

## STATIVE VERBS IN IGBO SYNTAX

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The purpose of this paper is two-fold: (1) to focus on the class of Stative Verbs in Igbo; and (2) to highlight their inflectional characteristics, which have so far been little understood. Igbo stative verbs fall into two subsets: those which express a non-past time meaning in their simple CV stem (we shall hereafter refer to them as subset A), and those expressing the same non-past time meaning in the CV + rV form (subset B). While stative verbs of subset A form their imperative by adding a high-tone **-rV̄** suffix, those of subset B do so by adding the high-tone open vowel suffix **-ē**, which is the traditional marker of imperative verb forms. Each subset also has its own corresponding past forms:

	<u>non-past</u>	<u>imperative</u>	<u>past</u>
subset A	<b>CV</b>	<b>CV + rV̄</b>	<b>CV + rV</b> or <b>CV + V + rV</b>
subset B	<b>CV + rV</b>	<b>CV + ē</b>	<b>CV + V + rV</b>

It is to be pointed out that whereas the imperative **-rV̄** suffix is consistently on a high tone, the **-rV** suffix of the non-past and past forms will be on high or low tone depending on the tonal class of its verb root/stem. Thus a study of this class of verbs is also an exercise in morpheme identification since it helps us to sort out the number and types of **-rV** suffixes in the language.

The above inflectional characteristics are maintained in the following verb forms: (1) serial verb form, (2) perfective verb form, and (3) open conditional construction. The three copulas in Igbo, **bu/wu**, **dī**, and **nō** are typical of the stative verbs in the simple **CV** form.

The presence or absence of a certain inflectional suffix can and does change the class membership of a verb. For example, verbs of carrying and dressing can be stative or activity verbs depending on whether they occur in the simple **CV** or in the **CV + gha/ghe** form. Thus, where languages such as English distinguish the notion of state and activity by two distinct verbs, Igbo in certain cases uses two different forms of one and the same verb.

The large number of stative verbs found in Igbo more than adequately complements the small number of real adjectives found in the language.

Ce papier a deux buts: (1) mettre le point sur la classe des verbes auxiliaires en Igbo (2) souligner leurs charac-

téristiques flexionnels qui ont été très peu compris jusqu'à présent. Les verbes auxiliaires en Igbo se divisent en deux sous-ensembles: les verbes qui expriment un sens de non-passé dans leur base simple **CV** appartiennent au sous-ensemble que nous appellerons sous-ensemble A. Le deuxième sous-ensemble comprend les verbes qui expriment le même sens de non-passé dans la forme **CV + rV** (ce sont les éléments de sous-ensemble B). Les éléments de sous-ensemble A des verbes auxiliaires forment l'impératif en ajoutant un suffixe **-rV** sur ton haut, mais ceux de sous-ensemble B forment l'impératif en ajoutant une voyelle ouverte **-ē** sur ton haut, ce qui marque traditionnellement les verbes à l'impératif. Chaque sous-ensemble a aussi ses formes correspondants du passé, indiqué comme suit:

	<u>non-passé</u>	<u>impératif</u>	<u>passé</u>
Sous-ensemble A	<b>CV</b>	<b>CV + rV̇</b>	<b>CV + rV</b> ou <b>CV + V + rV</b>
Sous-ensemble B	<b>CV + rV</b>	<b>CV + ē</b>	<b>CV + V + rV</b>

Il faut noter que le suffixe **-rV̇** qui marque l'impératif est toujours sur ton haut, alors que les formes non-passé seront sur ton haut ou bas selon la classe tonale de la racine ou de la base du verbe. Ainsi, l'étude de cette classe de verbes sert aussi à identifier les morphèmes puisqu'elle nous aide à classer le nombre et les types de suffixes **-rV** dans la langue. Les caractéristiques flexionnels (voir ci-dessus) se retrouvent dans les formes verbales suivantes: (1) forme verbale à série, (2) forme verbale du temps parfait, (3) construction ouverte du conditionnel.

Les trois copules en Igbo, **bụ/wụ**, **dị** et **nọ** sont typiques des verbes auxiliaires sous la forme simple **CV**.

La présence ou l'absence d'un certain suffixe flexionnel peut changer l'appartenance d'un verbe à un sous-ensemble. Par exemple, les verbes qui indiquent l'action de porter ou d'habiller peuvent être des verbes auxiliaires ou d'action, selon leur construction: soit la forme simple **CV** ou le forme **CV + gha/ghe**. Ainsi, certaines langues, telle que l'anglais, distinguent l'état ou l'action par deux verbes distincts, l'Igbo, dans certains cas, utilise deux formes différentes du même verbe.

Le nombre restreint d'adjectifs réels dans la langue est largement compensé par le grand nombre des verbes auxiliaires dans la langue Igbo.

## O. INTRODUCTION

A number of studies<sup>1</sup> have been made on the Igbo verb, but none of these has singled out the stative subcategory of verbs for close examination. The first mention of this subclass was in my

1983 paper "Towards a classification of Igbo Verbs" which argues that an **-rV** suffix expressing a present meaning is one of the diagnostic tests for stativity. Since then there has been no follow-up until this article in which I give a much more detailed characterization of this syntactic class of verbs.

The tone-marking convention used here is identical to that used in Nwachukwu (ed. 1983), by which only the first of a sequence of syllables on the same pitch level is marked, leaving the rest unmarked until a contrasting pitch is reached. This means that one never gets a situation where two consecutive high or low tones are marked: this fact is therefore exploited to indicate a high-downstep relationship. Thus, any sequence of two consecutive high tone marks is to be interpreted as high followed by a downstep. For example, **ĩmē** 'to do' is high-downstep (i.e., two distinct high levels) while **ĩme** 'inside' is high-high (i.e., unchanged high).

## 1. STATIVE VERBS IN INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

George Lakoff (1966) argues that stative verbs in English should be regarded as a subclass of adjectives. This suggestion is particularly apt for Igbo where the class of what can be described as real adjectives may not number more than twelve. The vast majority of what translates English adjectives constitute a subcategory which has been described as inherent-complement verbs (Nwachukwu 1983); they are so called because the citation form of each of them is accompanied by a free morpheme (always a noun) without which the meaning of the verb cannot be determined. Such nominal complements are no more than meaning specifiers, and they along with the root of the verb constitute one semantic unit. The presence of a large body of such verbs makes up for the paucity of adjectives in Igbo.

One of the characteristics of stative verbs in English is that they never occur in the progressive aspect as activity verbs do, and when they are used in what appears to be that form, the use is explained in terms of either postulating a different class membership or suggesting a wide range of meaning (polysemy) for the verbs concerned. I do not intend to give many examples of English stative verbs here, the reference to them is just to draw attention to what constitutes their differentiating syntactic features, that is, their inability to occur in the progressive form, except when a different meaning or activity is involved.

For example:

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| (1a) I feel tired.  | (state, inert - perception) |
| (1b) I am generally feeling my<br>way through.  | (activity)                  |
| (2a) I can smell it.  | (inert perception)          |
| (2b) That student is smelling that<br>bottle of poisonous gas<br>(contrary to instruction). | (active - perception)       |

However, with other stative verbs in English, the question of using the progressive form does not even arise, as the following examples show:

- (3a) I own a car.  
 (3b) \*I am owning a car.  
 (4a) This house belongs to me.  
 (4b) \*This is belonging to me.  
 (5a) I have a book.  
 (5b) \*I am having a book.

The progressive aspect is associated with the notion of temporariness and incompleteness and these two aspects of time meaning are not compatible with the sense of permanence associated with stative verbs.

## 2. IGBO STATIVE VERBS

Igbo stative verbs fall into two inflectional groups: the first group comprises all those verbs which express a simple present (non-past) meaning in the simple **CV** form; such verbs belong to subset A. The second subset is made up of verbs which express the simple present (non-past) meaning in the **CV** + **-rV** form. Both subsets are examined in detail below.

### 2.1 STATIVE VERBS IN **CV** FORM, SUBSET A

The copula (the verb 'to be' in English) is a good example of the stative verb in most languages. So it is in Igbo where there are three different copulas, each translating the English verb 'to be' but possessing slightly different syntactic characteristics. The copulas are: **-bū/-wū**, **-dī**, and **-nō**. Each of them occurs in the simple **CV** form without any suffix whatsoever in expressing a present stative meaning; thus:

- (6a) **Ọ bū nwóké.** 'He is a man/manly.'  
 (6b) **Ọ bū íhe méré éme.** 'It is a thing which happened:  
 it is true.'

The copula occurs in the syntactic frame \_\_\_\_\_ [ + NP]:

- (7a) **Ọ dī ọchā.** 'It is white.'  
 (7b) **Ọ dī ojī.** 'It is black/dark.'  
 (7c) **Hā dī ọtụtụ.** 'They are many.'  
 (7d) **Ọ dī oféle.** 'It is light/easy.'  
 (7e) **Ọ dī mkpà.** 'It is important.'

**dī** occurs with the few Igbo adjectives as its complement, and in addition it takes other nominal complements which are single nouns capable of occurring as its only complement as in the above examples, and here lies the difference between the two copulas, **-dī** and **-bū/-wū**: where we say (7e) we do not say:

(7f) \***Ọ̀ bụ̀ mkpā.**

For (7f) to become well-formed, the word **mkpā** must be further defined or qualified as in

(7g) **Ọ̀ bụ̀ mkpā m̄.** 'That is my need.'

(7h) **Ọ̀ bụ̀kwa mkpā madū nīle.** 'It's also everybody's need.'

For the foregoing syntactic reason, the copula **-dị** occurs in the following syntactic frame:

\_\_\_\_\_ [ { adjective }  
          [ { predicate nominal } ] ]

The third copula, **-nọ**, is simple in its syntactic behaviour; its only possible complement is a prepositional phrase (PP) as in the following:

(8a) **Ọ̀ nọ n'ụlọ.** 'He is at home.'

(8b) **Éghu ahū nọ n'ọbú.** 'That goat is in tether.'

It will be observed that all three copulas appear in simple un-suffixed **CV** form. Apart from these the verb **bī** is another stative verb expressing present state in a similar form:

(9) **Ọ̀ bī ēbe ā.**

With very few exceptions all verbs in Igbo which can be used in the simple **CV** form are stative verbs; the copulas just discussed thus belong to subset A stative verbs. The following are more examples of subset A stative verbs:

(10a) **Ọ̀ lū ọlu.** 'It is bitter.'

(10b) **Ọ̀ chā ọcha.** 'It is neat, clean, fair, or light in complexion.'

(10c) **Ọ̀ gō ugo/jī nji.** 'He/she is black/dark.'

(10d) **Ọ̀ fū ọfū.** 'It is painful/hot (as pepper).'

(10e) **Ọ̀ jọ njọ.** 'It is bad, ugly, unfair.'

(10f) **Ọ̀ mā mmā.** 'It is good, upright, fair, beautiful.'

(10g) **Ọ̀ gbā aka.** 'He is with nothing./He is empty-handed.'

(10h) **Ọ̀ gbā aka bja ūwa.** 'He came to the world with nothing.'

(10i) **Ányị ga agbákwa akā laa.** 'We shall also go back empty-handed.'

- (10j) Ó bũ/gbā ònũ. 'He is going without food./he is starving.'
- (10k) Ọ gbā ụkwụ efū bīa. 'He came on bare feet.'
- (11a) Ọ mā jọọjị. 'He has a "George" wrapper on.'
- (11b) Ó tī trawūzā. 'He has a pair of trousers on.'
- (11c) Ó kpū okpū. 'He has a hat on.'
- (11d) Ọ kwū ọlā n̄tī. 'He has earrings on.'
- (11e) Ógū pā àtụmǎ māj. 'Ogu is carrying a jar of palm wine.'
- (11f) Àdā kù nwā n'aka. 'Ada is carrying a baby on the hand.'
- (11g) Íbè pụ/kpụ éghu èjé ahịā. 'Ibe is dragging a goat to market.'

## 2.2 VERBS OF DRESSING, ORNAMENTATION, AND CARRYING: A SPECIAL CLASS OF SUBSET A

This is a special subclass within the larger body of stative verbs. They are special because they can be both activity and stative verbs. As verbs denoting activity, they answer the question:

- (12) Ọ meghe/na emé gịnị? 'What is he doing?'

The answer can be any of the following:

- (13a) Ọ màgha/na amá akwà. 'He/she is putting on his/her wrapper.'
- (13b) Ọ tìghè/na etí àgbayị. 'He/She is putting on his/her shoes.'
- (13c) Àdā gbàgha/na agbā ìchafu. 'Ada is tying her scarf.'
- (13d) Ụzọ kpughe/na ékpū ókpū. 'Ụzọ is putting on his hat.'

I have consistently and rightly translated each of the above verbs with the English gloss 'put on' to distinguish that meaning of activity from the meaning of state suggested by the gloss 'have on'. In other words, where the English language has two different morphemes, Igbo uses two different forms of one and the same verb. Thus, the end of the activity marks the beginning of the state, as in the following:

- (14a) Ógū ma jọọjị. 'Ogu has a "George" wrapper on.'
- (14b) Ụzọ kpū okpū. 'Ụzọ has a hat on.'
- (14c) Ó yī/sū/tī àkpukpọ ụkwū. 'He has his shoes on.'

Other verbs which have identical behaviour include the following verbs of carrying:

<b>ībū/īvū</b>	'to carry heavy objects'
<b>īchī</b>	'to carry countable objects like kernels'
<b>īpā</b>	'to carry containers of liquids'
<b>īkū</b>	'to carry a baby'
<b>īkwō</b>	'to carry a baby on the back'
<b>īkpū</b>	'to drag living animals to market or pasture'
<b>īkpū</b>	'to carry in the mouth'

### 2.3 IMPERATIVE FORM OF SUBSET A STATIVE VERBS

Without exception all the verbs in (6-11) form their imperative by adding a high-tone **-rV** suffix to their respective stems; we call this an imperative **-rV** because tonally it behaves just like the open vowel imperative suffix which is always on a high tone. Since these two phonetically different suffixes perform identical functions and occur in identical positions they must belong to the same class. The association of this suffix with strictly stative verbs helps to resolve the problem of pinpointing the meaning of each **-rV** suffix identified in the language; the tendency has been to force a benefactive meaning on most. The following are examples of the imperative forms of the subclass of stative verbs under discussion:

- (15a) **Būru/wūru onye isī ānyī.** 'Be our leader.'
- (15b) **Dīrī ndū; ndū gī dī anyī mkpā.** 'Stay alive; your life is important to us.'
- (15c) **Māra mmā gī gāwā.** 'Go away with all your beauty.'
- (15d) **Būru onū byāā, ihe ōriri jūru ejū n'ebe ahū.** 'Come on an empty stomach; there is plenty to eat there.'
- (15e) **Māra jōōjī tāā.** 'Wear your "George" wrapper today.'
- (15f) **Kpūru okpu ọzọ gī byāā.** 'Wear your Ọzọ title cap when coming.'
- (15g) **Kwōrō yā n'āzu gī.** 'Carry him/her on your back.'

The foregoing examples are sufficient to prove that all those stative verbs which occur in the simple **CV** in expressing a present state form their imperative by adding a high-tone **-rV** suffix. As a reaction to my earlier article (Nwachukwu 1976a) in which the need to set up a subcategory of stative verbs in Igbo was emphasised, Prof. Kay Williamson and Rev. Sr. A. Uwalaka (in conversation) pointed out that the above fact itself was an inflectional characteristic of certain Igbo stative verbs.





## 2.5 STATIVE VERBS IN THE -rV FORM, SUBSET B

The majority of stative verbs are those which take a low-tone -rV suffix to express a present state. It was the confusion between the -rV expressing present time meaning and the -rV (past) denoting past time that led to my first paper on the need to recognise a number of -rV suffixes. In standard Igbo, this -rV (time) is always on a low tone in contradistinction to the imperative -rV (associated with stative verbs) which is always on a high tone. The following examples are grouped by semantic class.

## 2.5.1 Verbs of emotion and mental attitude

- (19a) **Ányị chọrọ udó.** 'We want peace.'  
 (19b) **Ányị kwere na Chúkwo.** 'We believe in God.'  
 (19c) **Ọ hụrụ nwátà nwáàyị áhụ n'ánya.** 'He loves that young girl.'  
 (19d) **Màna ọ kpọrọ nké ọzọ ụgwụ.** 'But he hates the other one.'  
 (19e) **Nwáànyị à kwesịrị gị.** 'This woman is fit for you, (is your match).'

## 2.5.2 Verbs of permanent disability

- (20a) **Ụkwụ rụrụ nwókó à.** 'This man is deformed.'  
 (20b) **Ánya pịrị nwá ágboghọ ñké à.** 'This young girl is one-eyed.'  
 (20c) **Ñtị chikwara yá.** 'She is also deaf.'  
 (20d) **Ógbù/Ógbì dara nwá à.** 'This child is dumb.'

## 2.5.3 Verbs of maturation or deterioration

- (21a) **Ụbé à goro egó.** 'These pears are ripe.'  
 (21b) **Ákụ ahụ kara aká.** 'That coconut fruit is mature.'  
 (21c) **Ñkwụ à chara achá ñke óma.** 'This palm fruit is very ripe.'  
 (21d) **Ọbyagelí toro etó nà nwáànyị.** 'Ọ. is quite tall for a woman.'  
 (21e) **Ánụ ahụ rere eré.** 'That meat is rotten.'  
 (21f) **Jí ndị à mēbiri emēbì.** 'These yams are bad/have gone bad.'

## 2.5.4 Verbs of aesthetics or value judgement

- (22a) **Ọ màra ñmá.** 'It is beautiful/right/just/good.'  
 (22b) **Ọ jọrọ ñjọ.** 'It is ugly/unfair/unjust/bad.'  
 (22c) **Ó ziri ezí.** 'It is right/appropriate/straight.'

(22d) **Íhe ahụ kwesiri omumé.** 'That thing is worth doing.'

#### 2.5.5 Verbs of content

(23a) **Ìtè à juru na mīrī.** 'This pot is full of water.'

(23b) **Ídị mādū juputara n'ébe ahū.** 'That place is full of people.'

(23c) **Mādū zuru ezū.** 'The people are complete.'

Note that only these two verbs have so far been found in this class.

#### 2.5.6 Verbs of ownership

As in the previous case, the number verbs denoting ownership is small. The two representatives of this subclass are shown in the following:

(24a) **Ógū nwere égo.** 'Ogu has money/is rich.'

(24b) **Ó nwèrè ñdom̄ abụḡ.** 'He has two wives.'

(24c) **Nwókó ahū jì égo.** 'That man has money; he is rich.'

### 2.6 IMPERATIVE FORM OF SUBSET B STATIVE VERBS

By their very nature some of these verbs cannot be in the imperative. But for those that can be so used, such as **-chē** 'think', **-kwe** 'think (so)', and **-tō** 'grow', the imperative is formed by adding the open vowel suffix **-ē** to the **CV** stem. This morphological feature is in contrast with what was observed with the first group given in section 2.3. Those verbs, it will be recalled, exist in the simple **CV** form to express a present time meaning, while their imperative form is **CV + rV**. It is thus the case that if a stative verb takes the **-rV** suffix in its present form, it will take the normal open vowel suffix **-ē** to form its imperative; conversely, a stative verb in the simple **CV** will form its imperative by adding on a high-tone **-rV** suffix.

### 2.7 THE COMMON FEATURE OF STATIVE VERBS

The common denominator to all stative verbs in Igbo, as in any other language, is semantic; that is, stative verbs express state, condition, or situation, unlike verbs of activity which denote action. Consequently, the classical assumption in Indo-European linguistic studies is that such a semantic feature is not compatible with the notion of progression (expressed with the present progressive aspect marker). It is thus argued that when a stative verb occurs in the progressive form the context is special and the shift in meaning is accounted for by suggesting a different class membership for the verb. For example, the two sentences,

He is difficult.  
He is being difficult.

have two different meanings although the same verb 'to be' is used in both cases.

The following English verbs are cited as examples which do not occur in the progressive; they refer to mental, emotional, and sensuous feelings.

ENGLISH	IGBO
think	-chē
believe	-kwē
understand	-ghōta
remember	-chēta
forget	-chēfū
want/wish	-chō
like	-māshị
hate	-kpō asị
hear	-nū
see	-hū
feel	-chē
notice	-hūta
recognise	-kōta
smell	-sị
detest	-kpō asị
please	-mēma
forgive	-gbāghā
guess	-kō nkọ
desire	-chō
cost	-dā

However, a good number of the Igbo equivalents, though stative, do freely occur in the progressive form; among these are **-ghōta**, **-nū**, **-hū**, and **-dā**, as in the following:

- (25a) **Ánà m aghōta/Aghōtagha m íhe o kwūghe.** 'I understand what he is saying.'
- (25b) **Ì na anū/nūgha íhe o kwūghe?** 'Do you understand what he is saying?'
- (25c) **Ọ nà ahū íhe ị nà egōsị yā.** 'He sees what you are showing him.'
- (25d) **Anyị na anū/nūgha ísị íhe rére ére.** 'We perceive the smell of rotten things.'
- (25e) **Gārị dàgha/nà ádà ọnụ taà.** 'Garri is costly nowadays.'

Perhaps, these progressive forms explain why the average Igbo speaker of English is fond of saying in English:

- "\*I am understanding." instead of "I understand."  
 "\*I am smelling it." instead of "I smell it."

"\*I am hearing it." instead of "I hear it."

For another subset of stative verbs, the normal form used is the perfective form with a present meaning:

- (26a) **Ákòtala m̄ ya.** 'I have recognized him/  
I recognize him.'
- (26b) **Ágbághārāla m̄ gị.** 'I have forgiven you/  
I forgive you.'
- (26c) **Ájūla m̄ ekweñsu.** 'I have renounced satan/  
I renounce satan.'

The perfect form of these stative verbs has the force of present meaning like Latin **inveni** 'I have found/I know'. But in general there is no one-to-one correspondence between stative verbs in Igbo and English; the progressive and imperative tests, which are supposed to be acid tests for stative verbs in English, fail in most cases in Igbo.

### 3. PAST TENSE OF STATIVE VERBS

So far we have observed two inflectional features of Igbo stative verbs: the ability of subset B to take the **-rV** suffix in its present form, and the ability of subset A to appear in the simple **CV** form (both the **-rV** and **CV** forms being on low tones). Each of the above forms has its corresponding past form; in the following sections we shall examine each of these subsets more closely.

#### 3.1 PAST FORM OF **CV**-STEM STATIVE VERBS, SUBSET A

Subset A stative verbs express their present meaning in the simple **CV** stem, while past form is either **CVVrV** or **CVrV**:

<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>
(27a) <b>Hā bī n'Abā.</b> 'They live at Aba.'	(27b) <b>Hā bīiri/bīri n'Abā.</b> 'They used to live at Aba.'
(27c) <b>Ọ nọ yā.</b> 'He/She is in.'	(27d) <b>Ọ nọọọ/nọọ yā.</b> 'He/She was in.'
(27e) <b>Hā gbā āka nwā.</b> 'They are without offspring.'	(27f) <b>Hā gbaāra/gbāra akā nwā.</b> 'They were without offspring.'
(27g) <b>Ndị nwaānyị ma jọọjị.</b> 'The women are dressed in "George" wrappers.'	(27h) <b>Ndị nwaānyị maara/mara jọọjị.</b> 'The women were dressed in "George" wrappers.'

The variation in the past form of these verbs can be synchronically interpreted as analogically influenced by the past form of

**-rV** present stative verbs in **CV + V + rV** on the one hand, or by the past form of non-stative verbs in **CV + rV** on the other. But in the analysis of examples shown in sec. 3.1 above, the **CV** present statives should normally show a **CV + rV** past, so I prefer to regard the **CV + V + rV** form as analogical and doubly marked for past.

### 3.2 PAST FORM OF **-rV** STATIVE VERBS, SUBSET B

It is very easy to distinguish the past from the non-past forms of Igbo verbs of activity, but a bit intriguing to differentiate the present from the past forms of stative verbs. This is so because the stative present of these verbs which take the **-rV** suffix is of the same segmental shape and identical tone pattern as the past form of activity verbs.

#### Stative Present

(28a) Ógū nwere égo.  
'Ogu has money.'

(28c) Ókwu à bara úrū.  
'This is a useful discussion.'

#### Active Past

(28b) Ógū jere ọrụ.  
'Ogu went to work.'

(28d) Ó gbūru éghu.  
'He killed a goat.'

All four of the underlined verbs are of the same morphemic shape, **CV + rV**, and L + L tone pattern, yet an Igbo speaker recognizes without difficulty that one expresses present and the other past meaning. Early European linguists were misled by this formal similarity into concluding that Igbo does not formally distinguish between the past and the present. But in fact Igbo does grammaticalize the distinction between them. A number of different **-rV** suffixes have been isolated (Winston 1973, Nwachukwu 1976b): the **-rV** present is associated only with stative verbs, but the **-rV** past occurs with all categories of verbs. Other **-rV** suffixes have non-time readings.

In fact, certain dialects, for example Ọmahya (Umuahia), attest verb forms in which the two time-reading **-rVs** simultaneously occur, as:

(29) Ó nwèrere égo. 'He used to be rich/have money.'

Here the first **-rV** is the stative (present) marker, while the second is the past marker. However, the majority of dialects do not permit a surface sequence of **-rVs**, and a 'de-reduplication' rule deletes the first **r**:

$CV_i + rV + rV \quad V_i + \text{stative } -rV \text{ present} \quad CV_i V_i rV_i$

Most dialects therefore attest something like the following:

(30a) Ó nwèere égo. 'He used to be rich.'

- (30b) **Ógū baara ụbā.** 'Ogu used to be wealthy.'  
 (30c) **Ánya pīrī nwókó ahụ.** 'That man used to be one-eyed.'  
 (30d) **Ànyī bīrī n'Abā.** 'We formerly lived at Aba.'  
 (30e) **Nwā ahụ daara ọgbū ọgè**  
**ọ dī ndū.** 'That child was dumb when she  
 was alive.'

All stative verbs which take the **-rV** suffix in their present tense form exhibit the application of the above rule in their past tense form, that is, **CVVrV** where all suffix vowels assimilate in both quality and pitch to the vowel of the root.

### 3.3 ALTERNATIVE PAST FORM OF STATIVE VERBS

In **Ọlụ** (Orlu) and **Ọnicha** (Onitsha) alternative past forms exist for both subsets of stative verbs. The markers are **-bū** for subset A and **-būru** for subset B. These alternative forms are becoming so popular among speakers and writers of standard Igbo that they may well become the standard past tense marker for all stative verbs in all dialects of Igbo. The following are examples of this; example 31 shows subset A verbs and 32 shows subset B.

<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>
(31a) <b>Ó kpū okpú.</b> 'He has a hat on.'	(31b) <b>Ó kpūbu okpú.</b> 'He had a hat on.'
(31c) <b>Ó kū nwā.</b> 'He is carrying a baby.'	(31d) <b>Ó kūbu nwā.</b> 'He was carrying a baby.'
(31e) <b>Ó jī íhe n'ake.</b> 'He is holding something in his hand.'	(31f) <b>Ó jību íhe n'aka.</b> 'He was holding some- thing in his hands.'
(31g) <b>Ó dī ndū.</b> 'He is alive.'	(31h) <b>Ó dību ndū.</b> 'He was alive.'
(32a) <b>Díkē nwère égo.</b> 'Dike is rich.'	(32b) <b>Díkē nwèburu égo.</b> 'Dike used to be rich.'
(32c) <b>Ánya pīrī ya.</b> 'He is blind.'	(32d) <b>Ánya pīburu yā.</b> 'He was blind.'
(32e) <b>Nwā ágboghò ahụ mara ímā.</b> 'That young woman is beautiful.'	(32f) <b>Nwā ágboghò ahụ māburu ímā.</b> 'That young woman used to be beautiful.'

It will be observed that for subset B stative verbs, the **-rV** persists in the morpheme **-būru**, its corresponding past marker.

4. PERFECTIVE FORM OF STATIVE VERBS IN RELATIVE CLAUSES:  
YET ANOTHER -rV SUFFIX?

It has been pointed out in sec. 2.7 above that with stative verbs, the perfective form has the force of present meaning; thus:

- (33a) Ńkwụ ā achāala. 'These palm fruits are ripe.'  
 (33b) Ùbē ahụ egōole. 'Those pears are ripe.'  
 (33c) Jī ahụ eghēele. 'That yam is cooked/done.'  
 (33d) Ófe āgwula. 'The soup is finished.'  
 (33e) Akụ oyībō ñkē ā akāala. 'This coconut is ripe.'  
 (33f) Íke āgwula m̄. 'I am tired.'  
 (33g) Ìtiri āgbāāla. 'It is dark.'  
 (33h) Chī abōōla. 'It is dawn/day.'

Note that each of the underlined verbs has the normal morphemic shape of a perfective verb form namely a + CV + (ē) + lā, that is, an open vowel prefix followed by the root/stem of the verb followed by the high-tone open vowel suffix and the perfective marker -lā or -lē.

However, there is always a change of morpheme whenever the perfective verb-form functions as the verb of a relative clause. The difference lies in the placement of the high-tone open vowel suffix with a high-tone -rV suffix:

- (34a) Ì na ajū māka ñkwụ e  
gbūdārāla? 'Are you inquiring about the palm tree which has been felled?'  
 (34b) (Ó bū) Ùbē ndị górolenị  
kā ī gā aghōta. '(It is) Pears which have ripened that you will pluck/ You will pluck only those pears that have become ripe.'  
 (34c) Gūnyé ānyị ji (ndị)  
ghērelenī. 'Select for us yam (pieces) which have become/are done.'  
 (34d) Ónye bīrile ebe ā ga aghōta  
ihe na āgānī. 'Someone who has lived here will understand what is going on.'  
 (34e) Ì choro ivofuta jī  
fūrūle omo? 'Do you want to unearth yam which has (already) sprouted (produced shoot)?'  
 (34f) Ényéne ndị ōbjà ānu  
rērelenī. 'Don't give guests meat that has become rotten.'

The above change of the verb form from a non-relative to a relative clause can be represented as follows:

$a + CV + (\acute{e}) + l\acute{a} \longrightarrow a + CV + rV + l\acute{a}$  in relative clauses

Our hypothesis is that this  $-rV$  which replaces the vowel suffix  $-\acute{e}$  is the same stative present  $-rV$  found in a certain subset of stative verbs. We have already seen its co-occurrence with the  $-rV$  past in certain dialects in and around Ụmyahja (cf. sec. 3.2 ex. 29). We also saw its reflex in other dialects in the form of

$$CV_i + rV + rV \longrightarrow CV_i V_i rV_i$$

which has been described as a morphological rule. As we have seen, in relative clauses, the same  $-rV$  resurfaces and co-occurs with the perfective marker  $-la/le$ . From this evidence, one is led to the conclusion that the  $-rV$  stative marker occurs freely with the other inflectional suffixes in the language.

But there is a further complication when additional data are admitted for analysis, namely that the same high-tone  $-rV$  suffix is found in the perfective form of activity verbs if they are in relative clauses. The following are illustrative examples:

- (35a) **Ónye gbúrúle madū ga anwílìlì.** 'One who has killed a person must die.'
- (35b) **Ónye nwúrụna ánwụ ánwụona.** 'One who has died, has died (i.e., cannot come back to life).'
- (35c) **Ágbārā à ga emé kà ndị zúrune ohí, kwupụtá yá.** 'This spirit will make those who have (ever) stolen confess it.'
- (35d) **Íkítá mūrụna mmụ áno ágbalìála.** 'A dog which has had four births has done well.'
- (35e) **Gósì m ọkwọ mótò áhụ gbúrúle mādụ mgbu íse a hápụrụ ka ọ na ákwọkwa.** 'Show me that driver who has had five fatal accidents and yet is left to go on driving.'

It will be observed that the presence of this high-tone  $-rV$  implies the absence of the high-tone vowel prefix  $-\acute{e}$  in both stative and non-stative verbs. The phenomenon occurs only in relative clauses. Since this is the case, it becomes difficult to maintain our earlier claim that the  $-rV$  is the stative non-past marker. There are three possible ways of looking at the problem. The first is to claim that the  $-rV$  stative (non-past) occurs in all verbs in relative clauses. This claim tends to weaken its function as the marker of a certain subclass of stative verbs. The second and stronger hypothesis is that there is an additional  $-rV$ , let us call it  $-rV$  relative, which occurs only in the perfective verb-forms found in relative clauses. Even this interpretation does not inspire confidence as non-arbitrary. The most satisfying hypothesis is that there is a tendency towards symmetry: what was initially a feature of stative verbs (functioning in relative clauses) has now been extended to the perfective form of non-



stative verbs in relative clauses. What is particularly interesting is the fact that the **-rV** stative present co-occurs with other inflectional markers within the same verb.

There seems to be a semantic explanation for the above inflectional phenomenon. The **-rV** suffix in question is a stative present marker. The perfective form of the verb has a completive meaning, the effect of which is still felt in the present. This is why the non-past and perfective forms of stative verbs can be used interchangeably in Igbo (cf. sec. 2.7 ex. 26). It is the above fact which intuitively conditions my use of the past and perfect in English. For example, I can utter the sentence, "The man has come," only if the man is still present. But if I utter the sentence, "The man came," I am implying that he is no longer present, he has come and gone. For me, and possibly for speakers of any language with a preponderance of aspect rather than tense, the simple past and the perfect forms of the verb carry different implications.

#### 5. STATIVE VERBS AND ADJECTIVES IN IGBO

As was observed early in this paper, Igbo is not rich in adjectives. The number is so small that one wonders whether there is any need to set up a separate lexical category for such. As a matter of fact, there are only six true adjectives in most dialects of Igbo (cf. Emenanjo 1978).

(36a) <b>ọcha</b>	'white'
(36b) <b>ọji</b>	'black'
(36c) <b>ọma</b>	'good'
(36d) <b>ọjọọ/ájọ</b>	'bad'
(36e) <b>ụkwu</b>	'big'
(36f) <b>ntà</b>	'small'

With the exception of **ájọ** all of them are post-nominal modifiers as in:

(37a) <b>nwókó ọcha</b>	'a fair-complexioned man'
(37b) <b>nwókó ọma</b>	'a good man'
(37c) <b>nwókó ọjọọ</b>	'a bad man'

There are two other words popularly but erroneously considered to be adjectives; it suffices here to note their idiosyncratic syntactic behaviour in contrast to (37) above (and note the inherent tones of /**nmādū**/):

(38a) <b>ézigbo nmādū</b>	'a good person'
(38b) <b>nnukwu nmadụ</b>	'a big person'

Apart from these, Igbo does not possess other lexical items describable as adjectives; and yet the language successfully expresses those notions which Indo-European languages represent by means of adjectives. This is done with a large number of stative verbs, a large proportion of which are immediately followed by a nominal complement which specifies their exact meaning. Because the stem verb and its complement are always found together, they form a semantic unit and have been named 'inherent complement verbs' (Nwachukwu 1983).

(39a) <b>īchā ūcha</b>	'to be fair-complexioned/white'
(39b) <b>īgō ugo</b>	'to be black'
(39c) <b>īpé mpe</b>	'to be small'
(39d) <b>ībū ibū</b>	'to be fat'
(39e) <b>īfū ūfū</b>	'to be painful'
(39f) <b>īchā (acha)</b>	'to be ripe'
(39g) <b>īkā (aka)</b>	'to be ripe'
(39h) <b>ītō ogologo</b>	'to be tall'
(39i) <b>ījū (eju)</b>	'to be full'
(39j) <b>īmā mma</b>	'to be beautiful'
(39k) <b>ījō njo</b>	'to be ugly'
(39l) <b>īkū ilu</b>	'to be bitter'
(39m) <b>ītō ūtō</b>	'to be tasty, sweet'
(39n) <b>īkpō (nku)</b>	'to be dry'
(39o) <b>īrē (ere)</b>	'to rotten'
(39p) <b>īrū unyi</b>	'to be dirty, defiled'
(39q) <b>īchī ntī</b>	'to be deaf'
(39r) <b>īdā ōgbū/ōgbī</b>	'to be dumb'
(39s) <b>īrū ūkwū</b>	'to be deformed'
(39t) <b>īgbā àwhọ ọnū</b>	'to be bearded'
(39u) <b>īkwōcha isi</b>	'to be bald'
(39v) <b>īkpū isi</b>	'to be blind'
(39w) <b>īpī anya</b>	'to be one-eyed'
(39x) <b>īdā ngwōrọ</b>	'to be lame'

It will be observed that these are mostly inherent-complement verbs (Nwachukwu 1983).

Another way of expressing adjectival meanings in Igbo is through the use of the stative verb **-dī** (cf. sec. 2.1) along with nouns which were described in sec. 5 as predicate nominals:

(40a)	īdī ndū	'to be alive'
(40b)	īdī mkpā	'to be important'
(40c)	īdī nsọ	'to be holy'
(40d)	īdī anya/ọti	'to be far'
(40e)	īdī mmiri	'to be wet'
(40f)	īdī eferē/ófelē	'to be easy, light'
(40g)	īdī oberē	'to be small'
(40h)	īdī ukwu	'to be big'
(40i)	īdī ọtutu	'to be many'

(Note: The high-step pattern of **īdī** in the infinitive, as opposed to its high-low present **Ọ dī**, shows its class III (L-H) tonality.)

There is no end to the above listing as the **-dī** + nominal construction is the most prolific way of translating Indo-European adjectives into Igbo. It is interesting to note that what follows the copula **-dī** is a nominal which can function as the NP subject of a sentence, and not an adjective as had been thought earlier. Thus nearly all the Igbo constructions which translate Indo-European adjectives involve the use of stative verbs; in other words, the small number of real adjectives in Igbo is supplemented by the large number of stative constructions expressing the same notion.

## 6. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing we reach the following conclusions:

(1) Igbo distinguishes between stative and non-stative verbs; the distinction is semantically based though it has diagnostic syntactic reflexes in characteristic inflections.

(2) The stative verbs belong to the following semantic categories:

- (a) emotion/mental activity
- (b) permanent disability
- (c) maturation or deterioration
- (d) aesthetics/value judgement
- (e) ornamentation/dressing and carrying
- (f) content
- (g) ownership
- (h) existence/location

(3) The 'progressive test' which shows that English stative verbs are not normally used in the progressive form does not hold true for all Igbo statives. Certain Igbo verbs whose English equivalents are never used in the progressive form are, in fact, perfectly normal in that form/aspect in Igbo.

(4) Igbo stative verbs alone express a present state in either of the following forms with low tones:

$C\grave{V}$  or  $C\grave{V} + r\grave{V}$

(5) The corresponding past forms of the above are:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>
Subset A:	$C\grave{V}_1$	$C\grave{V}_1 r\grave{V}_i$
		$C\grave{V}_i \grave{V}_i r\grave{V}_i$
Subset B:	$C\grave{V}_i r\grave{V}_i$	$C\grave{V}_i \grave{V}_i r\grave{V}_i$
		$C\grave{V}_i r\grave{V}_i r\grave{V}_i$

(6) The following **-rV** suffixes have been identified in the course of this study:

- (a) **-rV** non-past (for stative verbs)
- (b) **-rV** past (for both stative and activity verbs)
- (c) **-rV** imperative (for stative verbs only)
- (d) The argument here is that it is the same **-rV** non-past which marks stativity that recurs in the following verb forms or constructions: serial verbs, open conditional constructions, and in the perfective verb form of relative clauses.

(7) Stative verbs generally perform the function of adjectives in Igbo; they supplement the small number of real adjectives existing in the language; such stative verbs also happen to be inherent-complement verbs. Their syntactic study (cf. Nwachukwu forthcoming) will help to shed some light on movement transformations in Igbo syntax. It is hoped that this article will help to dispel certain wrong notions about Igbo verb inflection, especially the inflection of those stative verbs expressing the present time meaning in **CV + rV** form.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The studies include Qjj (1979) and Uwalaka (1981). Sr. Anne Uwalaka studied the Igbo verb within the framework of case grammar, and her rather detailed classification is very much influenced by her model. What she treats as inherent quality verbs fall under my category of stative verbs; both of us identify the same -rV suffix which characterizes these verbs, although we give it different names--for Sr. Anne, it is an assertive suffix, for me, it is the marker of stativity.

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