ànyí ágbaru-hò.

We did not (run) reach (there).

Ȯ siri la yá afù-bèhe íhe : dù èréle.

He said that he had never seen such a thing.

Simple Past Tense

- 1st sg. Ǻbiáha m ñnyáà.
 M biáhá ñnyáà.
 I did not come yesterday.
- 2nd sg. Ǫ biáha ñnyáà.
 You did not come yesterday.
- 3rd sg. Ǫ biáha ñnyáà.
 He/she/it did not come yesterday.
- 1st plur. Ǻnyí abiáha ñnyáà.
 We did not come yesterday.
- 2nd plur. Úlù ábiáha ñnyáà.
 You did not come yesterday.
- 3rd plur. Há abiáha ñnyáà.
 Ǻbiáha hà ñnyáà.
 They did not come yesterday.

Past Perfect Tense

- 1st sg. {Mù áká ábiáha.)
 {Áká mù abiáha.)
 I would not have come.
- 2nd sg. Ǫ ká ábiáha.
 You would not have come.
- 3rd sg. Ǫ ká ábiáha.
 He/she/it would not have come.
- 1st plur. Ǻnyí áká ábiáha.
 We would not have come.

2nd plur. Úlú àká àbiàha.

You would not have come.

3rd plur. {Há àká àbiàha.}
{Àká àbiàha hà.}

They would not have come.

Past Progressive Tense

1st sg. Mù àká la àbiàha.

Àká m la àbiàha.

I would not have been coming.

2nd sg. Ì ká la àbiàha.

You would not have been coming.

3rd sg. Ò ká la àbiàha.

He/she/it would not have been coming.

1st plur. Ànyí àká la àbiàha.

We would not have been coming.

2nd plur. Úlú àká la àbiàha.

You would not have been coming.

3rd plur. {Há àká la àbiàha.}
{Àká la àbiàha hà.}

They would not have been coming.

Past Habitual Tense

1st sg. M mà abiágwoho.

I usedn't to come.

2nd sg. Ì là abiágwoho.

You usedn't to come.

3rd sg. Ò là abiágwoho.

He/she/it usedn't to come.

1st plur. Anyí alá abíágwóhó.

We usedn't to come.

2nd plur. Ulu alá abíágwóhó.

You usedn't to come.

3rd plur. {Há alá abíágwóhó.}
{Alá abíágwóhó há.}

They usedn't to come.

Verbal Forms in Negative Purpose Sentences

The negative verb used to express negative purpose is ghàrá which precedes the infinitive form of the verb. The construction is headed by kà⁽⁷⁾ followed by the subject NP.

i) ----- kà ọ́ ghàrá ibiá.

that he may not come.

ii) ----- kà ń ghàrá ijé.

that I may not go.

The purpose clause is the dependent clause of the sentence; the independent clause which has been omitted in (i) and (ii) always precedes the purpose clause.

Verb Forms of the Negative Imperative

As already said above, the negative particles which occur in imperative sentences consist of:

(7) The meaning of constructions with ghàrá in which kà does not precede ghàrá has been given earlier in the chapter.

-lá,
 -(b)èle,
 -débe,
 -zila, and
 -kwàla.

The imperative is the only mood in the language in which number is expounded by the addition of a suffix to the negative marker of the verb.

-pl Ábì'álà/Ábì'álalù.

Don't come.

+pl Ábì'álalù.

Don't (you + pl) come.

-pl Émèbè'ele ájò'ìhe.

Never do a wicked thing.

+pl Émèbè'elelù ájò'ìhe.

Never (you + pl) do a wicked thing.

-pl Émè-è'ele ájò'ìhe.

Stop doing a wicked thing.

+pl (Úlù) émè-è'elelù ájò'ìhe.

Don't (you + pl) any more do a wicked thing.

-pl Mèdè'ebe ájò'ìhe.

Stop doing a wicked thing.

(You have done enough of it.)

+pl (Úlù) mèdè'ebelù ájò'ìhe.

(You + pl) stop doing a wicked thing.

| | | | |
|---------|-----|-----------|---|
| Compare | -pl | Jèbélù. | |
| | | | Go (then) (If that is the case, go then.) |
| with | +pl | Jèbélùlù. | |
| | | | (You + pl) Go, then. |
| or | -pl | Jèbélù. | |
| | | | Go, then. |
| with | +pl | Jèbélù. | |

in which it can be observed that the singular or plural meaning is determined by whether the tone on -lù is high or low.

Verb Forms in the Reduced Negative ⁽⁸⁾

The linguistic phenomenon of negative reduction is characterised by the absence of the negative marker -ha in certain expressions. It occurs in names and proverbs, as well as in negative compound sentences linked by la as will be shown below. "The lexical meaning changes to a general timeless truth in the reduced negative."⁽⁹⁾

The negative reduction is exemplified in the following names and proverbs:

(8) This term was first used by Paul and Inge Meier, and John Bendor-Samuel (1975) in their A Grammar of Izi, An Igbo Language, Summer Institute of Linguistics of the University of Oklahoma, Norman.

(9) Ibid.

Names

| AFFIRMATIVE | NEGATIVE | REDUCED NEGATIVE |
|---|---|---|
| 1. $\acute{O}nw\grave{u} \grave{m}\grave{a} \acute{e}z\grave{e}.$ Death knows kings. | $\acute{O}nw\grave{u} \acute{a}m\grave{a}h\grave{a} \acute{e}z\grave{e}.$ Death does not know kings. (Death does not spare kings.) | $\acute{O}nw\grave{u} \acute{a}m\grave{a} \acute{e}z\grave{e}.$ Death does not know kings. (Death kills everybody including kings.) |
| 2. $\acute{O}n\grave{u} \grave{l}\grave{a} \acute{e}gb\grave{u}.$ Mouth kills. | $\acute{O}n\grave{u} \acute{a}l\grave{a} \acute{e}gb\grave{u}h\acute{o}.$ Mouth does not kill. (Words do not kill.) | $\acute{O}n\grave{u} \acute{e}gb\grave{u}.$ Mouth does not kill. (Words do not kill.) |
| 3. $\acute{I}kp\grave{e} \grave{l}\grave{a} \acute{a}m\grave{a} \acute{e}z\grave{e}.$ Judgment goes against kings. | $\acute{I}kp\grave{e} \acute{a}l\grave{a} \acute{a}m\grave{a}h\grave{a} \acute{e}z\grave{e}.$ Judgment does not go against kings. | $\acute{I}kp\grave{e} \acute{a}m\grave{a} \acute{e}z\grave{e}.$ Judgment does not go against kings. |
| 4. $\acute{O}kp\grave{u} \acute{i}si \grave{l}\grave{a} \acute{e}r\acute{i}$ $\acute{n}g\acute{o}.$ A shaver of hair (= barber) receives pay. | $\acute{O}kp\grave{u} \acute{i}si \acute{a}l\grave{a} \acute{e}r\acute{i}h\acute{o}$ $\acute{n}g\acute{o}.$ A shaver of hair does not receive pay. | $\acute{O}kp\grave{u} \acute{i}si \acute{e}r\acute{i}ng\acute{o}.$ A shaver of hair does not receive pay (for so doing). |

Proverbs

| AFFIRMATIVE | NEGATIVE | REDUCED NEGATIVE |
|--|--|--|
| 5. $\acute{I}ny\acute{i} \grave{l}\grave{a} \acute{a}gb\grave{a} \acute{o}k\grave{u}.$ "Inyi" (a tree) can burn. | $\acute{I}ny\acute{i} \acute{a}l\grave{a} \acute{a}gb\grave{a}h\grave{a} \acute{o}k\grave{u}.$ "Inyi" cannot burn. | $\acute{I}ny\acute{i} \acute{a}gb\grave{a} \acute{o}k\grave{u}.$ "Inyi" never burns. |
| 6. $\acute{O}nw\grave{u} \grave{l}\grave{a} \acute{a}t\grave{u} \acute{e}gw\grave{u}.$ Death fears. | $\acute{O}nw\grave{u} \acute{a}l\grave{a} \acute{a}t\grave{u}h\acute{o} \acute{e}gw\grave{u}.$ Death does not fear. | $\acute{O}nw\grave{u} \acute{a}t\grave{u} \acute{e}gw\grave{u}.$ Death does not fear. |
| 7. $\acute{I}y\acute{i} \grave{l}\grave{a} \acute{e}r\acute{i} \acute{o}b\grave{a}$ A gourd-plate can sink. | $\acute{I}y\acute{i} \acute{a}l\grave{a} \acute{e}r\acute{i}h\acute{o} \acute{o}b\grave{a}.$ A gourd-plate does not sink | $\acute{I}y\acute{i} \acute{e}r\acute{i} \acute{o}b\grave{a}.$ A gourd-plate can never sink. |

Proverbs (cont)

| AFFIRMATIVE | NEGATIVE | REDUCED NEGATIVE |
|--|---|---|
| 8. Nwóké là ézù íkè. A man can have a rest. | Nwóké ala ezuhó íkè. A man does not have a rest. | Nwóké ezù íkè. There is no rest for a man. |

It should be observed that the reduced negative expression has the stem low for a low tone verb as in (8), and a step down for a high tone verb as in (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6) and (7).

Reduced Negative in Compound Sentences

The traditional definition of a compound sentence as a sentence which consists of two or more clauses of equal rank holds here. In other words, a compound sentence comprises two or more independent clauses. Negative compound sentences in Igbo, in which reduced negation is exemplified, are constructed with the conjunction la. Examples of negative compound sentences of the language will be given here by joining two or more simple negative sentences as follows:

1. (a) Ọ́ là ebéhé akwa.

She does not cry.

(b) Ọ́ là achíhó ọ́chí.

She does not laugh.

When (a) and (b) are combined, the result will be (1)(c) below:

(c) Ọ́ bé akwa là ọ́ chí ọ́chí.

She does not cry, and she does not laugh.

(= She neither cries nor laughs.)

2. (a) Ǿ̀lǎ erího jí.

He does not eat yam.

- (b) Ǿ̀lǎ erího edè.

He does not eat cocoyam.

- (c) Ǿ̀lǎ erího òsikápa.

He does not eat rice.

The combination of 2(a), 2(b) and 2(c) will give 2(d):

- (d) Ǿ̀rí jí, Ǿ̀rí edè lá ó rí òsikapa.

He neither eats yam, nor cocoyam nor rice.

3. (a) Ǿ̀biáha lá ahò lǎbù gara aga.

He did not come the last two years.

- (b) Ǿ̀biáha àká à.

He did not come last year.

- (c) Ǿ̀biáha lá ahò à.

He did not come this year.

3(a), 3(b) and 3(c), when combined, will result in 3(d):

- (d) Ǿ̀biáha lá ahò lǎbù gara

He did not come last two years,

aga, Ǿ̀biáha lá ahò gara aga, là ó biá lá ahò à.

he did not come last year, and he did not come this year.

(= He neither came last two years, nor last year, nor this year.)

The System of Transitivity

Transitivity in Igbo entails three classes of verbs:

1. Verbs which are unambiguously transitive. The contextual entry for such verbs is $\boxed{+ \text{ ——— NP}}$ and this is exemplified in the sentences that follow:

gbú, kill: Úché gburu oké.

Uche killed a rat.

*Úché gburu.

sí, cook: Ûgo la esí nri.

Ugo is cooking food.

*Ûgo la esi.

Transitive verbs can be sub-classified according to the number of objects which they govern:

- i) taking only one object, eg. fú, see:

Áfuru m yá.

Saw I him. (I saw him.)

- ii) taking more than one object, eg. náta, receive:

Nàtá yá ego iri.

Receive him shillings ten.

(Receive ten shillings from him.)

sí, say: Ô siri la yá gà abia.

He said that he will come.

Other verbs that take more than one object are:

kwú, say;

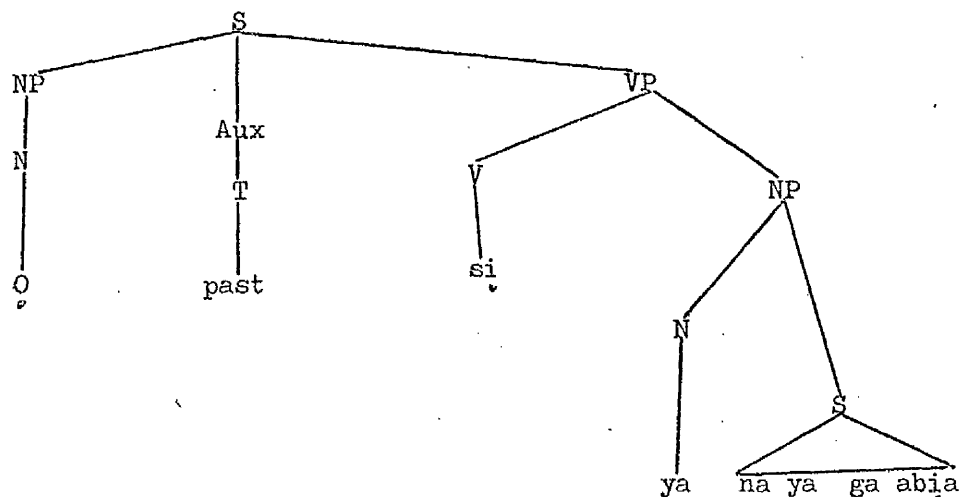
nyé, give;

biri, borrow;

binye, lend.

In the case of *sí* and *kwí*, which often have as object or complement a sentence, the pronoun *it* is always understood as being used appositionally in the deep structure to the sentence object. This is illustrated in the following tree:

Ô sírì na yá gà abia.



Ô + past + sí + (ya) na ya ga abia.

He + past + say (it) that he will come.

iii) taking optionally one or two objects:

Compare *mé*, do, make: *Ô mere mụ yá.*

He did me it.

(= He did it for me.)

with

Ô mere yá.

He did it.

nyé, give:

Úzoamáka nyèrè m ákwukwò.

Úzoamaka gave me a book.

Úzoamáka nyèrè onyinyé.

Úzoamaka gave an offering.

biri, borrow: Èzè biri m égbò.

Eze borrowed me money.

(Eze borrowed money from me.)

Èzè biri ákwùkwò.

Eze borrowed a book.

2. Verbs which are unambiguously intransitive, and which have the feature: $\left[+ \text{---} \# \right]$ eg.

gwú, to be finished: Ȯ gwúgwò. (10)

It is finished.

*Ȯ gwúgwò osè.

It is finished pepper.

dú, be:

Ȯ dú mma.

It is good.

*Ȯ dú nwányi.

It is woman.

The starred sentences are ungrammatical because the verbs are made to "govern" objects; therefore, unambiguously intransitive verbs can never govern objects in the language. All the meteorological verbs fall into this category, eg.

jò, fall (rain): Mmiri là éjò.

Rain is falling.

wá, rise: Ánwú áwágwò.

The sun has risen.

gbúke, shine brightly: Kpákpańdo la egbúke.

Stars are shining brightly.

tú, feel (cold): Óyí là atú kalà.

It is cold here.

(10) In some dialects, verbs such as igwú - to be finished, may follow cognates for emphasis.

tí, shine:

Ónwa là etí (èchí)

The moon is shining.

mù, shine:

Ánwù là ámu.

The sun is shining.

3. There are verbs of the contextual entry, $\begin{pmatrix} + & \text{---} & \text{NP} \\ & & \end{pmatrix}$
 $\begin{pmatrix} & & \end{pmatrix}$
 $\begin{pmatrix} + & \text{---} & \text{NP} \\ & & \end{pmatrix}$
 which may be used transitively or intransitively. Such verbs include:

chiwa, break:

(a) Nwátà à ga echíwà afere.

This child will break the plate.

(b) Afere à ga echíwà.

This plate will break.

gbáwa, split:

(c) Gbáwa yá íbóó.

Break it into two.

(d) Àkpáká ahù agbáwagwo.

The pod of the oil bean tree has split into two.

hápu, leave:

(e) Hápu Èze ka ó labà.

Leave Eze to go.

(f) Ó ga ahápu échí.

He will leave tomorrow.

In sentences (a), (c) and (e), the verbs have been used transitively, while in sentences (b), (d) and (f), they have been used as intransitive verbs.

Verbs are also categorized into motive and locative verbs.

Motive Verbs

These are the verbs that express movement from one place to another. In deep structure they have prepositions which follow them, but which are not necessarily manifested in surface structure. The nouns which follow such verbs are not governed by the verbs, and the sentence in which they occur cannot be turned into the Igbo agentless passive voice.

One can say, for instance,

"Égbùrú m ágwò" (I killed a snake),

and then transform it into the agentless passive,

"É gbùrú ágwò",

but it is not possible to similarly transform

"Éjégwò m Enugu" (I have been to Enugu), into

* "É jégwò Enugu".

These motive verbs (as V.N. Smith calls them)⁽¹¹⁾ are preposition-embedded. They are intransitive verbs in deep structure, but in the surface structure, because of the absence of the preposition, and because they are often followed by nouns, they appear to be transitive verbs. The motive verbs are subject to certain limitations with regard to the syntactic structures into which they can enter; they are not followed by a pronominal complement; the complement must be the name of a place, not a person. The chief verbs that fall into this category are:

(11) Smith, N.V., The Nupe Verb, African Language Studies, X, S.O.A.S. University of London, 1969.

| | | |
|------|---|--------------|
| biá | - | come; |
| ga | - | go; |
| jé | - | go; |
| ru | - | reach; |
| gbá | - | run; |
| la | - | go home; and |
| lata | - | return. |

In the illustrative examples which follow, the symbols, s p c a, will be used. (s stands for subject, p for predicator, c for complement and a for adjunct.)

- psc (a) Èjere m Onícha.
I went to Onícha.
- spc (b) Ô látagwo afià.
He has come back from the market.
- sp (c) M mà agáha.
I am not going.
- spca (d) Há làtara Ènugu ònyàà.
They returned from Enugu yesterday.
BUT
- spc * Ô jébegwo la Enugu.
He has left for Enugu

This sentence is anomalous structurally, because of the presence of the preposition la which precedes the noun, Enugu.

But when be forms part of the complement, the preposition la can optionally be used.

- i) pspc Álà m ejé (là) bé ulù.
 I'm going to your house.
- ii) spc Ó là agá (là) bé Njoku.
 He is going to Njoku's house.
- iii) spc Úlu là ejé (là) bé ònye?
 To whose house are you going?

Exceptions

In some rare cases, however, the agentless passive form of the verb can be used with these verbs of motion, but the prepositional phrase that goes with such forms in the active voice is obligatorily deleted. One can say, for example,

(a) "È jégwo"

in reply to an angry questioner who asks,

(b) "È jégwo ihù onye biara?"

(Has someone gone to see the visitor?)

and

(c) "È rúgwo" (we have reached),

in answer to the question,

(d) "È rúbegwo?" (Are we nearly there?)

But, as already pointed out, these constructions are very rarely used; (d) is mostly used by children going to hunt or fetch firewood or on an errand whatsoever to a place, the location of which only one or a few of them know.

There are therefore two implications in such usage:

- (a) Not all the children know exactly where they are going.
 (b) The place they are going to must be somewhat far;
 otherwise they would all know it. The question suggests
 that, at least, the questioner is getting tired due to a
 long walk. In the case of the complements,

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| ùlò ákwùkwò | - school; |
| ùlò ùkà | - church; |
| ùlò n'zúkò | - meeting house; |
| ùlò ákwà | - a house in which someone has died, |

the use of the preposition is obligatory.

Compare Ò là agá l'ùlò ákwùkwò.

He is going to the school (he is not a schoolboy).

and Ò là agá akwùkwò.

He goes to school (he is a schoolboy).

Compare also

Ò là agá l'ùlò ákwà.

He is going to the bereaved house (which is
 known to both the speaker and the hearer)

and Ò là agá ùlò ákwà.

He is going to a bereaved house (which may not
 be known to the speaker and his interlocutor).

Restricted Verbal Features

These features identify a verb as a member of a class of verb
 that can occur in a given construction. Thus, there are verbs:

- (a) which can take an NP and a prepositional phrase (PP), eg.

tínye, put: "Tínýé yà na ime ulò."
Put it in the house.

- (b) which take sentential objects, eg.

lò, think: "Èlò m na ó gà abíá."
I think that he will come.

- (c) which take manner adverbials, eg.

mé, make, "Mè-kwá hà òfúma."
treat: Treat them well.

(The rewriting rule for the VP can therefore be recast as:

VP \longrightarrow V + (NP) + (PP) + (Adverbs))

- (d) which must have as their subjects and objects human items, eg.

jú(ò), ask/ "Pólís la ajú hà ajujú.
interrogate: They are being interrogated by the police.

- (e) which must never have human items as subjects and objects, eg.

dà, sound "Ó ná ádá kà mgbiringba."
(intr.): It sounds like a bell.
*Ézè ná ádá kà udu.
Eze sounds like udu.

The verbs in sentences (d) and (e) have, therefore, the lexical entry:

$\angle + V, + \text{ ————— } NP, + (\text{Human}) \angle$ and
 $\angle + V, + \text{ ————— } NP, - (\text{Human}) \angle$ respectively.

The two entries indicate

NP —————→ Inanim / ——— VP Inanim
 NP —————→ Anim / ——— V Anim

that is, an inanimate verb requires an inanimate noun phrase.

The Igbo verbs are further sub-categorized into causative and stative verbs.

Causative Verbs

The classification of verbs into causatives and non-causatives seems to be still an unsettled issue in Linguistics. Whereas, for instance, Webster's Third New International Dictionary (unabridged) defines causative verbs as verbs "indicating that the subject of a verb causes an act to be performed or a condition to come into being", Mario Pei and Frank Gaynor (1958) in their Dictionary of Linguistics (Peter Owen Limited, London) define them as verbs "expressing or indicating that the subject causes an agent to perform the action". The discrepancy between the two definitions lies in the role of the subject of the verb. The Webster's notion of causatives can be formulated as follows:

Subj. Clause —————→ ACT

in which the subject which may be agentive or instrumental causes directly the act or state which has resulted from the action described by the verb. The definition of Pei et al, can be formulated as

Subj. Cause Agent Cause —————→ ACT

in which there must, of necessity, be two causative verbs, and in which the subject has no direct bearing on the outcome of the action described by the verb of the subject. The only verb in Igbo which can be described as causative, according to this formula, is

mé - make, cause. But there are other verbs of the language which should be regarded as causative as will be shown later. Pei's et al. notion of causative can only be regarded as partially correct, as it does justice only to the verb mé as can be seen in

| Subject | Caus-V | | Agent | Caus-V → ACT | |
|---------------------------------|--------|------|-------|--------------|------|
| Ugo | mere | ka | Oko | chiwa | ite. |
| Ugo made | | that | Oko | break | pot. |
| (= Ugo made Oko break the pot.) | | | | | |

Other difficulties confronted in the classification of verbs into causatives and non-causatives include the fact that "some linguists have been tempted to analyse transitive sentences as essentially causative ones" (Palmer, 1976), and the uncertainty as to whether "creative" verbs are causative or not as pointed out by Bolinger (1971) in his The Phrasal Verb in English (footnote), "A point that needs investigating is whether of the causative verbs those which 'create' the object are excluded."

In the present study, the notion of causativity adopted is that of Webster's, as it encompasses all the causative verbs in Igbo which occur as follows:

1. When the subject of the intransitive verb becomes the object of the transitive verb derived from the intransitive one.

| Intransitive Verbs | : | Causative Verbs |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| i) $\dot{U}\dot{z}\dot{o}$ meghere. \longrightarrow $\dot{O}\dot{k}\dot{o}$ meghere $\dot{u}\dot{z}\dot{o}$. | | |
| The door opened. | | Oko opened the door. |
| ii) $\dot{M}\dot{o}\dot{t}\dot{o}$ kwusiri. \longrightarrow $\dot{O}\dot{k}\dot{e}\dot{k}\dot{e}$ kwusiri $\dot{m}\dot{o}\dot{t}\dot{o}$. | | |
| The car stopped | | Okeke stopped the car. |
| iii) $\acute{E}\acute{r}\acute{i}\acute{r}\acute{i}$ gbaburu $\dot{i}\dot{b}\dot{o}\dot{o}$. \longrightarrow $\acute{E}\acute{z}\acute{e}$ gbaburu $\acute{e}\acute{r}\acute{i}\acute{r}\acute{i}$ $\dot{i}\dot{b}\dot{o}\dot{o}$. | | |
| The rope broke into two. | | Eze cut the rope into two. |

It should be observed that the causative verbs above are derived from the corresponding intransitive verbs by the morphological process of "zero modification". This means that the intransitive verbs, though modified by becoming causative, have the same phonological form as the derived causative verbs.

2. When there are pairs of different verbs between which the same syntactic and semantic relationship holds in corresponding intransitive and transitive sentences as exemplified by:

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| iv) $\dot{A}\dot{h}\dot{a}$ nwuru. \longrightarrow $\dot{O}\dot{k}\dot{p}\dot{u}$ gburu $\dot{A}\dot{h}\dot{a}$. | |
| Aha died. | Okpu killed Aha. |
| v) $\acute{M}\acute{g}\acute{b}\acute{i}\acute{r}\acute{i}\acute{m}\acute{g}\acute{b}\acute{a}$ là $\acute{a}\acute{d}\acute{a}$. \longrightarrow $\acute{A}\acute{k}\acute{u}$ là $\acute{a}\acute{k}\acute{u}$ $\acute{m}\acute{g}\acute{b}\acute{i}\acute{r}\acute{i}\acute{m}\acute{g}\acute{b}\acute{a}$. | |
| The bell rings. | Aku is ringing the bell. |
| vi) $\acute{A}\acute{k}\acute{a}$ riri $\acute{e}\acute{l}\acute{u}$. \longrightarrow $\acute{U}\acute{c}\acute{h}\acute{e}\acute{n}\acute{n}\acute{a}$ weliri $\acute{a}\acute{k}\acute{a}$ $\acute{e}\acute{l}\acute{u}$. | |
| An arm rose. | Uchenna raised an arm. |

3. When certain transitive verbs express or indicate that the subject causes an agent to perform the action. (See Pei's et al. definition above.)

vii) Èmèrè m lá ò biara.

Made I that he came. (= I made him come.)

viii) Ò manyere mǔ mē yá.

He forced me do it. (= He forced me to do it.)

ix) Ágà m afú là é mēre yá.

I shall see that someone do it. (= I shall get it done.)

Stative and Non-Stative Verbs

Stative verbs "refer to a state of affairs, rather than to an action, event or process".⁽¹²⁾ Lyons states further that stative verbs do not combine with the progressive since "the implication of duration is already contained in the general meaning of these verbs". In Igbo, stative verbs are exemplified by the following verbs:

| | | |
|-----|---|-----------|
| yí | - | resemble; |
| nwé | - | own; |
| dú | - | be. |

These verbs are distinct from non-stative verbs which, like causative verbs, initiate activity, in three respects:

(12) Lyons, J. Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics, Cambridge at the University Press, 1969.

1. Non-stative verbs can be used in imperative sentences;
stative verbs cannot be so used, eg.

Non-stative verbs:

| | | | |
|-----|---------|-----------|-----------------|
| ru | work: | Ruó orù! | Work! |
| yí | put on: | Yié afe! | Put on clothes! |
| gbá | kick: | Gbaá bôl! | Kick the ball! |
| mé | do: | Mée ya! | Do it! |

Stative verbs:

| | | | |
|-----|-----------|--------------|-----------------------|
| yí | resemble: | *Yié nnà í! | Resemble your father! |
| nwé | own: | *Nweé ego! | Own money! |
| fú | see: | *Fú ya! | See it! |
| | BUT | Lée ya! | See or look at it! |
| | | *Dì ógonogo! | Be tall! |

2. Stative verbs cannot be used in the progressive; non-stative verbs can be so used. In connection with these verbs, Joos (1964) quoting Allen, states, "Of all the books that have come to my attention, W. Stannard Allen in his *Living English Structure*, pp.78f. does the best job with such verbs:

'Certain verbs are practically never used in the Present Continuous (present temporary aspect), even when describing the real present. --- These are mainly verbs of condition or behaviour not strictly under human control; consequently, they go on (their referents occur) whether we like it or not. Take an obvious example: "I see a man outside; he is looking at me."

Although these are both "real" present, the verb 'see' in this sense is never used in the continuous form. I have no control over what I see; I see all the time my eyes are open; but I can decide what to look at ...¹⁰ The following examples show that the stative verbs in Igbo cannot be used in the progressive:

Non-stative verbs:

| | | | |
|-----------|---------|----------------|--------------------------|
| rú, orú, | work: | Ó là arú orú. | He's working. |
| yí, | put on: | Ó là eyí afe. | He's putting on clothes. |
| gbá, | kick: | Ó là agbá bôl. | He's kicking the ball. |
| mé, | do: | Ó là emé ihé. | He's doing something. |

Stative verbs:

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| *Ó là eyí nnà yá. | He is resembling his father. |
| *Ò la enwé motò. | He's owning a car. |
| *Ó là adí ogonogo. | He's being tall. |
| *Ó là ahụ́ yá. | He's seeing her. |

3. Non-stative verbs can occur in embedded sentences: stative verbs do not appear as embedded sentences, eg.

Non-stative verbs:

Ágwara mu yá kà ó ruo orú.

I told him that he work work. (I told him to work.)

Ó sìrì la yá gà agbá bôl.

He said that he will kick the ball.

Stative verbs:

*Ágwara m yá kà ń yie nnà yá.

*Ọ́gwara m ka ḿ hụ akwukwo tọgboro ná ala.

He told me that I see the book lying on the ground.

CHAPTER V

The Structure of the Verb Phrase

In this chapter, the study is concerned with the verb phrase, that is, the constituent(s) of an expression which contains only (a) verbal element(s). The structure of a verb phrase is determined by the type of clause in which it occurs because "... the nature of a verb phrase is bound up with the particular type of subordinate clause it belongs to." (Quirk et al. (1972)). The chapter, will, therefore, concentrate on the study of the main sentence-types of the language in which occur the different structures realising the verb phrase.

The verb phrase can be finite or non-finite (as has been seen in Chapter II). It can also be simple or complex. It is simple if it consists of one word, and complex, if it consists of two or more words, in which case it consists of a nucleus and one or more auxiliaries.

Simple Verb Phrase

A simple verb phrase consists of one word as exemplified by

Ó bù kálà

He lives here.

Ézè sírì ikè.

Eze is strong.

Ó dù mǎmá.

It is good.

Complex Verb Phrase

A complex verb phrase consists of two or more words made up of one or more auxiliaries and a nucleus. In this study, complex verb phrases will be subclassified into those with one auxiliary (referred to henceforth simply as CVP1), and those with more than one auxiliary, which will be designated as CVP2. The auxiliaries (which have already been studied in Chapter III) comprise: (à)gá, (à)ká, (á)là, (è)jí and (à)chó.

The following sentences illustrate the CVP1:

Ó gà abíá.

He will come.

Ó là ebé akwá.

She is crying (cry).

Nyá méré mú ji biá.

It made me hold come. (= That is why I have come.)

Mú àká ábia ñnyáà

I would have come yesterday.

Observe that chó cannot occur in CVP1 as it occurs as an auxiliary only in a positive sentence in which la or ga or both can combine with it. This has been explained in Chapter III.

In the CVP2, the verbal elements consist of three items, two of which are auxiliary to the nucleus. The five auxiliaries can occur here as shown in the sentences which follow:

Ó gà lá àbíá kwàdà.

He will be coming every day.

Mmírì là achó ijò.

Rain is wanting to fall.

(= Rain is going (= is about) to fall.)

Gínì m̀èrè há là ejí àbíá kalà?

What made them are holding come here?

(= Why do they come here?)

Complex Verb Phrases in Negative Sentences

In the CVP1, except for the imperative, the negative is formed by attaching the negative particle (-ha) to the nucleus.

Ó là abíá.

He is coming.

Ó là abíáhà.

He is not coming.

Ànyì là arú orù.

We are working.

Ànyì alà arúhò orù.

We are not working.

Há àká ábíá nnyáà.

They would have come yesterday.

Há àká abíáhà nnyáà.

They would not have come yesterday.

In the negative imperative where vowel length and tone constitute the negative marker, the auxiliary là disappears, and the resultant construction is as follows:

- Positive Imperative: Lá èmé yá ngwa ñgwa.
Keep doing it quickly.
- Negative Imperative: Émé-èle yá ngwa ñgwa.
Stop doing it quickly.
(= Do it slowly.)
- Positive Imperative: Lá àrú orú òfúma.
Keep doing the work well.
- Negative Imperative: Àrú-èle óru òfúma.
Stop doing the work well.
(= Do it badly.)

If the auxiliary is either ga, ji or cho, the negative particle is attached to the auxiliary, not to the nucleus as is the case with la or ka above.

O ga abia.

He will come.

O gaha abia.

He will not come.

Eji m ya eme ihe.

Hold I it doing something.

(= I am doing something with it.)

Ejiho m y eme ihela

Hold not I it doing anything at all.

(= I am not doing anything with it.)

In the CVP2, in which there are two auxiliaries, the negative particle is attached to ga (when ga and la are juxtaposed), and to ji (when ji and la are used). But, in the case of ka, when juxtaposed with la, the negative particle is attached to the nucleus.

Ó gá lá àbíá kwàdà.

He will be coming every day.

Ò gáha lá àbíá kwàdà.

He will not be coming every day.

Ìmírì là achó ijò.

Rain is wanting to fall.

(= It is threatening to rain.)

Ìmírì alá achóho ijò

Rain is wanting not to fall.

(= It is not threatening to rain.)

Ànyí là ejí yà èmé ihè.

We are holding it doing something.

(= We are doing something with it.)

Ànyí àká lá àbíá kwàdà.

We would have been coming every day.

Ànyí àká lá àbíaha kwàdà.

We would not have been coming every day.

The example sentences above are simple sentences in the sense that they each contain one verb phrase. But verb phrases as pointed out above are also used in complex sentences as will be shown later.

Verb Phrases in Complex Sentences

Complex sentences have other sentences inside them in deep structure. For instance, the following relative constructions.

1. Nwókè nwèrè égo.

(The) man has got some money.

2. Nwókè biàrà kàlà.

(The) man came here.

3. Nwókè, ñké biàrà kàlà, nwèrè égo.

The man who came here has money.

4. Nwátà à siri ike.

This child is strong.

5. Nwátà à la ejé akwukwo.

This child goes to school.

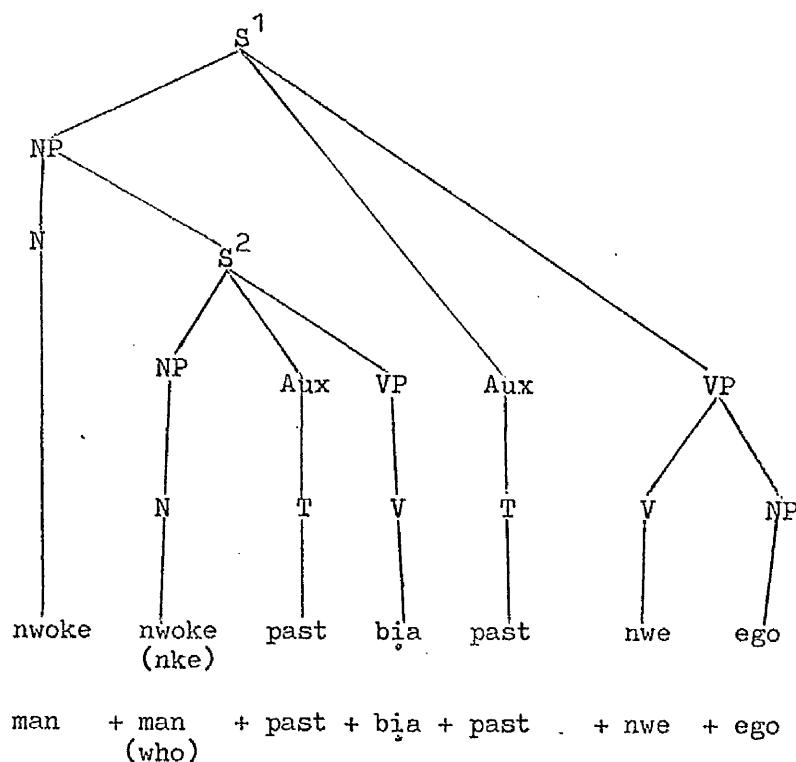
6. Nwátà à la eje akwukwo siri ike.

Child this is going to school is strong.

(= This child who goes to school is strong.)

Observe that in the deep structure of the above sentences the noun phrases are identical. The relative pronoun nke which joins the two sentences is moved to the front of the relative clause if it is not already there.

The deep structure of the complex sentence (3) can be represented in the tree diagram which follows:



Some of the complex sentences are constructed with the aid of conjunctions and conjunctive phrases. The table which follows contains such conjunctions and conjunctive phrases as well as the types of clause which they introduce.

| Clause - type | Conjunctions and Conjunctive Phrases |
|---------------|---|
| 1. Relative | ̀nke (which, who). |
| 2. Time | kà, ógè/̀ngbe (time, when). |
| 3. Cause | màka (because); màka la (because that); màka ífì (la) (because (that)); ̀ere/étu (as, since); tùmady ébe ọ̀ bù (especially that); Ỗ bùhọ là (it is not that); bído (since). |

Clause - type . Conjunctions and Conjunctional Phrases

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 4. Result | là, kà (that) nyá bụ (that is, therefore). |
| 5. Conditional | Ó bụ́rụ́/àgarasí (if it is/was/would it be said = if); díkà aga así, kà aga así (as if); bèrúsò ma (unless). |
| 6. Reason | kà (so that); sò (sò) kà (only that) (= simply for); maka ka (because that); kà/là (that). |
| 7. Concession | ó bụ́ ézié ... mà (although ... yet); kàma (but, although); màla (but); ó bụ́goduru (even if it were = even though). |
| 8. Comparison | kà (same as); karia (more than); bụ́ ófù (same) ùdí (such); kwàzi (also). |

In some cases, two statements juxtaposed can be subordinated in deep structure without a conjunction or words that function as conjunctions to show the subordination as in (a) and (b) below.

(a) relation from cause to result:

Ó dara iwú; ó gà ahárirí nha.

He fell foul of the law; he must pay a fine.

The main proposition is: Ó dara iwú; what follows is dependent upon it.

Ó là atú ajò egwu; ó là afùtáha là anyási.

He is very cowardly; he does not go out at night.

What follows as a result of his cowardice is his inability to go out at night.

(b) simultaneous relation:

Ó bu erélè ógè lííle; mú la afù o lá abàtá.

It is always like this; while I am going away,
he will be coming in.

In other instances, conjunctions or conjunctive phrases are used to construct complex sentences as will be shown in the following different types of dependent clauses which are met in the language.

Relative Clauses

Two types of relative clauses can be distinguished according to whether the conjunction is attached to the subject of the proposition or not.

Relative clauses without antecedent in the sentences:

Ìkẹ́ biara dù mma.

Who came biara dù.

Ìkẹ́ afuru jòro njo.

That lost was bad.

(= That which was lost was bad.)

In the above sentences, the conjunction nke functions not only as a relative pronoun that joins two sentences together but also as the subject of the sentences.

Relative clauses with antecedents:

The relative clause which functions like an adjective can take on two different values according to whether it defines or supplements the antecedent. In the sentence, for instance,

1. Nwókè òkè mú là akóro wù màka yá àbiákwa òzò.

(The man about whom I spoke to you has come again.)

the clause - òkè mú là akóro wù màka yá - (about whom I spoke to you) is the determiner of the noun nwókè (man), and cannot be deleted without nwókè losing one of the essential elements of its meaning in the sentence.

On the other hand, in the sentence

2. Ófú nwoke, òké biara kalà nnyáà, zuri ósì.

(A certain man, who came here yesterday, stole something.)

the relative clause separated by commas is related to nwókè simply as an explanatory supplement which could easily be done away with without doing harm semantically to the main clause.

Differences between Restrictive and Non-Restrictive Clauses

The relative clause in (1) is restrictive, while that in (2) is non-restrictive. The two types of relative clause differ phonologically and semantically.

Verb Phrases in Adverbial Clauses

Adverbial clauses function like adverbs, that is, their function is analogous to that of simple adverbs. They indicate a "circumstance" which, in spite of its effective importance, can be considered as secondary with regard to the principal verbal idea in a construction. The circumstance indicates either the moment when the action is produced, its cause, its aim, its consequence, the condition under which it is subordinated, or an opposition, a concession given to it which restrains its meaning. All this will be exemplified in what follows.

Time Adverbial Clause

Adverbial clauses of time indicate the time when the principal action took place in relation to another action expressed in the time clause. It is thus less an indication of a time absolutely determined than a relation of anteriority, posteriority or simultaneity between two actions. Simultaneity is marked by either kà (as) or ngbe/ógè

Ala m áfù áfù ógè ó là ábàtá.
(when)/(as).

Álā m áfù áfù ógè ó là ábātā.

I was going out as he was coming in.

Ó là abíá kà mú là áfù.

He was coming as I was going out.

In general, kà and ngbe/ógè introduce a given action as near as possible in time to the principal action (but in fact posterior to it):

Àfuru m ọ̀gè mú rùsiri ọ̀rù.

Went out I when I finished the work.

(= I went away when I finished the work.)

Ọ̀ biara ka mú rùsiri ọ̀rù.

(He came when (after) I had finished the work).

or an action intervening as another is still going on, but not in a way that their respective moments of occurrence are confused.

Álā m edé letà mgbe/ka ọ̀ là akú mgbiringba.

(I was writing a letter as he was ringing the bell.)

The language possesses a certain number of conjunctive elements destined to bring about relation of cause as exemplified by the following sentences:

(a) Ọ̀ là abíàhà màka la ahụ́ aduhọ́ ya.

He is not coming because he is unwell.

(b) Ọ̀ là abíàhà màka ífi la ahụ́ aduhọ́ ya.

He is not coming (simply) because he is unwell.

Sentence (a) indicates that, although he is not coming because of his sickness, he could as well be prevented to come by some other cause. Sentence (b) indicates that the only reason why he is not coming is his sickness; if he were not sick, he would certainly come.

(c) Ọ̀ jì onwé yá la aka l'ífi la ọ̀ nwere égo.

He holds himself in hand because he has got some money.

(= He is confident because he is rich.)

Like màka ifi la in (b), lá ifi la in (c) indicates that the sole cause of his confidence is the fact that he is rich.

Sometimes, màka la is used in the sense of màka gínì? (why?) as

(d) Mma enwehe ike (i)bià.

I will not be able to come.

Màka la? Because?

La is lengthened, and the questioner expresses in a way less brusque than in demanding màka gínì? (why?). He introduces a causal clause in which there is no preceding affirmative sentence. Màka la obliges the speaker of (d) to consider it as suspended, and to finish the statement by giving the cause (why he won't be able to come).

Màka is sometimes followed by an infinitive without a finite verb, or followed by a nominal as in:

Ànyí biàra maka ímu íhe.

We have come because to study something.

(= We have come to study.)

Ànyí biàra maka ílútara ya nwányi.

We have come because to marry him a wife.

(= We have come to marry him a wife.)

Ó nwèhe ebe mụ nwèrè íke ije màka íke ògwugwu.

It has not place I have ability to go because power finishing

(= I cannot go anywhere because of tiredness.)

Ère/Ètu whose sense connotes both limit of time and cause, has a temporal nuance.

Ère ó nwèhe ike íbià, ó dèrè m létà.

As he could not come, he wrote me a letter.

In this example, the sense of cause predominates, but it retains a certain indication of simultaneity of the two actions.

Bído (begin) followed by either óge, èrì óge or mgbe áhù indicates time and cause, and marks very weakly the point of departure of an action.

Bído erì óge áhù ó biara ka ahù gbùdidere yá, ò weé nwuo.

Beginning from that time he came that body kept killing him until he died.

(= From the time he came, he became sick until he died.)

Kítà ó bù/ébe o bù (now it is = now that/since) indicates cause as in

Ébe o bù la ó lòho, anyị alá agaha be yá.

Since it is that he is not, we shall go not to his house.

(= Since he is not in, we shall not go to his house.)

Tùmadu ébe o bù la (especially where it is that = especially that).

This conjunctive phrase presents the cause of the principal action as if having that value, it could produce still other effects, than those announced. Tùmadu suggests that other reasons exist, but that the one given is the principal one.

Ô ká éje ebe ahù tùmadu ébe o bù la ó nwèhe ihe
o là emé mgbe áhù.

He should have gone there, especially now it was that he had nothing he was doing then.

(= He should have gone there then especially because he was doing nothing then.)

Ọ́ búhọ̀ là (it is not that) denies that the announced cause is true.

Ọ́ búhọ̀ là ọ́ búhọ̀ ezigbo mmadụ̀, káma ọ́ là ejiáagá ụgwọ̀.

It is not that he is not a good person, but he is holding debt.

(= It is not doubted that he is a good man, the only stain on his character is that he owes a lot.)

Ọ́ bu so ka (it is only that) indicates cause.

Ọ́ bu so ka ọ́ biara ka mmadụ̀ jì nwee àñuri.

It was only that he came that people held got happiness.

(= It was only when he came that people began to be happy.)

Nke (that, which) sometimes takes on a causal status in interrogative or exclamatory affectionate sentences.

Àhụ́ ọ́ la egbuya nke la anyị́ afubèhe yá anya èrí abalí itọ́?

Body it is killing him that that we saw never him eyes since night three? (= Is he sick that we have not seen him for three days?)

Ị́ fúbèkwara ájọ̀ ngála nke la ọ́ nwehe ike ije lata ègo ezitere yá!

You see ever very bad laziness that that he has not power to go receive money sent to him!

(= Have you ever seen such laziness that he cannot go to receive the money sent to him!)

Sometimes ̀nke is used after certain imperatives to indicate some personal interest:

Gwàkéle mú, kèdú enyì óké wu, ̀nke la mú afùbèhe yá
èrí arò gara agá.

Tell therefore me, where is friend, man your that that
I saw never him since year passed passing.

(= Tell me now, where is your friend? I am asking
because I have not seen him since last year.)

The above examples indicate that ̀nke is par excellence a conjunction that can be used with different verb phrases. It has not a precise meaning as in the case of other temporal conjunctions discussed above. In the sentences, the speaker formulates an interrogative or an exclamation and attaches to it, through the intermediary of ̀nke, another notion which justifies the first proposition.

Clauses of Reason

The verb phrases used here give reasons for the occurrence of the actions in the main propositions. They are introduced by the following conjunctions.

Kà (so that). This is a purpose conjunction. It is sometimes reinforced by the word sò (only). Sò ka/sòsò ka (only that) indicates that the objective stated is pursued to the exclusion of any other by the principal action.

Compare \hat{O} biara ka \acute{o} fu wu.

He came that he sees you.

(= He came to see you). If he saw or did not see you,
he might as well see (an)other person(s).

with \hat{O} biara sósò ka \acute{o} fu wu.

He came only that he sees you.

(= He came purposely to see you.) If he did not see
you, it availed him nothing that he saw someone else.

Màka ka (because that). This is used to indicate the main
object pursued by the author of the action.

Màka ka $\acute{g}\acute{i}\acute{n}\acute{i}$ $\acute{w}\acute{e}\acute{e}$ $\acute{m}\acute{e}\acute{e}$?

Because that what then be done?

(= So that what will happen? For what purpose?)

\acute{E} kwuru ihe ndi à maka ka ndi biara $\acute{w}\acute{e}\acute{e}$ $\acute{z}\acute{u}\acute{o}$ ike.
 \acute{E} kwuru ihe ndi à maka ka ndi biara $\acute{w}\acute{e}\acute{e}$ $\acute{z}\acute{u}\acute{o}$ ike.

Said things these because that those came then rest power.

(= These things are said so that the visitors may have a rest.)

Màka ka ihe dù $\acute{e}\acute{r}\acute{e}\acute{l}\acute{e}$ $\acute{g}\acute{h}\acute{a}\acute{r}\acute{a}$ $\acute{i}\acute{m}\acute{e}$ $\acute{o}\acute{j}\acute{o}$, agà m ejísi ikè jee be ha.

Because that things are like this leave off to do again will

I hold power going to them.

(= In order that such a thing will not happen again, I
will try to go to them.)

$\acute{A}\acute{r}\acute{u}\acute{r}\acute{u}$ $\acute{m}\acute{u}$ $\acute{o}\acute{r}\acute{u}$ à maka ka $\acute{m}\acute{u}$ $\acute{w}\acute{e}\acute{e}$ $\acute{n}\acute{w}\acute{e}\acute{e}$ ego.

Did I work this because that I then have money.

(= I did this work so that I would get some money.)

Là (that), when preceded by the nominal bound verb ítù egwu (to be afraid), indicates the consequence which the author of the main action wants to avoid.

Álā m atú egwù la ó là abiaha.

I am afraid that he will not come.

When kà/là (that) is followed by ínwè + Neg., the objective or the consequence stated has no influence on the main action.

Ó mere yá la enwèhe ènyémú aka obùla.

He did it that has not giving hand whatsoever.

(= He did it without help.)

Ó la arú orú ka ó nwehe onye la ényere ya aká.

He is working work that he has not who that giving him hand.

(= He is working, and he has nobody helping him.)

Kà (that)

Lòdú àla ka anyí kpaa nkàtá.

Sit down that we chat a chat.

(= Sit down so that we chat.)

This construction is especially used after the verbs in the imperative. It contains the idea that a certain objective should be attained. The kà here is not the same as the purpose kà already discussed in the preceding paragraphs. The construction occurs also when the verb is in the interrogative.

Í lá alòdúhò àla ka anyí kpaa nkàtá?

You are sitting not down that we chat a chat?

(= Won't you sit down so that we chat?)

"Clauses" of Reason introduced by the Infinitive

With the verbs of movement, the infinitive without a conjunction is used to mark the objective pursued:

(a) Ó là abíá ilèta ụmùákà.

He is coming to see the children.

(b) Ó là agá Enugu izuta motò.

He will go to Enugu to buy a car.

In some cases, the relation of finality or objectivity can be indicated when the motive verbs are used with màka.

Compare

(c) Ó là abíá màka ilèta ụmùákà.

He is coming to see the children.

with

(d) Ó là ábíá màka ilèta ụmùákà.

He will come to see the children.

where the change of the tone on abíá brings about a change of tense.

The sense in these sentences is not the same as in the (a) and (b) examples. The objective indicated by màka is not given as having been attained. He comes to see the children, he has the intention of seeing them, but, perhaps they may not be there. But (a) does not, on the contrary, suppose that the speaker has any shadow of doubt that the objective of his visit will be achieved.

Clauses of Result

Clauses of result are introduced by the conjunctions là and ńke followed by bu + la.

Ó là aghá oke ùgha là ó nwèhezi onye la èkwe ine ó là ekwú.

He is lying male lies that no-one who is believing what he is saying.

(= He lies so much that no-one believes anything he says.)

Ó nwèrè égo sinne là ó nwèrè íke ikwú ndu Achi liile ugwo.

He has money so much that he has power to pay people

Achi all payment.

(= He has so much money that he can pay salary to all

Achi people.)

When ńké bu is used to introduce a clause of result, it lays more emphasis on the noun or adjective preceding it than the noun or verb corresponding to it.

Ó nwèrè égo sinne ńké bu là ó nwèrè íke ikwú ndu Achi liile ugwo.

He has money so much that is that he has power to pay people

Achi all payment.

(= He is so rich that he can pay a salary to all Achi people.)

Compare

1. Ó bèrè ákwa sinné là ó nwèhezi íke ikwu okwú.

She cried cry so much that she has not power to talk talk.

(= She cried so much that she cannot talk.)

with

2. Ó bèrè ákwa ńké bu là ó nwèhezi íke ikwu okwú.

She cried cry that is that she has not power to talk talk.

(= She cried so much (to such an extent) that she can no longer talk.)

Sentence (1) simply indicates the logical sequence and result of her crying much; in (2) the result is heightened to the extent that it is accompanied by astonishment. The degree of the effect, in the latter case, surpasses all expectations.

Nyá bú (that is; therefore) is frequently used to show the result of a state as can be seen in the sentences which follow:

Enwéhe mụ ego; nyá bú la m' mà akwuho wu ugwo wu.

Have not I money that is that I not paying not you debt your.

(= I have not got any money; therefore, I will not pay you your money.)

Nwóké à jì ugwo tupu o nwuo; nyá bú la nwá yà gà akwu yà.

Man this holds debt before he died that is that son will pay it.

(= This man owed some money before he died; therefore, his son will repay the debt.)

The relation of result is sometimes marked with the aid of the infinitive. The result is then indicated as probable or expected.

Kèdú òkè ó là echí mkpú; íkpòte ndu mmadu la ura?

What that he is hitting noise to wake up these people from sleep?

(= Why is he shouting to wake people from sleep?)

Mmadu ílā la iyi!

Person to go to ruin!

(= A person going to ruin!)

This expression is derived from

Ì fukwara nké bù mmadù ílā la iyi!

You see therefore which is a man to go to ruins!

(= You see how a person can ruin himself!)

Conditional Clauses

Conditional clauses may be introduced either by tone or by the conjunction, àgarasí, or the juxtaposed expression, ó buru. Àgarasí is a dialectal variant of ó buru, and both are translated into English by the word, if.

Conditional Clauses with Tone

Tone marks, with a greater expressive force, the conditional tense of the action than either ó buru or àgarasí as can be seen in the following sentences:

| | <u>Conditional</u> | + | <u>Present</u> |
|------|--|-------|----------------|
| i) | Ó <u>bíá</u> | Ì | jee. |
| | He comes | I | go. |
| | (= If he comes, I go.) | | |
| ii) | Ézè <u>bíá</u> | | fú yá. |
| | Eze comes | | see him. |
| | (= If Eze comes, see him.) | | |
| iii) | Í <u>ree</u> yá | iwe | èwée mü. |
| | You sell it | anger | angers me. |
| | (= If you sell it, you make me angry.) | | |

Conditional + Future

- iv) Ó bíà agà m ejé.
He comes shall I go.

(= If he comes, I shall go.)

- v) Eze bíà ì gà afú yá.
Eze comes you will see him.

(= If Eze comes, you will see him.)

- vi) Ó ree yá iwe gà ewé mụ.
He sells it anger will anger me.

(= If he sells it, I shall be angry.)

Future + Present

- vii) Ó ga ábía nya kute mmiri.
He will come, he brings water.

(= If he will come, let him bring water.)

- viii) Ó la ábía nya vùté jí.
He is coming, he brings yams.

(= If he will be coming, let him bring yams.)

Conditional + Future Perfect in the Past

- ix) Há biàra anyi ejéé.
They came we went.

(= If they had come, we would have gone.)

- x) Ó rèrè yá iwe àká éwe mụ.
He sold it anger would anger me.

(= If he sold it, I would be angry.)

- xi) Ànyị gàra, ọ ká áfụ anyi.
We went, he would see us.

(= If we went (there), he would see us.)

In careful speech, the phrase, ó bú là, (it is that), generally precedes (ix), (x) and (xi).

xii) Ó bú là ô biàra, anyi ejee.

It is that he came, we went.

(= If (it happened that) he came, we would go.)

xiii) Ó bú là ô rere yá iwe àká ewe mụ.

It is that he sold it anger would anger me.

(= If (it happened that) he sold it, I would be angry.)

xiv) Ó bú là anyi gara, ô ká afụ anyi.

It is that we went, he would see us.

(= If (it happened that) we went (there) he would see us.)

Conditional Clauses with ó buru/àgarasí

Ó buru + Present + Present

xv) Ó buru là i bia, mée kà mụ mara.

It was that you come, make that I know.

(= If you come, let me know.)

xvi) Ó buru là ô bu ogirinya, nyá mée kà mmádù nchá nwee egò.

It was that he is a rich man, he makes that people all have money.

(= If he is a rich man, let him make everybody have money.)

Ó buru + Present + Past Perfect

xvii) Ó buru là ó bú ónye amuma, ô ká amarugwo là ónye à bu ónye òme njo.

It was that he is person knowing he would know already that person this is person doing badness.

(= If he had been a prophet, he would have known that this man is a sinner.)

xviii) Àgarasí là ọ̀ bú ájò mmadù, anyí àká àgbalarigwo yà.

Said (it) that he is bad person, we would run away from him.

(= If he is a bad person, we would have left his company.)

Àgarasí/ó búru + Past + Past Perfect

xix) Àgarasí là ọ̀ biara, mụ́ àká áfụ́ ya.

Said (it) that he came, I would see him.

(= Had he come, I would have seen him.)

xx) Ọ́ búru là íwè wèrè yá ọ̀ ká ála.

It was that anger angered him he would go.

(= If he had been angered, he would have gone.)

Àgarasí/ó búru + Past + Past

xxi) Àgarasí là ọ̀ biara m̀ gara ífù́ ya.

If he came, I would see him.

xxii) Ọ́ búru là mụ́ fùrụ́ yá ọ̀ gara ínyèrè mụ́ aka.

If I saw him, he would help me.

Ó búru is the conjunctive phrase which introduces the conditional sentence, being itself the conditional tense of the verb bú. When it is not used to introduce a whole proposition, it is preceded by the conjunction, mà.

Ágà m̀ abiá, mà ọ́ búru là ọ́ gá álò́ ya.

I will come, if he will be in.

Unlike conditional sentences introduced with the aid of tone, ó buru is used to refer to all the tense forms of the language. It is an indicator, showing the stated fact as a hypothesis, but it does not always establish a clear relation of subordination with regard to the principal verbal phrase.

Ó buru là mụ ròtere ofuma, ihe o kwuru bu ...

If I remember well, what he said was ...

Here the condition has no relation to the proposition which follows, but indicates a reservation on the part of the speaker.

Dika aga asị/ka aga asị. These two juxtaposed expressions are synonymous and they translate the English expressions: as if, as though, pretend.

Íke gwuru m lóó, dika aga asị là mụ ruru oru rinne.

Power finished me so much as saying that I worked work very much.

(= I am so tired as though I had worked so hard.)

Í fuhọ kà ó sị emé kà aga asị là ó nwere égo.

You see not that he follows doing as going saying that he has got money.

(= Don't you see how he behaves as if he has got some money.)

(Dí)ka aga asị introduces a hypothesis as a term of comparison in order to clarify the principal idea. It is often used in an ellipsis which has an affectionate value, and marks a protestation against the suggested hypothesis as in:

Há gbara oso kà aga asị là ó nwere ihe ha mere.

They ran away as if that it had something they did.

(= They ran away as if they had committed some offence.)

Bèrúsò ma (unless) indicates that the principal action would be produced only when the action expressed in the subordinate clause happens.

Ó lá abíaha, bèrúsò ma i jere kpó yá.

He is coming not unless but you went calling him.

(= He will not come unless you go and call him.)

Ó buhára lá (if indeed) presents the action in the subordinate clause as the minimum exigency imposed as the condition for the occurrence of the principal action.

Ó buhára lá ò kwú ezi okwú, agà m agbághàrá yá.

It is indeed that he speaks truth will I forgive him.

(= Provided that he will tell the truth, I will forgive him.)

Ó buhára lá ò bíá, agà m afú yá.

Provided he comes, I will see him.

(On no account will I fail to see him if indeed he comes.)

The conjunctive phrase - ó buhára lá - indicates that the accomplishment of what is desired is considered by the speaker as absolutely necessary for his satisfaction; but the accomplishment is doubtful.

The sentence containing ó buhára lá contains a nuance of an anticipated regret.

(Mà) éwèrúka (but leaving aside - but for) introduces a circumstance which is added to the principal proposition, and which could prevent the occurrence of the action.

Nyá kàchasí ndí òzò mmá, mà éwèrúka ajò òmumé yà.

She surpasses the others in goodness, but taking aside
bad behaviour her.

(= She is the most beautiful of all, but for her bad manners.)

Éwèrúka là ó là ezú osí mmádù, nchá àká àfù ya la anyà.

Taking aside that he is stealing theft people all would
see him with the eye.

(= But for the fact that he is a thief, everybody would
have loved him.)

When éwèrúka is followed by an infinitive, it indicates that
account should be taken of a certain risk inherent in the principal
action. The notions of a hypothesis and consequence are almost
intertwined, but the hypothetical one predominates.

Éwèrúka igwù égwu yà, ó là ejé òlòfó ozu.

Taking aside to play play his, he is running indeed errands.

(= Apart from (= but for) his playing too much, he runs
errands for people.)

This implies that he is ready to go on a message for anybody provided
he is not occupied with his play.

Éwèrúka iwá ajo anyà, ô ká énwegwo jí.

Taking aside breaking bad eyes, she would have had a husband.

(= But for her being too sophisticated, she would have had
a husband.)

Her having no husband, in spite of her beauty, is dependent upon her
sophistication.

Clauses of Concession

Concession is expressed in Igbo by the juxtaposed words -

Ô bu ézie ... mà (la), (it is true ... but = although).

Ô bu ézie là ô bù nwàtá, mala ô gáfè-rè ulé yá.

It is true that he is a child but he went across
examination his.

(= Although he is very young, he passed his examination.)

"Ô bu ézie nà imelímè nímé fa mèlụ njó màna Chúkwa mèlụ
ebélè ô gbánàrịrọ fa." (5)

"It is true that many among them made sins but God made
mercy he ran away not them."

(= Although many of them sinned, God had mercy on them,
and did not run away from them.)

Kámà (but, although) indicates that, although the principal verbal
idea will be realised or has been realised, the subordinate notion
in the kámà - clause will not be, or has not been, realised either
because of the unwillingness or inability on the part of the subject.

Ô mara ímá kámà la mụ alá alụhọ yá.

She knew beauty but that I am marrying not her.

(= Although she is beautiful, I will not marry her.)

Àrụhọrụ m yá. ọrụ kámà la ọ kwùhọ m ugwò.

Worked I for him work but that he paid not me pay.

(= He did not pay me as I worked for him gratis.)

(5) Nde Dinwenu anye, Holy Ghost Fathers, Onitsha, 1920?

The hypothetical opposition in the construction is not as strong as that in a sentence in which màla replaces kàma.

Àrùorù mụ yá orù màla ọ kwùho m ugwo.

I worked for him but he paid not me pay.

(= Although I worked for him, he did not pay me.)

(He did not pay me (and I am bitter about it) even though I worked for him.)

Ó bugoduru là (even if it were that) is derived from the verbal phrase - ó buru - which has already been discussed. It indicates that the condition will be realised only contrarily to what is expected.

It is a more emphatic form of ó buru.

Ó bugoduru là ó kàsi mmádù lílile sie ike, ô ká ágba ñkíchi.

It is even then that he surpasses people all being strong he would kick silence.

(= Even though he was the strongest person (among them) he would have kept silent.) (He did not keep silent; he talked, and this was not expected of him.)

The notion of concession is sometimes rendered by a verbal phrase, followed by the adverbial phrase - là nkíchi (in vain).

Í là ekwú là nkíchi, áfùbágwò mri.

You are speaking in vain going already I really.

(= You oppose my going away in vain, I am already on my way out.) (Although you don't want me to go out, I am, in spite of that opposition, going out.)

Ó là arú orù à la nkíchi, ọ nwéhe ego agà akwú yá.

He is working work this in vain; it has not money going to pay him.

(= Although he is doing the work, he will be paid no money.)

Clauses of Comparison

Clauses of comparison are of the structure

$\text{dù} + \text{Adj.} + \text{kà} + \text{Nom.}$

$\text{bù} + \text{òfú} + (\text{ihé}).$

$\text{dù} + \text{Adj.} + \text{kária}.$

$\text{clause} + \text{clause} + \text{kwàazi}.$

(Where dù and bù are equivalent to English "is" or "are", Adj. stands for adjective, kà is "same as", kária is "surpass", òfú - the same and Nom. is for nominal.)

A comparison may mark a relation of equality or inequality.

$\hat{\text{O}} \text{ du } \acute{\text{o}}\text{gologo } \text{kà } \acute{\text{o}}\text{sisi } \text{o}\hat{\text{j}}\text{i}.$

It is tall like tree iroko.

(= It is as tall as the iroko tree.)

(Here, the thing compared to the iroko tree is equal in height to the latter.)

$\hat{\text{O}} \text{ du } \acute{\text{m}}\text{kpumkpú } \text{karia } \text{nnà } \text{yá}.$

He is short surpassing father his.

(= He is shorter than his father.)

(Here, it is a question of inequality, the son being unequal to his father in height.)

$\acute{\text{I}}\acute{\text{j}}\acute{\text{e}} \text{ be } \text{ya } \text{là } \acute{\text{i}}\text{lòdu } \text{kàlà } \text{bù } \text{ofú } (\text{ihé}).$

To go to his house and to stay here are one thing.

(= Going to his place and staying here are the same.)

$\text{Anyi } \text{kwere}, \text{ anyi } \text{ekwèhe } \text{bù } \text{ofú } (\text{ihé}).$

We agree we agree not is one thing.

(= Whether we agree, or we don't agree, to what is said, is the same.)

Ha'ère and (di)ka indicate a relation of conformity and equality

as can be seen in the sentences that follow:

Emere mu ya ere í sìri meé ya.

Did I it as you followed doing it.

(= I did it as you (did it)).

Emere m ya díka ó gwàra mú.

Did I it like he told me.

(= I did it as he told me to (do it).)

Ó ha ere í chòrò.

It is as you want.

Udí (such) introduces a clause of comparison when it is used as an adjective qualifying a following nominal.

Àfubèhe m udí ihé ahù du èrêlè.

Saw not I such thing that is like this.

(= I have never seen such a thing.)

From this sentence can be derived

Àfubèhe m udí ihé du èrêlè.

Àfubèhe m udí ihé du èrêlè.
Saw not I such thing is like this.

(= I have never seen such a thing (that is) like this.)

Observe that the clauses of equality or inequality, and conformity give rise to "identical verb phrase deletion", or a whole identical clause deletion.

Identical Verb Phrase Deletion

Ô ha ka mú hà. —————→

He is as tall as I am.

Ô ha ka mú.

He is as I,

in which the verb phrase hà is redundant and is therefore deleted.

Ô la ekwú okwú ère(kà) í sì ekwú okwú. —————→

He talks as you talk.

Ô la ekwú okwú kà wú.

He talks as you,

in which í —————→ wú, and the verb phrase sì ekwú, which is equivalent to the principal verb phrase, are deleted.

Èmere m ya ere í chòrò ka mú mee yà. —————→

Did I it as you wanted that I do it.

(= I did it as you wanted me to do it.)

Èmere mú ya ere í chòrò.

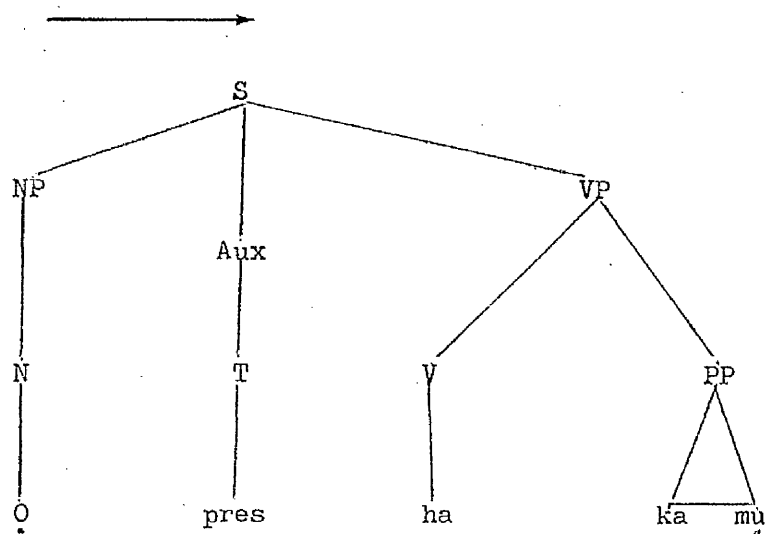
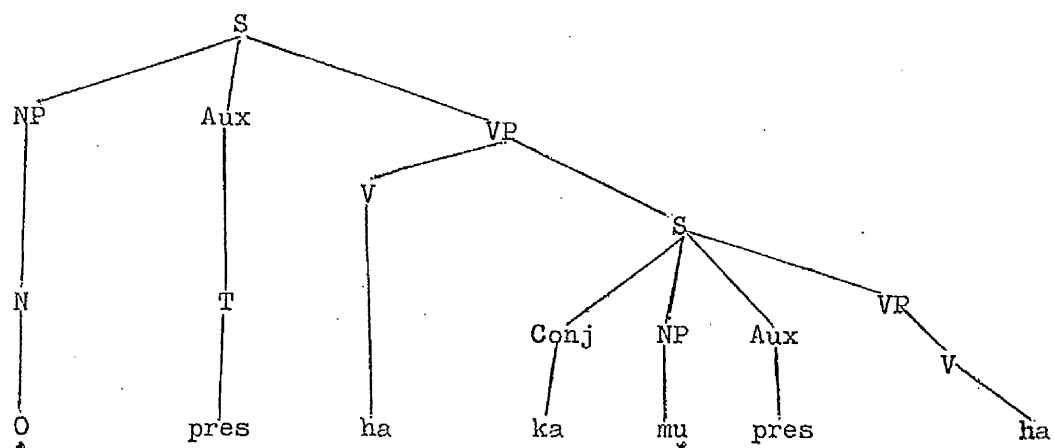
Did I it as you wanted.

(= I did it as you wanted me to.)

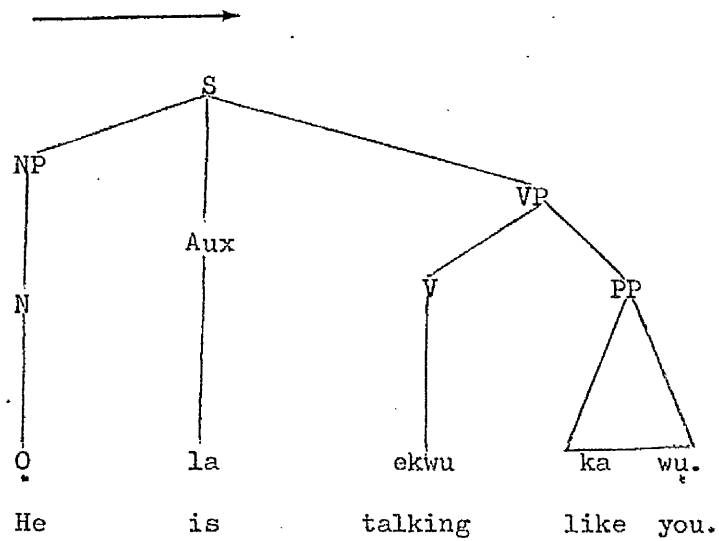
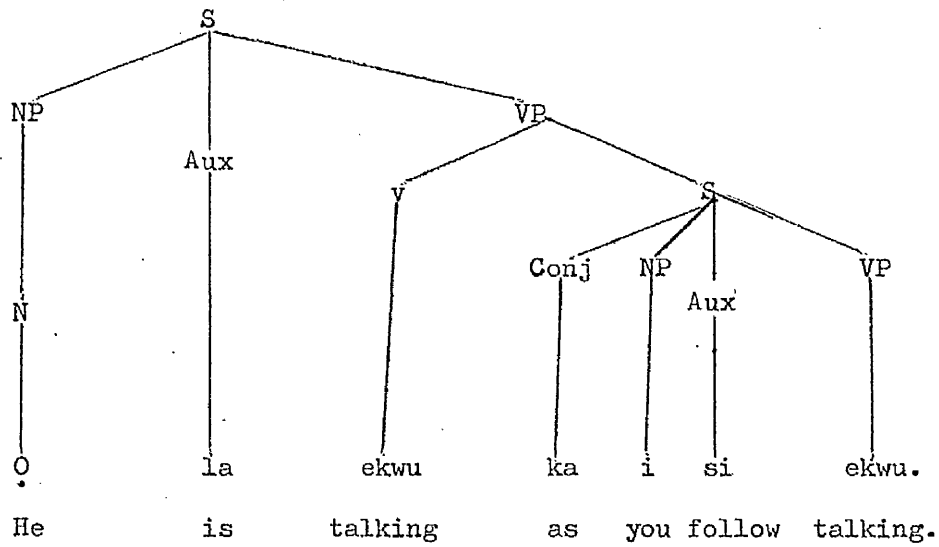
in which a whole clause, which is equivalent to the principal clause, is deleted.

The phenomenon of identical verb phrase or clause deletion in Igbo can be illustrated in tree-diagrams as follows:

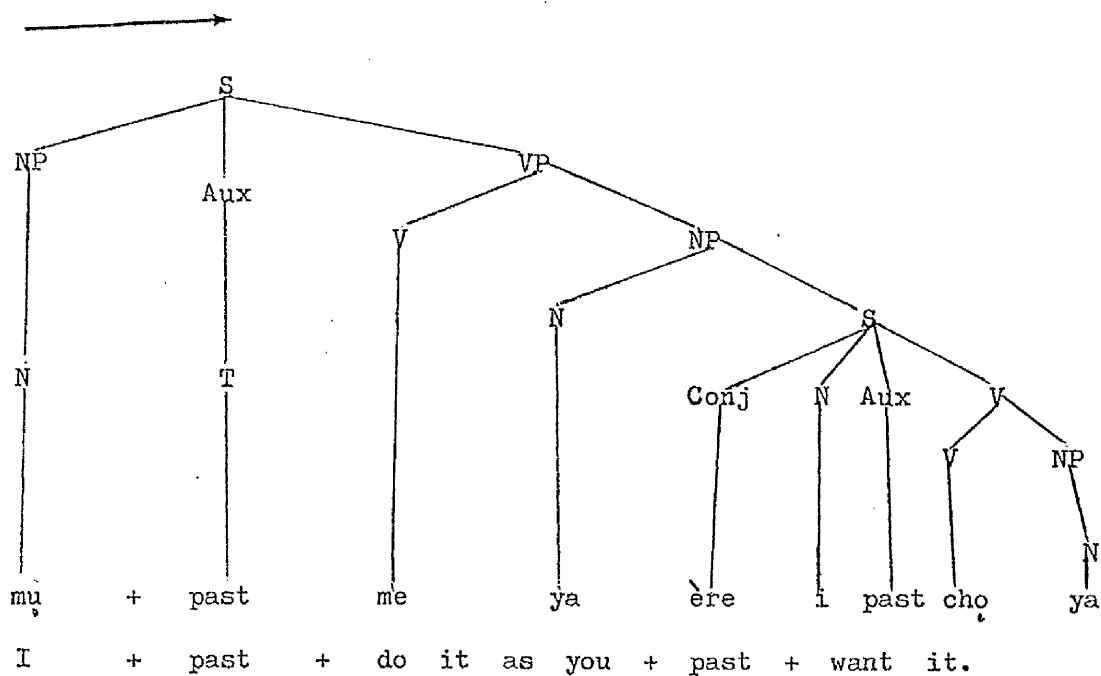
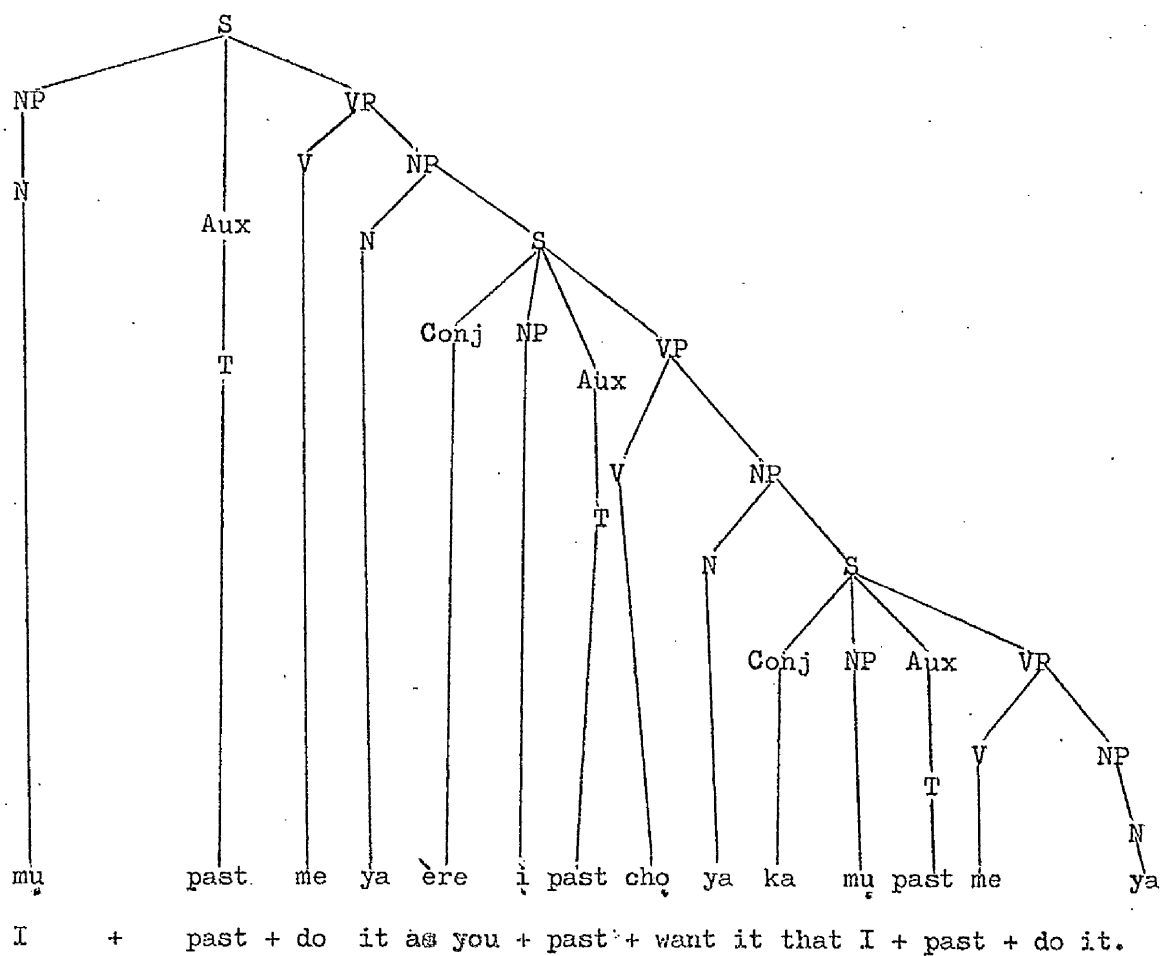
Ô ha ka mü hä.



Ô la ekwú kà ì sì ekwú.



(mü) (e) mere mü ya ere i choro ka mü mee ya.



Verb Phrases in Miscellaneous Constructions

Verb Phrases in Idioms

In this study, an idiom is used in the sense of a group of words having an opaque meaning; that is, the meaning of the combination cannot be related to the basic meanings of the items that constitute it. In ípàtá ukwà lá oso ákpaka - bringing (= finding) breadfruit under an oil-bean tree (instead of under a breadfruit tree) (= finding fortune where it is most unexpected), there is the collocation of ípàtá and úkwà whose meaning has nothing to do with either ípàtá or úkwà. Palmer (1976) said that an idiom can be defined in terms of non-equivalence in other languages.

The Igbo idiom,

Éjile úlò la adú ñsị.

Snails house contain faeces,

(= Snails found around the compound (hence without difficulty) are full of faeces) (= "No prophet is without honour save in his own town.") cannot be translated directly into another language, and still convey the same meaning which it has for an Igbo speaker. Idioms are neither phonetically motivated (where sounds are direct imitation of sense), nor morphologically motivated (where the components suggest the meaning) nor yet semantically motivated (where the components are derived from transparent metaphor). Idioms are used to convey more vividly and emphatically what the speaker means to say.

Verb Phrases in Depejorativization

There are other related ways of rendering meaning in Igbo more emphatically. One of these ways has been called, for the purposes of this work, depejorativization, a term suggested by Bazell. Depejorativization is the phenomenon by which a pejorative word in a syntactic environment is rendered semantically non-pejorative. Such pejorative words that will be studied here include:

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| ídù egwù | - to be dangerous |
| ínyù nsí | - to "deposit" faeces |
| íta amosu | - to practise witchcraft |
| ídù ajo njo | - to be bad; to be wicked |
| ibù ozu | - to be a corpse |
| igbù ochù | - to commit murder |
| igba oku | - to burn, to destroy with fire. |

When these words are used in a depejorative sentence, they intensify the positive meaning of the verbs.

Nwóké à dú égwù lá orụ yá.

Man this is dangerous to work his.

(= This man excels in his work; he has extraordinary skills.)

Jí nyurụ nsí lá afia taà.

Yams "deposited" faeces in market today.

(There were plenty of yams in the market today;
so much that they were cheaply sold.)

Onye nkuzi à tara ámosu.

Person teacher this bit witchcraft.

(= This person excels in his profession; he is one of the
best teachers one can think of.)

Nwányi a dú ájọ́ mma.

Woman this is bad beauty.

(= This woman is terribly beautiful.)

Nnà yá bù óke ozú.

Father his is male corpse.

(= His father is awfully rich.)

Nwóké à egbué ọchù lá nkuzi.

Man this has killed murder in teaching.

(= This man is extremely good at teaching.)

Éde gbara ókú la afia nnyaa a.

Cocoyams burnt fire in market yesterday.

(= Cocoyams sold like hot cakes yesterday.)

The above examples are semantically motivated. Ígbà oku, for instance, suggests that the cocoyams which gbàra ókú la afia (which burnt in the market) sold as rapidly as a fire destroys an object. The rapidity with which the cocoyams were sold is derived, by transparent metaphor, from the rapidity with which a fire can burn a combustible object. Similarly, inyu nsí (to "deposit" faeces). Excrement is always regarded, because of its bad odour, as being plentiful in the sense that, no matter how small the quantity may be, it is capable of, without arms, scattering a crowd, making them run. The abundance of yams in the above example sentence is derived from the apparent "immensity" of faeces.

A third way in which Igbo intensifies the meanings of verb phrases is by the process of suffixation. This consists in the use of the suffix - gbù(ru)⁽²⁾ which can be attached to any Igbo verb root to emphasise the semantic content of the verb.

Compare the following two sets of sentences in which -gbù(ru) is used to lay a greater emphasis in the B set.

-
- (2) Egudu in his Negative Expression for Positive Attribute in (the) Igbo Language: An Aspect of Igbo Idiom in Ogbalu, F.C. and Emenanjo, E.N. (eds.) Igbo Language and Culture (O.U.P. Ibadan, 1975), mistook this suffix for the verb root gbú - kill. The suffix - gbù(ru) means "completely" and not "kill" as Egudu suggested as can be seen in:

Há biagbuo, gwo m.
They come completely tell me.
(= When they have completely (= all) come, tell me.)

Or, compare

Ó bégwo akwa.
He has cried (cry).

with

Ó bégbugwo akwa
He cries completely has cry.
(= He has completely (= finished crying) cried.)

Another argument against regarding -gbù(ru) as an off-shoot of gbú (kill) is that even gbú (kill) can have gbù(ru) (completely) as a suffix as exemplified in:

Ó gbùgburu onwé ya la óchù.
He kills completely himself in murder.
(= He commits a lot of murders.)
Ó gbùgburu onwé ya la alù.
He kills completely himself in animals.
(= He kills lots and lots of animals.)

There is no verb in the language which reduplicates its root and uses the reduplicated root as its suffix.

| A | B |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Nwátà à mara mma. Child this knows beauty. (= This child is beautiful.)</p> | <p>Nwátà à amábugwo ònwe ya la mma. Child this knows completely already himself in beauty. (= This child in indescribably beautiful.)</p> |
| <p>2. Nwókè à nwere égo. Man this has money. (= This man has got money.)</p> | <p>Nwókè à nwegburu onwé ya la ego. Man this has completely himself in money. (= This man is awfully rich.)</p> |
| <p>3. Nwá ya là amá akwukwo. Child his knows books. (= His child is good at his studies.)</p> | <p>Nwá ya la amágbu ònwe ya la akwukwo. Child his knows completely himself his books. (= His child is a most clever child at his studies.)</p> |
| <p>4. Ó là emé ngará. He is doing pride. (= He is proud.)</p> | <p>Ó là emégbu ònwe ya la ngara. He is doing completely himself in pride. (= He is very proud.)</p> |
| <p>5. Ó là ekwú okwú sinne. He is talking talk plentifully. (= He talks a lot.)</p> | <p>Ó là ekwúgbu ònwe ya la okwu. He is talking completely himself in talk. (= He talks to the extent that he bores his listeners.)</p> |
| <p>6. Ndi ebe à la egbú ochu. People here are killing murders. (= People of this area are murderers.)</p> | <p>Ndi ebe à egbúgbu-gwo ònwe ha la ochu. People here kill completely already themselves in murders. (= People of this area are so murderous that murder means nothing to them.)</p> |

The use of suffixation to intensify assertions in Igbo as shown in the above examples (1) - (6) produces sentences which are morphologically motivated. This means that the knowledge of the individual words that constitute the constructions is a key to understanding the constructions. In (6) anybody who understands the meanings of gbú (kill) and óchù (murder) will know the meaning of the whole sentence.

It should be noted that not all the verbs in the depejorativized sentences can be used in all tenses. The following table indicates the tenses in which certain of the verbs can be used.

| Example Sentences | Main Tense Forms | | | |
|--|------------------|----------|--------|------|
| | Present | | Future | Past |
| | La-Form | Habitual | | |
| 1. Nwóké à dú égwù lá ọrụ yá. This man excels in his work. | - | + | + | - |
| 2. Jí nyùrụ nsí la afia taa. There were plenty of yams in the market today. | - | - | + | + |
| 3. Ónye nkuzi à tara ámosu. This teacher excels in his profession. | - | + | - | + |
| 4. Nwányi a dú ájò mma. This woman is very beautiful. | - | + | + | + |

Example Sentences

Main Tense Forms

| | Present | | Future | Past |
|--|------------------------|----------|--------|------|
| | La-Form ⁽³⁾ | Habitual | | |
| 5. Nna yá bú óke ozú. His father is awfully rich. | - | + | + | + |
| 6. Nwóké à egbué ochù lá nkuzi. This man is extremely good at teaching. | + | + | + | + |
| 7. Éde gbara ókú lá afia ñnyaa à. Cocoyams sold like hot cakes yesterday. | + | + | + | + |
| 8. Nwátá à amágbugwo ónwe ya la mma. This child is indescribably beautiful. | - | + | + | + |
| 9. Nwóké à nwegburu onwé yá la ego. This man is terribly rich. | - | + | + | - |

- (3) The "la-fom" is used to indicate continuity of action. Where it appears in the structure but does not indicate semantically some progressive action, the structure implies habitual activity or a regular state. This is illustrated in (10) - (11). The la in these sentences is in terms of continuity empty semantically. If (-ru) is added to amágbu without the vowel prefix, the la can be done away with, and the sentence will give the same meaning.

Nwá yá lá amágbu ónwe ya la akwukwo.

Nwá yá mágburu onwé yá la akwukwo.

To any speaker of the language, these two sentences are semantically the same.

Example Sentences.

Main Tense Forms

| | Present | | Future | Past |
|---|---------|----------|--------|------|
| | La-Form | Habitual | | |
| 10. Nwá yá ₁ la amagbu onwe ya la akwukwo. His child is very good at his studies. | + | + | + | + |
| 11. Ó lā emégbu ònwe ya la ngàrá. He is very proud. | + | + | + | + |
| 12. Ó lā ekwúgbu ònwe ya la okwu. He is a chatterbox. | + | + | + | + |

Verb Phrases in Negative Irony

A negative ironical verb phrase in Igbo is of the structure Neg. Imperative + Suffix (bé) + (kwàla). The use of this structure renders a positive imperative less brutal; that is the verb phrase is structurally negative but semantically positive.

The use of negative irony is confined to family or friendly circles. It is reminiscent of a situation where a father or mother reminds their children of what they ought to do; or what a "superior" friend tells the other he should do. The intimacy and superior, but affectionate, relation implied in the use of the negative ironical expression can be seen more clearly when such an expression is compared with a corresponding positive, and negative imperative sentences as shown below.

| Positive Imperative | Negative Imperative | Negative Irony |
|---|--|--|
| i) <u>Biá fù m.</u> Come see me. | <u>Ábiála ifu m.</u> Come not to see me. | <u>Ábiábèkwala ifu m.</u> Come never then to see me. (= Well, you don't care to come and see me; I would ask you to. |
| ii) <u>Mée ihe agwàrà wù.</u> Do what is told you (= Do what you are told.) | <u>Èméle ihe agwàrà wù.</u> Do not what is told you. (= Don't do what you are told (to do)). | <u>Èmekwala ihe agwàrà wù.</u> Do then not what is told you. (= Do what you are told; I would like it if you did it) |
| iii) <u>Kwúsi izù ori.</u> Stop to steal theft. (= Stop stealing.) | <u>Ákwúsila izù ori.</u> Stop not to steal theft. (= Don't stop stealing.) | <u>Ákwúsibèkwala izù ori.</u> Stop never then to steal theft. (= Stop stealing; it is high time you did so; we are all ashamed of it.) |

| Positive Imperative | Negative Imperative | Negative Irony |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| iv) Biábèkwaálù be ányì. | Ábiábèkwala bé ányì. | Ábiábèkwala bé ányì. |
| Come ever then to us. | Come never then to us. | Come never then to us. |
| (Come even once to our house.) | (= Never come to our house.) | (= Never come to our house; I am indirectly reminding you that it is high time you visited us.) |

It should be noted that in (iv) the structure of Neg.Imp. and Neg. Irony are the same. In a situation like that, it is difficult to discern unambiguously what the speaker means. But in an actual linguistic situation, it is not difficult to disambiguate the sentence; it is the relationship between the speaker and the hearer that determines what the speaker means to say.

Verb Expansion

The expansion of the verbs occurs in either of two ways.

1. The first way is by the addition, to the radical, of a vowel suffix which is different from the vowel of the radical as can be seen in the table which follows:

| Verb Roots | English | Expanded Form |
|------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| gbú | kill | gbue'(o) |
| chì | break (kernels) | chié |
| chí | shout, hit | chié |
| chì | laugh | chia |
| chù | pursue | chuo' |
| dì | endure | dié |
| dú | lead | duo'(e) |
| dù | plant, advise | dùo' |
| fí | rub | fié |
| fì | squeeze | fiá |
| fù | go out | fùo' |
| fú | sprout | fuó |
| fù | be lost | fùo' |
| gú | count | guo' |
| ghú | take a bath | ghuo' |
| ghú | cook | ghuo' |
| gwú | dig | gwuo' |
| hú | roast | huo' |
| hú | bend | huo' |
| jí | spit | jiá |
| jí | scratch (with nails) | jié |
| jý | ask | juo' |
| ku | breathe, fan | kuo |
| kú | plant | kuo' |
| kpi | be stingy | kpiá |
| kpu | enter by bending forward | kpuo' |

| Verb Roots | English | Expanded Form |
|------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| kpù | cover; be blind | kpùó |
| kpú | build with clay; pull by the rope | kpuó |
| kpú | shave | kpuó |
| kwú | talk | kwuó |
| kwú | pay a debt | kwuó |
| lì | bury | lié |
| lì | endure | liá |
| lú | push | luó |
| lù | offend | lùó |
| lù | rob | lùó |
| lú | marry | luó |
| mì | draw (eg. a sword) | míá |
| mì | bear fruit; weep | míá |
| mú | bear (child) | muó |
| mù | flash a light; learn | mùó |
| nyú | fart | nyuó |
| nwú | die | nwuó |
| nú | drink | núó |
| pì | sharpen | piá |
| pì | press | piá |
| rì | eat | rié |
| rì | think | riá |
| ru | reach | ruó |
| ru | steal; work | ruó |
| rù | point | ruó |

| Verb Roots | English | Expanded Form |
|------------|--|---------------|
| sú | grind | suó |
| sù | pound | suó |
| sù | breathe with a sound, in pain | sùó |
| sí | cook | sié |
| sì | say | siá |
| sì | smell | sié |
| tú | trace | tuó |
| tù | boast | tuó |
| tù | throw, contribute | tuó |
| tù | burrow | tuó |
| vú | carry | vuó |
| vù | grow fat | vuó |
| vù | scramble | vuó |
| wù | be famous | wuó |
| wù | pour (a liquid) | wuó |
| wù | jump | wuó |
| yí | lay eggs; resemble | yié |
| yì (qyì) | make friends | yia |
| zí (i) | teach; show | zié |
| zì | show signs of happiness through movement and gestures | zié |
| zú | steal | zuó (e) |
| zù | be enough | zuó (e) |
| zù | train | zuó |
| zù | buy | zuó |

The verbs that expand as illustrated above have as thier root vowels either /i/, /ị/, /u/ or /ụ/.

2. The second way is illustrated by the following verbs that expand by reduplicating the vowel of the radical:

| Verb Roots | English | Expanded Form |
|------------|---------------------|---------------|
| bá | scold, increase | baá |
| bà | enter | bàá |
| bé | cry | beé |
| bè | cut | bèé |
| bọ | clean with a hoe | bọọ |
| bò | cut (meat) | bòọ |
| gbá | run | gbaá |
| gbé | crawl (a child) | gbeé |
| gbọ | separate (fighters) | gbọọ |
| gbọ́ | vomit, bark | gbọ́ọ |
| chá | shine | chaá |
| chà | give way | chàá |
| chè | think | chèé |
| chó | grow | choó |
| chọ | want | choọ |
| dá | warm | daá |
| dà | fall, fail | dàá |
| dé | write | deé |
| dó | build (wall) | doó |
| dò | recover | dòó |
| dọ | pull | dọọ |

| Verb Roots | English | Expanded Forms |
|------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| fè | cross | fèé |
| gá | go | gáá |
| gè | listen | gèé |
| gó | reward | góó |
| gǒ | deny | gǒó |
| gò | be in-law | gòó |
| ghò | transfigure | ghòó |
| ghǒ | catch (a thrown object) | ghǒó |
| gwá | mix | gwáá |
| há | leave | háá |
| hò | tell (folklore) | hòó |
| hó | uproot | hóó |
| hò | wash (bitter leaves) | hòó |
| já | praise | jáá |
| jé | go | jéé |
| jò | rain | jòó |
| jǒ | be bad; scramble for | jǒó |
| kà | say mass; reveal | kàá |
| ké | tie | kéé |
| kè | create | kèé |
| kǒ | tell | kǒó |
| kò | cultivate | kòó |
| kpǒ | be warm | kpǒó |
| kpǒ | call; play a percussion instrument | kpǒó |
| kpò | be dwarfish | kpòó |
| lá | go home | láá |

| Verb Roots | English | Expanded Forms |
|------------|--------------------|----------------|
| là | shake hands | làá |
| lé | look at | leeé |
| ló | swallow | loó |
| lò | stay | lòó |
| má | stab | maa |
| mà | think of (evil) | màá |
| mé | do | meeé |
| mò | germinate | mòó |
| nyá | warm (oneself) | nyaá |
| nyò | peep | nyòó |
| nwà | try | nwàá |
| nwé | own | nweé |
| nwó | wear a necklace | nwoó |
| ñá | listen | ñaa |
| ñé | cross | ñeeé |
| pá | "operate" by magic | paá |
| pé | be small | peeé |
| rá | mate | raa |
| ré | sell | reeé |
| rè | be efficacious | rèé |
| rò | think | ròó |
| rò | offer sacrifices | ròó |
| ró | think of (evil) | roó |
| sá | wash | saa |
| sà | altercate | sàá |
| sé | choose | seeé |
| sè | draw | sèé |

| Verb Roots | English | Expanded Form |
|------------|---|---------------|
| só | plant crops (yams, cocoyams) | soó |
| sò | queue up | sòó |
| só | taboo | soó |
| sò (úsòrò) | regret | sòó |
| tá | bite, chew | taá |
| tà | reveal (a secret) | tàá |
| té | cook, dance | tee |
| tó | grow up | toó |
| tò | praise | tòó |
| vó (ámù) | reach maturity; steal (yams, cocoyams) from the farm | voo |
| vò | open eyes with fingers (as a sign of a curse) or to remove dirt from eyes | vòó |
| wá | break | waá |
| wà | wear loin cloth; cut with a knife | wàá |
| wé | be angry; shed scales | weé |
| wó | push a stick into a burrow | woó |
| wò (áwò) | not to be generous | wòó |
| yà | be sick | yaá |
| yó | beg for; ask for | yoó |
| yò | play "úyò" by shaking them | yòó |
| zà | sweep | zaá |
| zè | watch out for, defend oneself | zèé |
| zó | hide (oneself) | zoó |
| zò | rain | zòó |
| zó | cure | zoó |
| zò | boast, forget | zòó |

It should be observed that the reduplicated vowels are /a/, /e/, /o/ and /o/.

Effect of "Vowel" Expansion

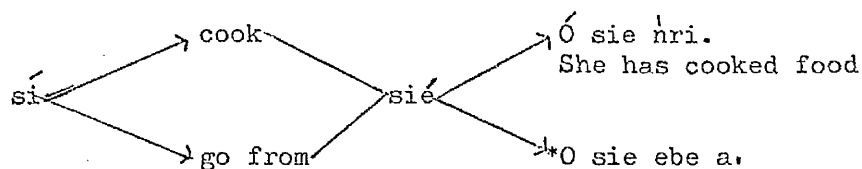
Some of the verbs that expand, it should be noted, are polysemic, that is they can be used in two or more distinct meanings. As Ullman (1963) in his Semantic Universals noted, polysemy is a fertile source of ambiguity in language. He held that formal means are used in a limited number of cases to disambiguate the ambiguous meanings of the same word, and the examples he gave to support this view included German "worte 'connected speech' - wörter 'words'", English word order "ambassador extraordinary - extraordinary ambassador", flection, "Brothers - brethren", and spelling "draft - draught, discrete - discreet". He observed, however, that in the vast majority of cases, it is the context that resolves all semantic problems which arise from ambiguity.

In Igbo, ambiguity resulting from vowel expansion can be resolved in either of two ways:

i) Vowel Expansion

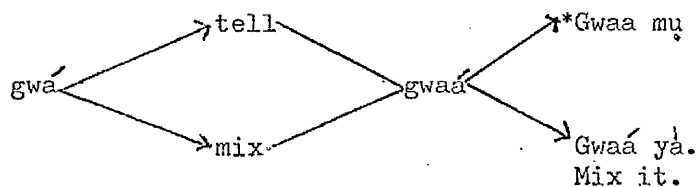
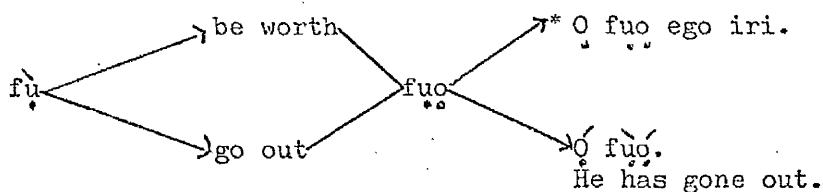
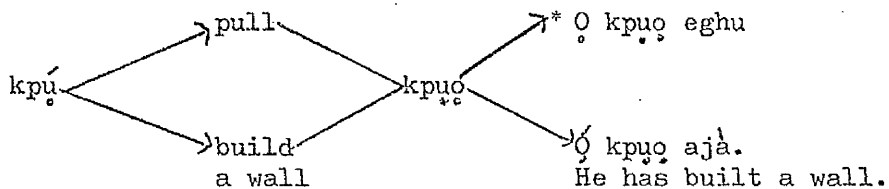
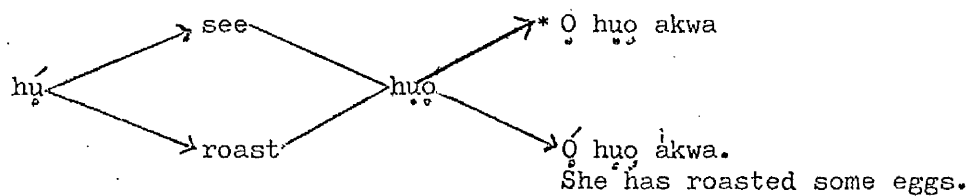
Vowel expansion has the effect of making two or more meanings of polysemic items collapse into one single meaning. This means that one of the meanings of the item cannot be stretched into the expanded form of the item.

Compare, for instance,

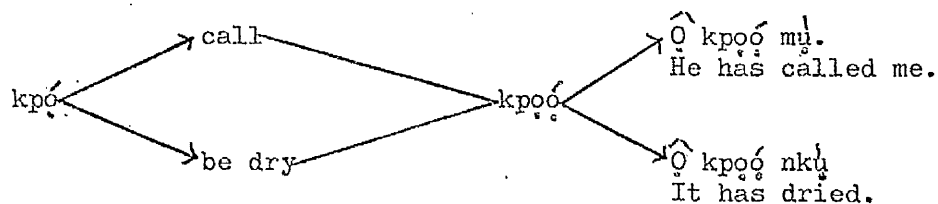
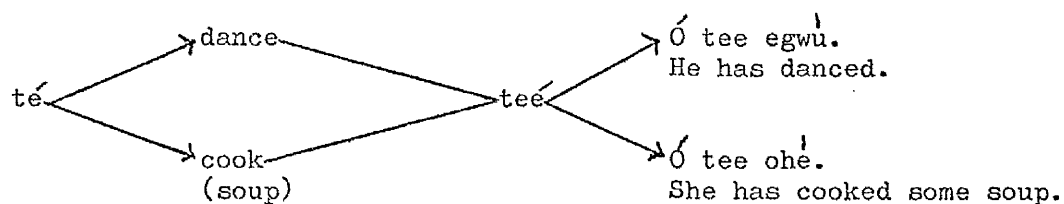
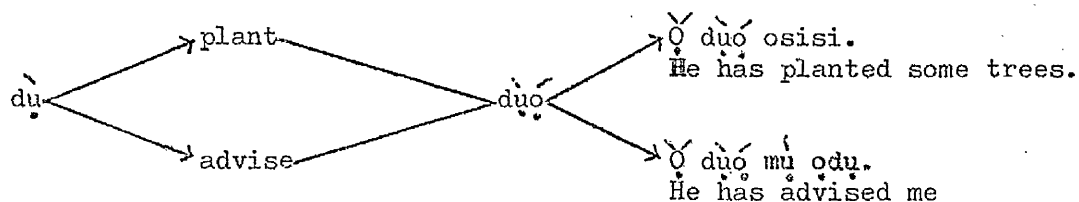
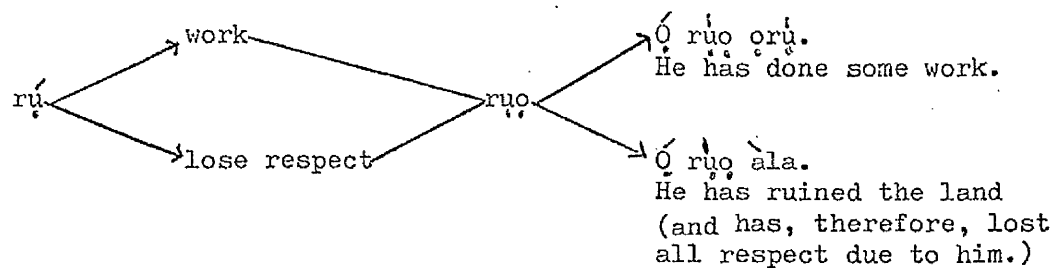


in which the meaning of si as 'go from' cannot be transferred to the 'expanded' form of the same word, sié.

Similarly, the following examples:



- ii) In the majority of cases, only the context can suffice to exclude all irrelevant senses. The following examples indicate instances in which there is no semantic loss in the verbs after "expansion", and in which the only indicator as to the meaning is the context.



The examples in (ii) indicate that the context alone can exclude all irrelevant senses.

Non-expandable Verbs

It is not all the Igbo verbs that 'expand'. The following verbs do not 'expand'.

| <u>Verbs</u> | <u>English</u> |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| bó | help (someone) to carry something |
| bù | lend |
| gbè | melt |
| gbú (m̀pa) | take by the leg (in wrestling) |
| gbó | shout |
| chá | ripen |
| ché | wait |
| fù | be worth |
| gù | catch |
| ghé (ònù) | talk to |
| gwá | tell |
| gwú | finish |
| há | be equal |
| hò | choose |
| hù | see |
| | |
| jí | hold |
| jú | be full |
| ká | surpass |
| kò | hang |
| kpú | pull |
| kwú | stop, to be standing |
| lú | hear |
| pá | carry |

| Verbs | English |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| ré | rot |
| ró | hate |
| rù | wear (beads, necklaces) |
| sù (uwe') | to put on, wear (clothes) |
| sò | follow |
| sì | go from |
| sé | take |
| yì | be with, be accompanied by |
| zá | answer |
| zù | meet |

Verb Phrases in Commencement and Continuity in Igbo

Commencement cum continuity is expressed in Igbo with the verb bído - begin, followed by (an)other verb phrase(s). The overall verb phrase is one of the structure (bído + verb root + 'suff. be) which harmonizes with the vowel of the verb root as follows:

Vowel of the verb root Vowel of the suffix

/i/ —————→ /e/

as in ríbe, síbe

/i/ —————→ /a/

as in ríba, ghíba

/e/ —————→ /e/

as in rèbé, chébe

/o/ —————→ /a/

as in róba, chòba

Vowel of the verb root

Vowel of the suffix

/u/ —————> /a/

as in rúba, chúba

/u/

/e/

as in rùbé, vùbé

The structure of the verb phrase and the suffixial vowel harmony involved in the expression of commencement and continuity in the language are exemplified by the following sentences:

1. Ó bido biaba.

He begins coming.

(= He has set off coming; and it is known when he started to come.)

This is an alternative for Ó biaba.

2. Ànyí ebido kwube okwú.

We start talking talk.

(= We have started talking. We have just begun to say it.)

Compare (1) and (2) with (3) and (4).

3. Ó bidogwo biaba.

He begins has coming.

(= He has started to come (coming).)

4. Ànyí ebidogwo kwube okwú.

We begin have talking talk.

(= We have begun to talk (talking).)

It should be observed that whereas (1) and (2) are unambiguously clear in their meanings, (3) and (4) are ambiguous. (3) may indicate a habitual action; that is, he has begun to come here nowadays, although he is not coming now; or it may mean that the person referred to has, at the time of his (speaker's) speaking, started coming; he is on his way to the place. Similarly, (4) has two readings: we now have the habit of talking even though we are not talking at this moment; or we have started talking, and we are still talking, though we do not talk as a habit.

The form of the verb phrase in the commencement cum continuity construction can be used in any tense except the la-form. The la-form meaning is partially implied in the present form of the verb phrase. The partial semantic implication can be seen in:

5. Ó bido ribe ihé.

He begins eating food.

(= He has just now begun to eat, and he is still eating;
it is known when he started eating.)

But *O la ebido ribe ihe.

Progressive La-Form:

6. Ó là erí ihé.

He is eating something (but it is not known when he started to eat).

(5) and (6) are semantically partially identical in the sense that the action in both is still going on, but they differ in that in (5), the moment at which the action begins is known to the speaker, while the moment for the commencement of the act of eating in (6) is unknown.

In the past and the future tenses, the verb phrases used in the commencement and continuity constructions refer only to commencement of habitual actions.

Future Tense:

7. Ó gà ebído biaba kalà.

He will start coming here.

(= He will start to come here; he will make it a habit to come here at intervals.)

8. Ágà mu agwá yá kà ó bido biaba kalà.

Will I tell him that he begins coming here.

(= I will tell him to begin to come here, as often as he can.)

Past Tense:

9. Ó bidoru biaba kalà.

He started coming here.

(= He started to come here, when and if he wanted to.)

10. Há bidoru jósaba ónwe ha njó.

They started being bad selves them bad.

(= They began to hate each other, and the mutual hatred continued.)

It should be observed that bído cannot be used with only a verb root, that is a verb root without the suffix -be.

Consider, for instance:

11. Ó bído biába.

He starts coming.

But *Ó bído bia.

Future:

12. Ó ga ebído biába.

He will start coming.

But *Ó ga ebído bia.

Past:

13. Ó bídorú biába.

He started coming.

But *Ó bídorú bia.

CHAPTER VI

Lexical Structure

In this chapter, the study will be centred on the meanings of the verbs from the point of view of polysemy and homonymy.

Polysemy and Homonymy of Igbo Verbs

Polysemy is defined by Palmer (1976) as the phenomenon by which a word may have a set of different meanings and homonymy as the phenomenon by which several words may have the same shape.

For Igbo, tone and vowel harmony (which is a feature relating to sounds in the same word) help to differentiate one word shape from another. But it often happens that verbs may have the same harmonizing vowels and tone pattern and still differ in meaning. Differences of meaning of such verbs are determined by the subject, object and adverbial segments which co-occur with the verbs, and by the total context.

For the classification of the verbs into polysemy and homonymy, all the verbs met in the present study have been examined. The verbs that lend themselves more readily to semantic ramifications than any other are ígbà and ígbà.

A research into ígbà and ígbà has shown that they have 105 different meanings according to "the company they keep". Each of the linguistic units is considered a homonym, and from each homonym can emerge a number of polysemic units.

A polysemic unit may have two different nominals as in igba mmonwu - to make a new masquerade, and igba ngu (akwa) - to make a new bed with palm fronds. The lexical meaning of igba - to cause to exist, is retained in both cases. And whereas igba oke - to show a boundary by drawing a line of demarcation, and igba oke - to share food among people, are polysemic because the lexical meaning of igba in both cases - to share - is present, igba oké - to shoot a rat, is homonymous in comparison with them as the object nominal oké has given the expression a different plane of meaning. Similarly, igba ose - to plant pepper seeds, and igba ose - (food) to contain too much pepper are homonymous as the expressions have the same shape but different meanings.

In the examples which follow, the inflected forms of the verb are not included. The examples numbered (1) - (90) are derived from igba, while (91) - (105) are derived from igba.

The verbs igba and igba and their semantic ramifications

Igba

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. | <u>igba</u> (HH) | - to be too much (eg. salt, pepper). |
| 2. | <u>igba</u> | - to break open with |
| 3. | <u>igba</u> - (to kick) | violence and sudden noise; to explode. |
| 4. | <u>igba</u> | - to sting. |
| 5. | (afia) <u>igba</u> ⁽¹⁾ | - to be unable to sell one's commodities without reason. |

(1) In (5) the subject precedes the verb.

6. igba - to germinate.
7. igba abụbà - to grow feathers.
8. igba àgaaba - to take, for consumption,
any farm crop (save yam?)
from any farm in one's
mother's village or town.
9. igba àgada - to sit with legs wide open;
to stand astride.
10. igba aha - to divine.
11. igba ahò - to fart with or without noise.
12. igba àja - to offer a sacrifice.
13. igba aka - to be empty-handed.
14. igba aka ebe - to be a witness.
15. igba akpiri - to be greedy.
16. igba akwukwo - to take out a summons in court
against someone.
17. igba àkwura - to be a prostitute.
18. igba àla - to reclaim one's land by
paying back the mortgage.
19. igba àma - to reveal a secret.
20. igba amùrùtu - (of ground) to be slippery.
21. igba anya mmiri - to shed tears.
22. igba àsiri - to gossip.
23. igba àva - to kick (of animals) with one
of the hind legs in defence.
24. igba avùvu - to walk away in anger.
25. igba (.chi) - to be mid-day.

40. igba ìkpuru - to contain maggots.
41. igba iyi - (a) to bring an oath for people
to take so as to exonerate themselves from a certain crime.
(b) to clean a stream.
42. igba ìzu - to whisper to someone; to have
a tête-à-tête with someone.
43. igba kàtaa - to be in two equal parts.
44. igba kírì kírì - to be as minute as specks of sand.
45. igba la anwù - to spread something in the sun;
(fig) to expose someone by
revealing their secrets.
46. igba là otu la.otu - to stay according to prearranged
groups.
47. igba ìmbalaka - to branch off.
48. igba ìmbáraoma - to perspire.
49. igba mbò - to endeavour.
50. igba ìmbubo - (women) to have one's chest and
stomach artistically decorated
with markings made with a sharp
knife.
51. igba ìmbubu - to look for a loan.
52. igba ìmgbá - to wrestle.
53. igba mgbaru - to go to a funeral.
54. igba ìmgbére - to trade.
55. igba mia - to produce wine.

56. *igba miri miri* - (eg. fresh fish) to be slippery to the touch.
57. *igba mkporogwu* - to take root; (fig) to occupy a place or position on a permanent basis.
58. *igba mkpu* - to answer a hue and cry in order to help.
59. *igba mkpuru* - (pounded food) to contain little balls - an indication that it was not well pounded.
60. *igba mkpuru aka* - to crack the fingers.
61. *igba mmiri* - to water.
62. *igba mmónwu* - to make a new masquerade.
63. *igba ncha* - to prepare the food of "ncha"/
jígboò (tapioca?) in a big way.
64. *igba nchara* - to rust.
65. *igba nchi* - to refuse to answer a call.
66. *igba ngho* - to intervene in a quarrel with a view to taking sides.
67. *igba nkichi* - to be silent, not to talk when expected to do so.
68. *igba nwamiri* - to urinate in an unusual place, eg. in a living room, in bed, etc.
69. *igba nrò* - to be soft.
70. *igba obo* - to cause to exist a prohibition of contact of any degree between two families.

71. igba ogwù - to give or receive an injection.
72. igba oji ala - to give money to a land owner so as to make use of his land on a temporary basis (see 18 above).
73. igba òjibo (òdibo) - to be a servant.
74. igba okè - to set up a boundary.
75. igba òko (trees) - to be not erect.
76. igba oku - to burn down.
77. igba onwò - to exchange.
78. igba òríò - to snap the fingers.
79. igba oso - to run.
80. igba òtò - to be naked
81. igba òtoro - to have a violent attack of cholera.
82. igba ugbo - to ride in a car, to travel by car, by train or by sea.
83. igba ùchu - to have a breakfast.
84. igba ugwo - to go for one's credits from one's debtors.
85. igba ùhé - to produce sperms.
86. igba uhie - to seize a person's property (in default of money payment) until it is redeemed with money.
87. igba uji - (of trees) to be hollow inside.
88. igba uka - to be sour.
89. igba ùlú - to repeat a visit.
90. igba ùzò - to be early.

There are other verbs in the language which extend their semantic 'field' by collocating with other words. Such verbs include:

a) Iba (H-H)

1. iba - to increase (see (4) below).
2. iba edè (jí) - to peel cocoyams (yams, etc).
3. iba mbá - to scold.
4. iba ùbá - to be many (of people, animals);
to be rich, to increase in wealth.

b) Iba (H-L)

1. iba - to enter.
2. iba mmónwù - to be initiated into the masquerade society.
3. iba úrù - to be profitable.

c) Ibe (H-H)

1. ibe akwa - to cry.
2. ibe mvo - to pare the nails.

d) Ibe (H-L)

1. ibe ákwà - to cut cloth.
2. ibe égo - to reduce the price.
3. ibe (la + NP) - to perch (on ...)
4. ibe úgwù - to circumcise.

e) Ichi (H-L)

1. ichi - to rub against; break by striking.

The present research has not been able to discover words (if any) that can collocate with this verb. It has only one meaning, to rub one body against another as in:

Chié yà la aja.

Rub it against the wall.

Ó là échi ákù.

He is breaking the kernels.

(By striking a heavy stone or a piece of iron on them.)

f) Ichi (H-H) on the other hand has several homonymous items, which are:

1. ichi (aka) - to beat (with hand).
2. ichi aka ebe - to bet.
3. ichi echimechi - to take a title; to undergo an initiation.
4. ichi iwú - to make law.
5. ichi nchi - to be headstrong, obstinate.
6. ichi nkwa - to play music by beating some musical instruments.
7. ichi mmónwú - (a) to bring out a masquerade.
(b) to lead a masquerade from one place to another.
8. ichi okórobíá - to enjoy one's youth.

g) Ichi (H-H)

1. ichi (isi) - to be headman; to rule.
2. ichi ibo - to curse with usually two out-stretched fingers indicating that the person cursing wishes the mother of the accursed to give birth to twins.

h) Ichi (H-L)

This is a nominal-bound verb which requires a cognate object to bring out its meaning. It is used only in the restricted collocation.

1. ichi ochi - to laugh (a laugh)

i) Ide (H-H)

When used with akwukwo, ude and uri, ide gives the following meanings:

1. ide akwukwo - to write a book; to write a letter.
2. ide ude - to be famous.
3. ide uri - to decorate the body with indigo.

j) Ide (H-L)

1. ide - to melt in a liquid.

k) Idu (H-H)

1. idu - to lead; to show somebody out.

The verb can only be used in combination with an object of the structure (+ Anim) and the core of its meaning is "to lead".

l) Idu (H-L)

On the contrary, idu (H-L), can be used with both animate and inanimate object NPs as in:

1. idu ódu - to give advice to.
 2. idu ósisi - to plant trees, to sow.

m) When idu is said on a (H-H) tone, it takes on the meaning to push as exemplified in:

1. idu aka - to push with hands.

Apart from some other words which have the same semantic features as aka, such as ósisi (idu osisi - to push with a stick), idu cannot be used with any other object segments. This restriction accounts for the unlikelihood of expressions such as *idu (ya) òkwúte - to push (it) with a stone; and *idu (ya) mmádu - to push it with a person.

n) Iha (H-H)

Iha has the core meaning of "to be equal", but when combined with the nominal object ísi as in íha isi, it means to comb (one's hair).

o) Iha (H-L)

Iha which collocates with such parts of the body as íchi - ears and inanimate objects such as òja - a flute, has the central meaning of "to pierce with a sharp pointed instrument" (usually made red in a fire). When used otherwise, íha means to leave something behind.

p) Ikwa (H-H)

The final verb that must be included in this study because of its capacity to combine different semantic "fields", by collocating with various items, is ikwa (H-H) and its various combinations are as follows:

1. ikwa akwa - to cry.
2. ikwa akwà - to sew clothes.
3. ikwa akwa - to crow (cocks, snakes?)
4. ikwa àmalú - to regret.
5. ikwa eméri - to regret.
6. ikwa ozu - to make funeral ceremonies.
7. ikwa ùgwu - to hold in high esteem.

q) Ikwa (H-L)

This is used with other verbs as follows:

1. ikwa aka - to push with the hand⁽³⁾
2. ikwa akwukwa - to swear

(3) It should be observed that the expression differs from idù aka which has been seen above (m)(1) in that one does not say *ikwa ósisi, but one says idù ósisi. This indicates that ikwa aka is more restricted than idù aka, ósisi, etc. in their capacity to collocate with words of similar semantic features.

3. ikwa íyí - to enter into a covenant by taking an oath (c/f ígbà ndù).
4. ikwa (mmírí, málù, etc.) - to pour a liquid (water, oil, etc.) on.

There are many other verbs in the language which collocate with a whole set of words to expand their semantic "fields". The verbs studied in this chapter have been deliberately selected. Ígbà, for instance, which, in this work, is regarded as a representative verb, has been dealt with first because its range of collocations by far exceeds that of any other verb in Igbo. Its range extends from collocations based entirely on the meaning of the item as ígbà bôl - to kick a ball; on its capacity to occur with a whole set of words which have similar semantic features so that one says: ígbà aji - to grow hair on the body; ígbà ñku - to grow wings; ígbà abụbà - to grow feathers; ígbà akwarà - to grow roots (the semantic features these items have in common being (a) parts of a whole, and (b) development of natural growths), while one cannot say "ígbà nwoke"; and to collocational restrictions in which no meaning is involved as ígbà - Christmas, rather than írí - Christmas, which is the normal usage, with regard to native feasts - írí Nnekèéjì - to celebrate (the feast of) Nnekèéjì.

The Formation of the Monosyllabic Verbs

It is not, however, every verb of the language that is subject to these collocations. There are verbs which have only one meaning, and which are, therefore, neither polysemic nor homonymous. Such verbs are listed below in the following tables (b - y).

The tables show the tonal and consonantal combinations in the formation of monosyllabic verbs (the syllabic infinitival marker i-/í- not being counted). Not all possible formations are in use eg. íbi and ibi.

KEY (to the Tables)

[] These enclose the phonetic transcriptions of the consonantal letters.

+ Non-Achi formations which exist in the language.

(+) Formations with Achi and non-Achi meanings.

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|-------|---|----------|--|
| b [b] | | | |
| iba | to scold; to peel; to increase. | iba(úrù) | (to be profitable) to enter. |
| ibe | to cry; to pare (the nails). | ibe | to perch on; to cut; to reduce; to end. |
| +ibi | to live in a place; to cut vegetables into pieces. | (+)ibi | (to borrow); to place hands on. |
| ibo | to help to put a load on another's head; to accuse. | | |
| ibo | to chat; to give a present to an actor. | ibo | to cut into pieces; to revenge. |
| +ibu | (to carry); to live in a place; to exist. | ibu | to lend, or borrow from. |
| ibu | to be, to boast. | +ibu | to sing. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|-----------|--|------|--|
| gb [6] | | | |
| igba | to run; to shoot; germinate; to be unable to sleep | igba | to mate (animals); to calculate. |
| igbe | to go on all fours. | igbe | to mix a soluble solid with water; to melt. |
| +igbo | to farm. | igbo | to part two quarrelling parties; to prevent. |
| igbo | to vomit; to remove palm nuts from the bunch with a big knife. | | |
| igbu | to kill; to lie on one's side. | | |
| igbu | to slip; to split. | igbu | to endure emotional upset without showing signs of it. |
| Ch [tʃ] | | | |
| icha | to ripen; to be free of bitterness (of bitter leaves etc.); to be bright. | icha | to give way; to behead. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|---------|--|---------|---|
| iche | to guard; to wait for. | iche | to think |
| ichi | to hit; to take a title. | ichi | to rub two bodies together; to break kernels. |
| ichi | to rule; to collect. | ichi | to laugh. |
| icho | to grow | (+)icho | to backbite; to give a girl away in marriage; to clip a tree. |
| icho | to want; to be older than. | | |
| ichu | to work for wealth; to fetch (eg. water); betray | | |
| ichu | to dismiss; to sacrifice; to pursue. | | |
| d [d] | | | |
| ida | to warm something on the fire; to hurt with fire or a hot object. | ida | to lie on the back; to fall; to press gently (with cloth etc.). |
| ide | to be famous; to write. | ide | to melt |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|---------|--|------|--|
| | | +idi | to endure. |
| +idi | to be in a state or place. | | |
| ido | to place one thing upon another; to place on the ground. | ido | to put on weight after (eg. an illness); to stalk (an animal). |
| (+)ido | (to struggle for); to pull; to plant such useful trees as palm trees and bananas). | +ido | to plant (very useful trees). |
| idu | to lead; to give a final treat to visitors so that they can go. | | |
| idu | to push; to sew clothes. | idu | to plant, to sow; to advise. |
| f [f] | | | |
| ife | to fly; to wave | +ife | to worship; to pass somebody. |
| ifi | to rub | | |
| ifi | to twist | | |
| (+)ifo | (to uproot); to break (day). | +ifo | to narrate a folk tale. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|----------|--|-----------|---|
| ifo ᵒ | to remain | +ifo ᵒ | to wash (bitter leaves or herbs). |
| ifu | to last; to develop (hair shoots, horns, etc). | ifu | to be lost. |
| ifu ᵒ | to see; to love | ifu ᵒ | to go out; to be able to; to blow with the mouth. |
| g [g] | | | |
| iga ᵒ | to go | | |
| ige | to pour out the dregs. | ige | to listen; to tie a rope around a piece of land to keep off transgressors, to wear a rope. |
| igo | to buy; to offer a reward. | igo(íhu) | to make a face. |
| igo(ᵒfo) | to deny; to call on "ᵒfo" to act. | igo ᵒ | to be an in-law; to give a domestic animal to some- one with a view to sharing the young ones when produced. |
| igu ᵒ | to count; to be hungry; to read | igu ᵒ | to give a name to; to catch. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|---------|---|------|---|
| gh [ɣ] | | | |
| igha | to tell a lie; to sow seeds. | igha | to fail to do; to overtake. |
| ighe | to fry; to yawn. | ighe | to be done to a turn; to cut slightly with a knife. |
| igho | to pick (fruit); to catch a falling object. | igho | to transfigure; to play tricks. |
| ighu | to cook. | | |
| ighu | to take a bath; to wind a stick (or a similar object) in a bone or hole to force out the marrow, or the animal respectively. | | |
| gw [ɣw] | | | |
| igwa | to tell; to mix; to revenge. | | |
| igwe | to grind. | igwe | to shake (waste). |
| igwo | to prepare (medicine "tapioca" - jìgbô). | igwo | to bend. |
| igwu | to dig up | igwu | to swim; to put something in a parcel. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|------------|--|
| igwu | to be finished. | igwu | to collect dung or human wastes with paper to throw them away. |
| h [h] | | | |
| iha | to pay a fine; to be equal. | iha | to pierce; to leave out. |
| ihe | to fly; to fan. | ihe | to worship, to pass someone. |
| +ihi(ura) | to sleep; to rub; | | |
| iho | to uproot. | iho | to tell a folk tale; to slap. |
| iho | to bring down a pot from the fire. | iho | to select; to wash (bitter leaves, etc). |
| ihu | to rub gently; to bend forward. | ihu | to be lost; to give a present. |
| ihu | to roast; to see. | ihu | (child) not to allow strangers to carry him; to recognise; to bargain. |
| j [d3] | | | |
| ija | to praise. | ija | to open (the teeth, etc). |
| ije | to go | | |
| iji | to hold; to be dark; to lie down. | iji(njiji) | to endure; to be patient. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|----------|--|-----------|--|
| iji(aso) | to spit. | iji | to try to force out something from the body by groaning. |
| | | ijo | to rain; to bloom (crops). |
| ijo | to struggle for the possession of; to cure. | | |
| iju | to be full. | | |
| iju | to refuse; to ask. | iju(anya) | (to take no notice of somebody); to throw. |
| k [k] | | | |
| ika | to surpass; to grow old. | ika | to narrate; to officiate in church services. |
| ike | to tie; to be heady. | ike | to create; to divide. |
| | | iko | to comb; to be hung; to be bumptious. |
| iko | to tell; to altercate; to scratch (the body when it itches). | iko | to make ridges or heaps with a hoe. |
| iku | to collect water in a vessel. | iku | to fan; to breathe; to hire (a troupe, etc). |
| iku | to plant; to beat a musical instrument or someone. | iku(oku) | to work for wealth; to run to for protection. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|-----------|--|------------|---|
| kp [kp] | | | |
| ikpa | to backbite; to fetch (eg. fire wood); to trade in oil; to be poverty-stricken. | ikpa | to shave hair with a pair of scissors; to make a basket, a net. |
| ikpe | to judge; to report. | ikpe(ikpe) | to curse while singing. |
| | | ikpi | to be stingy. |
| ikpo | to collect (eg. refuse). | ikpo | to be hot. |
| ikpo | to call; to hate; to get dry. | ikpo | to be diminutive. |
| ikpu | to get into a low building by bending the body forward. | ikpu | (hens) to sit on eggs; to cover; to be blind. |
| ikpu | to pull by the rope; to have a hair cut; to eat the head of (an animal). | ikpu | to have something in the mouth. |
| kw [kw] | | | |
| ikwa | to carry out a funeral ceremony; to behave in a cowardly manner. | ikwa | to push; to pour water on someone. |
| ikwe | to agree; to make a bow; to set a trap. | | |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|---------|---|---------------------|---|
| ikwo | to remove a body from another body (eg. head from the body, gourd for collecting palm wine from the palm tree.) | ikwo (ékworo) | to snore; to breathe one's last; (to compete). |
| ikwo | to wash hands; to grind cereals. | ikwo | to carry a child on the back. |
| ikwu | to speak. | ikwu | to kidnap. |
| ikwu | to stand by; to repay a debt. | | |
| 1 [1] | | | |
| (+)ila | to go home; (to drink) to receive. | ila(aka) " (uga) | to shake hands with; to play a game in which girls clap hands. |
| ile | to look at; to take an examination. | +ile | to be efficacious. |
| +ili | to eat. | ili | to bury. |
| | | ili | to endure; to be stingy. |
| (+)ilo | to swallow; (to nurse enmity). | +ilo | to think. |
| +ilo | to return. | ilo | to be in a place; to incarnate. |
| ilu | to push; to be bitter. | ilu | to offend; to slap. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|----------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| ilu ilu | to marry; to hear. | ilu ilu | to rob; to burn clay pots so as to harden them. |
| m [m] | | | |
| ima ima | to know; to be beautiful. | ima(oke) ima(oke) | to demarcate; to think (of evil). |
| ime (ngara) | (to be arrogant); to do. | | |
| imi(alu) imi(alu) | to withdraw (an object); (to dry meat). | imi imi | to bear fruit; to weep |
| | | imo imo | to develop shoots; to hit (a target) with an arrow. |
| | | imu(mvo) imu(mvo) | to hurt with the finger nails. |
| imu imu | to bear the young ones; to sharpen a knife on an anvil. | imu imu | to study; to look for snails at night with light. |
| n [n] | | | |
| +ina +ina | to go home; to receive. | | |
| +ine +ine | to look at. | | |
| +ino +ino | to swallow. | +ini +ini | to bury. |
| | | +ino +ino | to be in a place (+ Anim). |
| +inu +inu | to be bitter; to push. | +inu +inu | to offend. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|---------------|--|---------------|---|
| +inu | to marry; to hear. | +inu(ogu) | to fight. |
| n [b] | | | |
| iña (ñchi) | (to listen); to place near a fire so as to warm (it). | iña(isi) | to shake; (to be headstrong). |
| ine | to cross with the legs. | | |
| iñu | to drink; to take an oath. | iñu | to rejoice; to borrow. |
| ny [n] | | | |
| inya | to stay by the fire to warm oneself; to be sticky; to stick. | inya (isi) | (to be heady); to drive. |
| inye | to give; to help. | | |
| +inyi | to climb up | | |
| | | inyi | to be beyond one's control; to be heavy. |
| | | inyo | to peep. |
| inyu | to fart; to rub (obara - a native pomade) on the skin. | | |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|------------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| nw $\angle b^w \angle$ | | | |
| inwe | to own. | inwa _o | to try; (dog) to vomit. |
| inwo | to wear (necklaces, ear-rings and the like). | inwo | to change colours. |
| inwu | to catch fire. | | |
| inwu _o | to die; to invite a person from a group so as to entertain him; to try to befriend. | | |
| p $\angle p \angle$ | | | |
| ipa (apupa) | (to remove surplus fat from the body); to carry. | | |
| ipe | to be small. | ipe | to cut with a knife. |
| ipi _o | to sharpen (eg. a pencil). | ipi _o | to press in order to squeeze out some liquid. |
| +ipo | to collect in order to discard. | | |
| +ipu | to develop a shoot. | ipu _o | to seize; to go out. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|----------------|---|------|---|
| r [r] | | | |
| (+)ira | (to drink); to make love. | +ira | to leave off; to be equal; to lure. |
| ire | to sell, to rot. | ire | to be efficacious. |
| iri (amosu) | to eat; (to be versed in); to take a bribe. | | |
| iri | to climb up; to crawl. | iri | to think deeply. |
| iro(iro) | to nurse enmity | iro | to think; to give out (yams, cocoyams) to someone to cook. |
| iro | to offer food to the gods. | iro | to dream; to think of (evil). |
| iru | to reach. | iru | to wear beads; to put on beads; to throw sand or ashes to people. |
| iru | to be defiled; to work; to argue. | iru | to point a finger at; to peg long sticks to support shoots. |
| s [s] | | | |
| isa | to wash. | isa | to open (eg. a book, the mouth, etc.); to contend in words. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|-----------------|---|------|--|
| ise | to take out a share for oneself; to float. | ise | to draw; to quarrel. |
| +isi | to cook; to be strong. | +isi | to smell; to pass by; to come from. |
| +isi | to say. | | |
| iso | to sow (yams, coco- yams); (hens) to be full of eggs. | iso | to follow; to be excellent - to belong to a high class. |
| iso | to abstain from; to be sweet; to like. | iso | to express a regret that one cannot offer anything to a visitor. |
| isu | to grind; to kiss. | | |
| isu | to pound; to speak a language; to wash. | isu | to heave in pain; to groan; to stoop; to wear. |
| t [t] | | | |
| ita | to chew; to blame. | +ita | to reveal a secret. |
| ite | to cook soup; to dance. | | |
| +iti | to beat; to shout. | | |
| iti (akpiri) | to desire what one does not possess. | | |
| +ito | to grow. | +ito | to praise. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|-----------------|---|----------|---|
| ito | to be unable to get out of a difficulty. | ito | to last; to kidnap. |
| itu | to trace | itu | to boast; to heap. |
| itu | to throw; to con- tribute; to place an order for. | itu | to climb down; to bore (a hole). |
| v [v] | | | |
| (+)ivo (isi) | (to comb hair); to steal yams from the farm. | ivo | to open with fingers. |
| ivu | to carry; to be sick. | ivu | to grow fat. |
| ivu | to curse; to scramble for. | ivu(ède) | to harvest cocoyam; "ighu" and cassava. |
| w [w] | | | |
| iwa | to break; to name; to teethe. | iwa | to cut (yams, cocoyams); to put on or wear loin cloth. |
| iwe | to be angry; to shed scales. | iwe | to take. |
| | | +iwi | to be mad. |
| iwo | to push a stick into a hole. | iwo | to take. |
| +iwo | to pick fruit. | (+)iwo | (to play tricks); to refuse to give. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|-------------------|---|------------------|---|
| +iwu | to build (a house). | iwu | to be famous, be all the rage. |
| +iwu _c | to be (people); to take a bath. | iwu _c | to jump. |
| y [j] | | | |
| +iya | to warm. | iya | to be sick.* |
| +iye | to give (see inye). | iye | to be done to a turn; to cut slightly. |
| iyi | to resemble; to put on. | (+)iyi | (to bury); to lose heavily. |
| | | iyi | to be with; to indulge in friendship. |
| iyō | to beg | iyō | to sift by using a sieve; to play the ūyō. |
| iyu | (see inyu). | | |
| z [z] | | | |
| iza | to answer; to swell. | iza | to sweep. |
| ize | to sneeze. | ize | to fend off. |
| izi | to teach; to direct; to help to bring down a load from the head. | izi | to send on an errand; to blow the nose. |
| izo | to hit | +izo | to rain. |

| H-H | English | H-L | English |
|------------|---------------------------------------|------------|---|
| izo ˈ ˈ | to struggle for; to heal; to free. | izo ˈ ˈ | to forget; to boast; to prepare mud for building walls. |
| izu | to steal. | izu | to meet by chance; to be complete. |
| izu ˈ ˈ | to buy. | izu ˈ ˈ | to rear; to train; to make a noise. |

Monosemic Verbs

The tables illustrate that the verbs listed below are neither polysemic nor homonymous; each has one and only one central meaning and shape and, therefore, one dictionary entry.

ibi - to live in a place.

ibu - to sing.

igbe - to go on all fours.

igbe - to dissolve a soluble solid in water.

igbo - to farm.

igbu - to endure.

iche - to think.

ichi - to laugh.

icho - to grow.

- ide - to melt.
 - idi - to endure.
 - idi - to be in a state; (objects) to be in a place.
 - ido - to place things or a thing in an orderly manner;
to place in a state of grace.
-
- ifi - to rub.
 - ifi - to twist.
 - ifo - to be left over.
 - ifo - to wash (herbs or leaves) by pressing hard
in water.
 - ifu - to develop (hair, horns, shoots, teeth).
 - ifu - to be lost.
-
- iga - to go.
 - ige - to pour out the dregs.
 - igo - to make a face.
-
- ighe - to fry.
 - ighu - to cook.
-
- igwe - to grind.
 - igwe - to shake (waste).
 - igwo - to bend (body or anything).
 - igwu - to dig up.
 - igwu - to be finished.
 - igwu - to collect in order to discard.

- iho - to uproot.
 iho - to put down a pot from the fire.
 ija - to praise.
 ija - to open (teeth, etc).
 ije - (see iga)
 iji - to be patient.
 iji - to spit with the teeth quite visible.
 iji - to groan.
 ijo - to rain.
 iju - to be full.

- iko - to cultivate (a piece of land).
 iku - to draw water.

- ikpi - to be frugal.
 ikpo - to collect in order to discard.
 ikpo - to be hot (when felt).
 ikpu - to enter by bending forward.
 ikpu - to have something in the mouth.

- ikwo - to carry on the back.
 ikwu - to speak.
 ikwu - to kidnap.

- ile - see ire
 ili - to bury.
 ilo - to think.
 ilo - to return.

- imu(mvo) - to hurt with the finger nail.

 ine - to look at.
 ini - (see ili)
 ino - to swallow.
 ino - to be in a place.
 inu - to fight.
 ine - to cross.

 +inyi - to climb up.
 inyo - to peep.

 inwe - to own.
 inwo - to wear (beads, ear-rings, necklaces).
 inwo - to change colours.
 inwu - to catch fire.

 ipe - to be very small.
 ipe - to cut with a knife.
 ipi - to sharpen a stick at one end with a knife.
 ipi - to press hard to extract a liquid.
 ipu - (see ifu)

 ire - to be efficacious.
 iri - to think deeply.
 iro - to offer food to the gods.

- isa - to wash.
- iso - to regret that one is unable to help the situation.
- isi - to say.
- ita - to reveal a secret.
- iti (akpiri) - to be greedy.
- +ito - to grow.
- ito - to praise.
- ito - to be unable to help oneself.
- itu - to trace.
- ivo - to open (part of the body, eg. eyes) with the fingers.
- ivu - to grow fat.
- ivu - to harvest (all the farm crops owned exclusively by women).
- iwe - to take.
- +iwi - to be mad.
- iwo - to push a stick successively into an opening so as to disturb whatever may inhabit it.
- iwo - to take.
- +iwo - to pick fruit.
- +iwu - to build (a house).
- iwu - to be famous.
- iwu - to jump.

íyá - to be sick.

íyó - to beg.

ízá - to sweep.

íze - to sneeze.

íze - to fend off.

ízo - to hide.

+ízo - to rain.

ízu - to steal.

ízu - to buy.

Class Verbs of "Breaking"

So far in this chapter, the study has been on verbs which have several meanings and also those with one meaning. There still exist in the language verbs which express the meaning which may be expressed in English by a single verb. Such verbs divide up a whole semantic field and they are typified by the several verbs of breaking which exist in Igbo.

These are:

1. íchí ákú - to break kernels.
2. íchiwa íte - to break a pot accidentally.
3. íkúwa íte - to break a pot on purpose.
4. íwá nkú - to chop firewood.
5. ígbáji
(ínyáji)
ósisi - to break a stick with the hands.
6. ízọ́jì ósisi - to break a stick with the feet.

7. igbáwa ite - to break a pot by kicking it.
8. íwá oǒjì - to break kola nuts.
9. ídá iwú - to break the law.
10. igbúwa ite - to break a pot with a machete.
11. izowa ite - to break a pot by stamping on it.
12. ípiwa - to break by pressing between the palms.
13. íkuji - to break in two by falling to the ground.
14. ihowa - to break by throwing to the ground.
15. íkuja - to break by falling to the ground.
16. íjiwa (oǒjì) - to break with the finger nails.

Palmer (1976) noted a similar phenomenon in other African languages and referred to such verbs as "class verbs" which require particular words to collocate with them. Here, for example, one notes that one cannot íchiwa ite and íchiwa nku. Thus, sentences with such incompatible terms will contradict each other; they are in contrastive relation with each other.

The verbs are also unordered, Palmer further said. There is no way in which they can be arranged either in ascending or descending order. By this is meant that it cannot be known that such and such a "break" word precedes or follows that "break" word. Such sequence can only be based on alphabetic order, which is not necessary for the arrangement of the linear measure: inch - foot - yard - furlong - mile, and the days of the Igbo week: Óríó - Àfọ́ - Nkwó - Èké. Today cannot be Óríó and Àfọ́. The two characteristics of the "class" verbs which divide up a semantic "field" are thus incompatibility and "unorderedness".

Semantic Ramifications of *ífo*

The situation in which an Igbo verb encompasses several semantic readings can be illustrated with the verb *ífo* which literally means to remain. When used with the word *nwáńchínchí* - a little, however, different meanings occur as can be seen in the following illustrative sentences:

1. *Ó fòrọ́ nwáńchínchí ọ́ láta.*

It remains a little he returns

(= He will return very soon.)

2. *Ó fòrọ́ nwáńchínchí ọ́kọchí ebído.*

It remains a little the dry season sets in.

(= The dry season will set in in no distant future.)

3. *Ó fòrọ́ nwáńchínchí ọ́ gwú.*

It remains a little it finished.

(= Only a little of it remains, and that will finish soon.)

4. *Ó fòrọ́ nwáńchínchí ọ́ nwuó.*

He almost died.

It is possible, of course, to use the present form of *ífo* in such sentences as:

5. *Ó fò nwáńchínchí ọ́ yéé.*

It remains a little it is done.

(= It will be done to a turn very soon.)

6. *Ó fò nwáńchínchí ọ́ bía.*

It remains a little he comes.

(= He will arrive in no time.)

In (5) and (6), however, it should be noted that:

- (a) the verb refers to a future occurrence, and
- (b) the patience of the hearer is implored by the speaker.

In (5) the hearer may be complaining of hunger, and in (6) the implication is that he has waited for some time and wants to go now. In other words, there is no sense of urgency in (1), (2), (3) and (4), while this sense is predominant in (5) and (6).

A Tabular Analysis of the Monosyllabic Verbs

Below is a tabular analysis of all the monosyllabic verbs which have been studied in this chapter. In so far as the present research is concerned, the list is comprehensive; formations which are not included on the list have not been found to exist in the Igbo language either in the literature of the language or on the lips of native speakers.

KEY

| | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| An English word | | This indicates that the Igbo word |
| followed by + | : | Word in question has more than one meaning. |
| * | : | Another form with identical meaning has been chosen. |
| T | : | Transitive |
| Loc | : | Locative |
| M | : | Motive |
| H | : | High |
| L | : | Low |
| AS | : | Animate Subject |
| CO | : | Concrete Object |
| NB | : | Nominal-Bound |
| P | : | Polysemic |
| Ho | : | Homonymous |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|-------|----------|----------|-----|----------|------|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | |
| bá | + peel | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| bà | + enter | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| bé | + cry | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| bè | + cut | <u>+</u> | - | <u>+</u> | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | <u>+</u> | + |
| bí | live | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| bì | + borrow | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|------|---|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | |
| bó | + accuse | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| bó | + chat | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| bò | + cut | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| bu | carry | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | + | - | - |
| bu* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| bú | + boast | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| bù | sing | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | + | - | - |
| gbá | + run | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| gbà | + mate | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| gbé | go on all fours | +? | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | - |
| gbè | mix, to melt | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| gbó | farm | + | - | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | - |
| gbò | + part | + | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| gbó | + vomit | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| gbú | + kill | <u>+</u> | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| gbù | + slip | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| chá | + ripen | - | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | + |
| chà | + behead | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| ché | + guard | + | - | + | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| chè | think | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | + | - | - |
| chí | hit+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| chì | rub+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| chí | rule+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| chì | laugh | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | + | - | - |
| chó | grow | - | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | - |
| chò | backbite+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|------|---|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | |
| chó | want+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| chú | fetch+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| chú | dismiss+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| dá | warm+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| dà | fall+ | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| dé | write + | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| dè | melt | - | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| dì | endure | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - |
| dì | be | - | <u>+</u> | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | - |
| dó | pack+ | + | + | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| dò | convalesce + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| dó | pull | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| dó | plant | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| dú | lead+ | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| dú | push+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| dù | plant + | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| fé | fly + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| fè | worship+ | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| fí | rub | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | + | - | - |
| fì | twist | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| fó | uproot+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| fó | remain | - | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | - |
| fú | develop+ (hair) | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| fú | see+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| fù | go out+ | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|-------|-----------------|------------|----------|---|------|---|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | |
| gá | to go | <u>+</u> ? | - | + | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | - |
| gé | pour out | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| gè | listen+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| gó | buy+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| gò | pull a face | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| gó | deny+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| gó | give+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| gú | count+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| gù | catch+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ghá | lie+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ghà | fail to do+ | + | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ghé | fry+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | - |
| ghè | cut slightly+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| ghó | pick+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| ghò | transfigure+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ghú | cook | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| ghù | wash+ (body) | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| gwá | tell+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| gwé | grind | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| gwè | shake | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| gwó | prepare | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| gwò | bend | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| gwú | dig up | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | - |
| gwù | swim+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| gwú | be finished | - | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | - |
| gwù | remove | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |

| Verbs | English | TONE | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------------|------------|----------|---|---|---|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | T | Loc | M | H | L | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
| há | pay a fine+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| hà | pierce+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| *hé | | | | | | | | | | | |
| *hè | | | | | | | | | | | |
| hí | rub+ | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | + | + |
| *hó | uproot | | | | | | | | | | |
| hò | narrate+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| hó | bring down | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | + | - | - |
| hò | select | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| hú | rub+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | + | + |
| hù | be lost+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| hú+ | roast+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| hù | recognise | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| já | praise | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | - |
| jà | open | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | - |
| jé | go | <u>+</u> ? | - | + | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | - | - |
| jí | hold+ | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| jì | spit | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | + | - | - |
| jì | groan | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - |
| jò | rain+ | - | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | + | + |
| jó | struggle+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| jú | be full | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| jú | refuse+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| jù | overlook+ | + | - | - | | + | + | + | + | + | + |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|-------|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|---|------|---|--|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | | |
| ká | surpass | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| kà | narrate+ | + | - | - | - | + | | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ké | tie+ | + | - | - | + | - | | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| kè | create+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| kò | behung+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| kó | tell+ | + | - | - | + | - | | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| kò | cultivate | + | - | - | - | + | | + | + | + | - | - |
| kú | fetch | + | - | - | + | - | | + | + | + | - | - |
| kù | fan+ | + | - | - | - | + | | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| kú | plant+ | + | - | - | + | - | | + | + | - | + | + |
| kpá | backbite+ | + | - | - | + | - | | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| kpà | shave+ | + | - | - | - | + | | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | - |
| kpé | judge+ | + | - | - | + | - | | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| kpè | curse+ | + | - | - | - | + | | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| kpí | be stingy | + | - | - | - | + | | + | - | + | - | - |
| kpó | collect | + | - | - | + | - | | + | + | - | - | - |
| kpò | be hot | + | - | - | - | + | | - | - | + | - | - |
| kpó | call+ | + | - | - | + | - | | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| kpò | be dwarfish | + | - | - | - | + | | + | - | + | - | - |
| kpú | enter | - | - | + | + | - | | + | - | + | - | - |
| kpù | sit on eggs | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| kpú | pull+ | + | - | - | + | - | | + | + | - | + | + |
| kpù | have some- thing in the mouth | + | - | - | - | + | | + | + | - | - | - |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|-------|----------------|----------|-----|----------|------|---|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | |
| lá | go home+ | <u>+</u> | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| là | shake hands | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| lé | look at+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | + | + | + |
| lì | bury | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| lì | endure+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ló | swallow+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| lò | return | - | - | + | + | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| lò | be in a place+ | <u>+</u> | + | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | - | - |
| lú | be bitter+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + | + |
| lù | offend+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| lú | marry+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| lù | rob+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| má | know+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| mà | demarcate | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| mé | do+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| mì | withdraw | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| mì | bear+ | + | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| mò | sprout+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| mù | hurt | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| mù | bear+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| mù | study | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| ñá | listen+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ñà | shake+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ñé | cross | + | - | + | + | - | + | + | + | - | - |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|-------|----------------|----------|-----|---|------|---|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | |
| nú | drink+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| nù | rejoice+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| nyá | stick+ | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| nya | drive+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| nyé | give+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| nyi | be heavy+ | + | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| nyò | peep | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| nyú | fart+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| nwa | try+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| nwé | own | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | - | - |
| nwo | wear | + | +? | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| nwò | change | - | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - |
| nwu | catch fire | + | - | - | + | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| nwú | die+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| pá | carry+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| pé | be small | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | + | - | - |
| pè | cut | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| pí | sharpen | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| pì | press | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| rá | make love+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| rà | invite+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + | + |
| ré | sell+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| rè | be efficacious | - | - | - | - | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| rí | eat+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| ri | climb up+ | <u>+</u> | - | + | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ri | think | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|-------|---------------------------|----------|----------|---|------|---|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | |
| ró | nurse enmity | + | - | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | - |
| rò | think+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| ró | offer food to the gods | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | - |
| rò | dream+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | + | + | + |
| ru | reach | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | - |
| ru | wear+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| ru | work+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | - | + | + | + |
| ru | point+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| sá | wash | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | - | - |
| sà | open+ | + | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | + | + | + |
| sé | take away+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| sè | draw+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| só | sow+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| sò | follow+ | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| só | abstain from+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| sò | regret | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | + | - | - |
| sú | grind+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| sú | pound+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| sú | heave+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| shi | cook+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| shi | smell+ | + | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| shi | say | + | - | - | + | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | - | - |
| ta | chew+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| +ta | reveal a secret | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | - | - | - |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|-------|----------------------|----------|----------|---|------|---|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | |
| té | cook+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| tí | desire | + | - | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | - |
| tò | praise | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | - | - |
| tó | be in difficulty | - | <u>+</u> | - | + | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| tò | last+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| tú | trace | + | - | + | + | - | + | + | + | - | - |
| tù | boast+ | + | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| tú | throw+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| tù | carve+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| +vó | comb+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| vò | open | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| vú | carry+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| vù | grow fat | + | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | - | - |
| vú | curse+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| vù | harvest | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| wá | break+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| wá | cut+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| wé | be angry+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | + | + |
| wè | take | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| +wí | be mad | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | - | - |
| wó | push with a stick | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| wò | take | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| wò | refuse to give+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + | + |

| Verbs | English | T | Loc | M | TONE | | AS | CO | NB | P | Ho |
|--------|-----------------|----------|-----|---|------|---|----------|----------|----------|---|----|
| | | | | | H | L | | | | | |
| +wú | build | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | + | - | - |
| wù | be famous | - | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | - | - | - |
| wù | jump | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | - | - |
| yā | be sick | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | + | - | - |
| yè | be done+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| yí | resemble+ | + | - | - | + | - | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| (+) yí | lose heavily+ | + | - | - | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | + |
| yì | accompany | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| yó | beg | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | - | - |
| yò | sift | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| zá | answer+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | + | - | + | + | - | + | + |
| zā | sweep | + | - | - | - | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| zé | sneeze | + | - | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | - |
| zè | fend off | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | + | - | - |
| zì | teach+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| zì | send a message+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + | + |
| zǒ | hide | <u>+</u> | + | - | + | - | + | + | + | - | - |
| zǒ | struggle for+ | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | - | + | + |
| zò | forget+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | <u>+</u> | + | + |
| zú | steal | + | - | - | + | - | + | <u>+</u> | + | - | - |
| zù | meet+ | <u>+</u> | - | - | - | + | + | + | - | + | + |
| zú | buy | + | - | - | + | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | - | - |
| zù | rear+ | + | - | - | - | + | + | <u>+</u> | + | + | + |

CHAPTER VII

Synonymy and Antonymy

Apart from polysemy and homonymy discussed in the last chapter, there is a further contrastive verbal category of "relatedness of meaning". This category encompasses the semantic relations of synonymy and antonymy. In the present chapter, the verbs will be studied in terms of these semantic relations.

Synonymy

In the study of synonymy, it will be shown that two tests are essential for the determination of synonyms, that synonymy is context-dependent, and that hyponymy is a special case of synonymy. It will also be shown that as far as the Igbo verbs are concerned, synonymy obeys what Ullman calls "the law of synonymic attraction".

Synonymy is concerned with sameness of sense of lexical items. Two lexical items are said to be synonymous if, and only if, one is substituted for the other and the resultant sentences have the same meaning. This can be illustrated as follows:

$$\begin{array}{lcl} \text{If } S_1 + x & \longrightarrow & S_2 + y, \quad \text{and} \\ S_1 & \longrightarrow & S_2 \quad \text{then} \\ x & \longrightarrow & y. \end{array}$$

In terms of lexical items, x and y are, therefore, synonymous.

Thus, in (a) and (b) below, the substitution of the VP in (b) for the VP in (a) leaves the meaning of (a) unaltered. The VP in (a) and that in (b) are, as a result, synonymous.

(a) Ézè ghara ughá.

Eze told a lie.

(b) Ézè siri así.

Eze said (= told) a lie.

(a) and (b) indicate (i) that synonymy implies that two or more forms may be associated with the same meaning, and (ii) that one of the tests of synonymy is the substitution of lexical items.

Another test for the determination of synonyms can be found in Bebbington's (1970) definition of the word, synonym, as "the antonym of antonym". If, for example, the antonym of íghà ùghá (to tell a lie) is íkwù ezi okwu (to tell the truth) and that of íkwù ezi okwu is ísi asi, then íghà ùghá and ísi asi are synonymous.

Synonymy is context-dependent. An item x may have synonyms a, b and c, but the selection of any of these synonyms to substitute for x will depend upon the contextual environment of x. Take, for instance, the verb íku (to plant) and its synonyms íma, ídu, iso. In the sentence: Ézè la akú òromá (Eze is planting an "orange"), the only synonym for íku in this sentence is ídu. The substitution of either íma or iso for íku in the sentence will render it semantically deviant. So that the synonym for íku here which is ídu is contextually determined.

Hyponymy

Hyponymy is a special case of synonymy. The term, first used by Bazell and later by Lyons and Palmer, is used to indicate that a number of lexical items derive from a common source. The hyponyms so derived are synonyms of the superordinate or the common source. This is exemplified by the nominal-bound verb írú orú (to farm) from which are derived 18 hyponyms as shown below. Each of the 18 hyponyms is a synonym for the superordinate írú orú.

Igbo verbal synonyms obey what Ullman calls "the law of synonymic attraction". By this "law", he means that subjects prominent in the interests and activities of a community tend to attract a large number of synonyms. It is observed, for instance, that in Beowulf there are 37 words for "hero" or "prince" and at least a dozen for "battle" and "fight" to which 13 more may be added from other Old English poems.

This synonymic principle, which Ullman regards as a semantic universal, explains why some Igbo verbs have more synonyms than others, and why some have none at all as far as the present inquiry has gone. Take, for instance, the verb írú orú (úbi) which can mean any of the following verbs:

1. ísú àla - to clear the bush.
2. ígbo àla - to do a second clearing by cutting down some plants left on purpose during the first clearing.
3. ísú àla (ókú) - to burn the dead leaves, etc.

4. íkpo'cha (àla) - to remove burnt firewood.
5. íbo' àla - to do the first softening of the earth by using the hoe.
6. ígha' àla - to separate the roots from the earth.
7. ísu' àla - to burn the roots in (6).
8. íkò' íhe - to make ridges or mounds.
9. ísò' (ji) - to plant the yams.
10. íkpu' jí ùbò' - to cover the young shoots with leaves.
11. íma' ñrurù - to peg supporting sticks for the shoots.
12. íma' olí - to peg supporting (bigger) sticks for a number of yam-shoots.
13. ímé' ji - to direct the straying shoots.
14. íhò' afífia - to weed the farm.
15. ígba' ji aja - to replace eroded earth.
16. ígba' ji ákpù' - to cut the top of the yams so that they can produce other yams called ákpù' jí.
17. ígwù' jí (ákpù' jí) - to dig up some yams on a small scale.
18. ítù' òtùtùù (ji) - to harvest all the yams.

Similarly, the following verbal synonyms have been found in the language.

Synonyms

English

ígba' mbò, ínwà' oko; íjisi' ike, ilédo'/ílerù anyà.

to try

ígba' okù, írè' okù; ínwà' okù

to burn

ídù' okù; íkpo'/íkpe okù

to be hot

SynonymsEnglish

ígho òghòrò; ísì asì
 ígbà asìrì; íràhù mmàdù;
 íkwù ùkà (là) azù

to tell a lie

ísì ike; ígbàsì ike; ídù ike

to be strong

ínwè ego; ízù ezu (là mmàdù);
 íbà ògìrìnyà; ínwè ihe; íbà ùbà;
 íbù oke ozu

to be rich

ízu osì; ímè aka n-wò; íjé ekperìma;
 íjé àbàlì dù egwu

to be a thief

ízu afià; ítù mgbèrè; ígbà mgbèrè

to trade

íku; ímà; ídù; íso

to plant

ínwù; ídà (òdàchì); íhàpù

to die

ílu ògù; íjé agha; ígbà ògù egbe;
 ígbà nghò

to fight

ísì; íkwù; íkà ùkà

to talk

ímèchi; ígùchi

to close (door)

ímeghe; ígùghe

to open

író(sa)író; íkpò asì

to hate

íru inyi; ídù àchìchì

to be dirty

írube isì; ímè nwayòò

to be obedient

íbu; ínù

to borrow, to lend

íwù; ídè (ùdè)

to be famous; to be all the rage

SynonymsEnglish

imé ngára; imé nganga; imé gbube;
imé inyangá; ívùli onwe ya'íkeli kà útù;
imé okoko

to be proud

íwè (re); ílā (ta)

to take; to receive

ívu; ípá

to carry

íge n̄chi; ínā n̄chi

to listen

ínū anwūrú/sígá; íse anwūrú/sígá

to smoke

íbìli; íkùli

to rise

íchá; ígbuke

to shine

{ ímèrĩa íhe; ígò arunsi; ígò
{ ímmuo; íhe arunsi

to worship the gods

Anytonymy

"Antonymy is a regular and very natural feature of language ...

Yet, surprisingly, it is a subject that has often been neglected in books on semantics" (Palmer: 1976). Lyons regards antonymy "as one of the most important semantic relations". The importance of antonymy in Igbo can be illustrated by the fact that

- (a) common sayings in the language often consist of contrastive words. The meaning of the following sayings is made more vivid and striking by the contrastive words in them than it would be if the words were not used in sharp contrast to each other.

Íjé ògu ádu kà ula.

To go to war is not like returning (from war).

Ikute jibè ádu kà idu ya.

To send for a (native) doctor is not the same as (like) to see him off (when one is expected to pay his fees).

Ndu áfú uzò, ndú áfú mkporo ochíchi.

Some see light some see darkness.

(= Some people are lucky, some are unlucky.)

Ndu abia ndú ala.

Some are coming, others are going.

In the above examples, the contrastive words are underlined.

(b) Antonyms are used to determine synonyms (Palmer: 1976).

This is particularly true of Igbo verbs where a number of synonyms tend to have a common antonym. So that if the antonym of y is t, then x and t will be synonymous. This has been illustrated above in Bebbington's definition of a synonym as "the antonym of antonym". (Examples are given at the end.)

Antonymy is lexical oppositeness. If S_1 is opposite in meaning to S_2 only in that where one has the lexical item a the other has b, the a and b are antonyms. The assertion of S_1 is the denial of S_2 because of the incompatibility between a and b. For instance, íba ògirinya (to be rich) denies, and is denied by ída ògbènye (to be poor). Antonymy indicates total incompatibility, while

synonymy implies not necessarily total, but sufficient, sameness of sense, of lexical items.⁽¹⁾

In the present study, antonyms will be classified according to their (a) verbal (-cum-nominal or-adverbial) constituents, and (b) meaning.

Classification according to Constituents

1. It has been pointed out in Chapter 1 that one of the functions of suffixes in Igbo is to determine antonyms. The examples given there to illustrate this suffixial function included:

(The suffixes are underlined.)

| Verbs | English | Antonyms | English |
|---------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| ídu <u>te</u> | to lead towards speaker | ídu <u>fu</u> | to lead away from speaker |
| íme <u>zi</u> | to treat well | íme <u>jo</u> | to treat badly |
| ídu <u>zi</u> | to direct, to lead well | ídu <u>fio</u> | to mislead |

(1) Bloomfield insists "that there are no actual synonyms" but some lexical items approximate in meaning so closely to others as to be regarded as synonymous with them.

2. There are cases where single uninflected verbal items have single uninflected verbal items as their antonyms. A few of such verbs are given in the table which follows.

| Verbs | English | Antonyms | English |
|-------|-------------|----------|------------|
| íbià | to come | íga | to go |
| iha | to be equal | íka | to surpass |
| ígo | to deny | íkwe | to own |
| ízu | to buy | íre | to sell |
| íku | to plant | ího | to uproot |
| ínyè | to give | íla | to receive |
| ílo | to swallow | ígbò | to vomit |
| íli | to bury | ívo | to exhume |

3. The same object nominals used with different verbs can indicate antonyms as exemplified by the following:

| Verbs | English | Antonyms | English |
|------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| ímù (m̀m̀) | to whet (a knife) | ígbùchí m̀m̀ | to deaden or render a knife blunt |
| írùbè isi | to obey | ílufù isi | to disobey |
| ígbà afià | to sell like hot cakes | ísu afià | to be incapable of being sold |
| ído ahù | to put on weight | íjò ahù | to lose weight |
| íjì ugwo | to owe a debt | íkwù ugwo | to pay a debt |

4. In the final category are antonyms which are composed of different verbs and different object nominal (adverbial) segments.

These include:

| Verbs | English | Antonyms | English |
|---------------|--|------------------|-------------------------------|
| ínwé ego | to have got money (= to be rich) | ída ógbenye | to be poor |
| íkwú ezi okwu | to tell the truth | isi asi | to tell a lie |
| ímé garagára | to be active (= to be quick at doing things) | íju oyi | to be slow at doing things |
| íkpo ukpo | to be dwarfish | íchó ogo | to be tall |
| íkwú okwu | to be able to talk | ída ógbi | to be deaf and dumb |
| íma ihe | to be wise | ídu nzuzu | to be foolish |
| íma mma | to be beautiful | íjò njo | to be ugly |
| íga la ihu | to progress | ílàghàchi azú | to retrogress |

Classification according to meaning

Under this rubric, antonyms are subcategorized according to the semantic relationship they exhibit. They can exhibit relational "oppositeness" (or what Palmer (1976) calls reversal relationship), an irreversible relationship and a temporal relationship.

Relational "Oppositeness"

Antonyms can exhibit relational "oppositeness" between two verbs. If, for instance, A sells x to B, and B buys x from A, the act of selling on the part of A is relationally "opposed" by the act of buying on the part of B. The "oppositeness" can be formulated as $\left[(A-x) \longleftrightarrow (B+x) \right]$ (where the parting of x from A is equivalent to B being in possession of x, and vice versa). The antonyms that fall into this category include írè (to sell) / ízu (to buy), and the homonymous verb ibu (to lend) / ibu (to borrow).

Irreversible Relationship

"Some antonyms block reversibility" (Palmer, 1976). The irreversibility is triggered off mainly by motive verbs. Bíá (come), for example, does not reverse gá (go). Bíá indicates direction towards the speaker or hearer, while gá indicates direction away from the speaker or hearer, as illustrated in the following sentences:

i) Ágà m abíá bẹ́ wu.

I shall come to your house.

ii) M m ága áfia echi.

ii) M m ága áfia echi.
tomorrow.

In (i) the direction indicated is towards the hearer, while in (ii) it is direction away from the speaker, but not towards the hearer.

Gá is restricted in a way that bíá is not. So that even if gá implies direction away from the speaker, it cannot be used in the sense that the speaker can gá bẹ́ (go to the house of the) hearer, while that holds with regard to bíá. But if the speaker and the hearer were at

the speaker's, then the speaker could say "Kà anyí ga bẹ́ wu" (Let us go to your house). In that situation, even the hearer, if he were to say the sentence, that is, if they were to go to his house, would not use biá; he would rather say "Kà anyí ga bẹ́ mu" (Let us go to my house). If the hearer were to go to the speaker's house without the latter, the speaker would say:

iii) Gáá bẹ́ mu fu yá (Go to my house and see it).

Compare (iii) with (iv).

iv) Biá bẹ́ m fu ya (Come to my house and see it).

In (iii) the speaker is absent from his house, while in (iv) he is, at least, assumed to be present at the time of the visit. Compare also

v) *Álā m abiá bẹ́ wu, ì lá afù àfu.

I am coming to your house, and you are going away.

with

vi) Álā m agá bẹ́ wu, ì lá afù àfu.

I am going to your house, and you are going away.

The unacceptability of (v) is due to the fact that there is semantic incompatibility between biá (come) and the absence of the hearer.

vii) Ábiàra m bẹ́ wu, ì lá àráhù urà.

I came to your house, and (but) you were sleeping.

viii) *Ágàra m bẹ́ wu, ì lá àráhù urà.

I went to your house, and (but) you were sleeping.

Observe that (vii) is acceptable because, although the speaker did not transact any business with the hearer, the hearer was bodily present. Compare this with the unacceptable (viii) due to the semantic incongruity between gá and "presence".

Where biá and absence are found in an acceptable sentence, presence is assumed, and absence is accidental. Compare, for instance,

ix) Ábiàra m la bé wu, màla í lòhò yá.

I came to your house, but you were not in.

with

x) Ágara m la bé wu, màla í lòhò yá.

I went to your house, but you were not in.

(ix) indicates that the speaker believed the hearer was undoubtedly in, but, to his disbelief, the latter was absent. The (x) sentence implies that the speaker never entertained any hope of meeting the hearer at the time of the visit; it would be a surprise if the hearer was in. So that (x) is equivalent to "Ágara m bé wu mgbé í lòhò yá"; I went to your house when you were not in.

The antonymous pair biá/gá indicates also that the same activity of an individual can be seen as àgá (going) by one person and as àbiá (coming) by another. If, for instance, A is at X, he can say "B biàra X" (B came to X), but if A is at Y, where B started, A would say "B gàra X" (B went to X). So, antonyms which show irreversible relationship have to reckon with the relation of the speaker to what is spoken about.

Temporal Relationship

Antonyms which exhibit temporal relation are "permutationally related".⁽²⁾ They expect, but do not imply, each other. The pairs jú (ask) / zá (answer) and nyé (give, offer) / lata (receive, accept) can be used to illustrate the "expectation". If A, for instance, asks

(2) Lyons, J., op. cit.

B a question, the act of asking expects, but does not imply, that B answers, and if A gives x to B, the act of giving expects, but does not imply, that B accepts or refuses. Conversely, zá (answer, reply) and láta (accept) presuppose that there has been an act of íju (asking) and ínyè (offering).

By analogy to temporal relation (a term used by Palmer, 1976) there is a class of antonyms which can be described as showing permanent relationship. In this class, the denial of one lexical item implies the other. Take, for instance,

Ó nwehe ego (he is not rich)

which implies

Ò dara ógbenye (he is poor).

Similarly,

Ò lóèhe (he is no longer = he is dead)

implies

Ò nwúgwò (he is dead), and

Ò là ekwúhò ezi okwù (he does not tell the truth)

implies

Ó là así ási (he tells lies).

The Law of Antonymic Contraction

By analogy to Ullman's "law of synonymic attraction", the Igbo verbs not only obey Ullman's "law of synonymic attraction" but also what is referred to in this study as the "law of antonymic contraction". By this is meant that the verbal synonyms tend to converge into a common antonym as exemplified by:

1. $\begin{array}{l} \text{íba} \text{ ògírìnyá} \\ \text{ínwé} \text{ íhè} \\ \text{íba} \text{ ùbá} \\ \text{íbu} \text{ òkè} \text{ òzú} \end{array} \} \longrightarrow \text{to be rich} / \text{ídà} \text{ ògbènýe} \longrightarrow \text{to be poor}$
2. $\begin{array}{l} \text{ígbási} \text{ íkè} \\ \text{ídu} \text{ íkè} \\ \text{ísí} \text{ íkè} \end{array} \} \longrightarrow \text{to be strong} / \text{ídu} \text{ nrò} \longrightarrow \text{to be soft}$
3. $\begin{array}{l} \text{íná} \text{ nchí} \\ \text{ígè} \text{ nchí} \end{array} \} \longrightarrow \text{to listen} / \text{ímè} \text{ mkpatu} \longrightarrow \text{to make a noise}$
4. $\begin{array}{l} \text{íku} \\ \text{íma} \\ \text{íso} \\ \text{ídu} \end{array} \} \longrightarrow \text{to plant} / \text{íhò} \longrightarrow \text{to uproot}$
5. $\begin{array}{l} \text{ímè} \text{ ngàrà} \\ \text{ímè} \text{ ngàngá} \\ \text{ímè} \text{ okòkò} \\ \text{ímè} \text{ èbubè} \\ \text{ímè} \text{ ìnyàngá} \\ \text{ívùlì} \\ \text{íkèlì} \text{ kà} \text{ útú} \end{array} \} \longrightarrow \text{to be proud} / \text{ídu} \text{ nwáyo} \longrightarrow \text{to be humble}$

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