SEMANTAX OF V+NYE VERBAL COMPLEX IN IGBO[1]

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Compounds are generally words with two or more of other words as their constituents. The category of the output of compounding may be identical with the category of each of the constituents or one of them or a different category altogether. In this work, we have identified and analyzed a verb form in Igbo structurally described as **V**+**nye**, where **V** is a verb and **nye** an element which has been analyzed as a verb, meaning 'give' in some instancesand as an extensional suffix in some others. Of course with the former, the output is a compound; but with the latter a compound is ruled out. We argue here that it is a verb; hence we have formalized **V**+**nye** as **V-V** compound verb in all contexts. Though, we agree that in some structures **nye** may express illativity, which translates it as prepositional, andhas been the premise for some Igbo linguists to designate it as one of the examples of category-incorporated preposition or a verb grammaticalizing as a preposition, but the illativity notion, expressed by **nye**, is a metaphorical extension of its meaning as 'give'. The verb 'give' takes three arguments and assigns the roles: Agent, Theme and Goal to them. The same trivalent feature of **nye** as an independent verb is carried into its existence as part of a compound verb. When the Goal argument is [+human], it appears as the indirect object of the verb, but when it is [-Human], the illativity notion becomes prominent and the [-Human] Goal appears as an object of a preposition, denoting location. More interesting is that **nye** imposes its trivalent feature on any sentence where it occurs.

Les mots composés sont en général constitués de deux mots ou plus. La catégorie du résultat du mot composé peut être identique avec la catégorie de chacun des constituants ou de l'un d'eux ou être une catégorie tout à fait différente de ses constituants. Dans cet article, nous avons identifié et analysé une forme verbale en igbo décrite de manière structurelle comme **V**+**nye**, où **V** est un verbe et **nye** un élément qui a été analysé comme un verbe, signifiant 'donner' dans certains cas, et comme un suffixe d'extension dans d'autres cas. Le premier cas donne certainement lieu à un mot composé, mais quant au second, il est hors de question de parler d'un mot composé. Nous soutenons que c'est un verbe ; c'est pourquoi nous avons formalisé **V**+**nye** comme **V-V** verbe composé dans tous les contextes. Tout en étant d'accord que dans certaines structures **nye** puisse exprimer l'illativité, qui le traduit comme prépositionnel, et ceci a été considéré comme une prémisse pour certains linguistes Igbo de le désigner comme un des exemples de préposition incorporant des catégories ou comme un verbe qui se grammaticalise comme une proposition, mais la notion d'illativité, exprimée par **nye** est une extension métaphorique de sa signification comme « donner ». Le verbe « donner »prend trois arguments et leur assigne les trois rôles suivants : Agent, Thème et But. Le même trait trivalent de **nye** comme un verbe indépendant est réconforté dans son existence comme partie du verbe composé. Lorsque l'argument du But est [+humain], il apparait comme le But d'objet indirect du verbe, mais quand il est [-humain], la notion d'illativité devient proéminente et le but [-humain] apparaît comme un objet d'une préposition, dénotant le lieu. Ce qui est plus intéressant est que **nye** impose son trait trivalent sur n'importe quelle phrase dans laquelle elle apparaît.

0. INTRODUCTION

The Igbo verb has received copious attention. This predicates on the position of the category in the language. In fact, Mbah (2006:21) comments that the Igbo language has been described as a verb language. This position is supported by the fact

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[1]Semantax, according to Trask (1993:249) is, 'A name sometimes given to syntax and semantics taken together, when they are regarded as a single area of investigation …'. Trask also notes that this term is rarely used nowadays.

that while the Igbo verb highly contributes to the derivation of words in the language, there does not seem to be any lexical category that contributes to the derivation of Igbo verbs. The grammar of the Igbo languages centers largely around the verb. TheIgbo verb appearsin complex form with affixes marking different grammatical categories. Due to the complex nature of the Igbo verb, misinterpretations of some verb forms as a result of certain semantic nuances often encountered when one language is equated with another do occur. The **v+nye** verb form is one of such verb forms that have been given different semantic interpretations by different analysts.

This paper is an attempt to contribute to the debate on the status of **nye** in the verbal complex **v+nye**. The rest of the paper is divided as follows. Section 1 reviews various classifications of Igbo verbs. Section 2 discusses compound verbs in Igbo, showing that there are other verbs that can exist as compounds in the language. Section 3 takes up **v+nye** compound verb and provides evidence that **nye** is a verb meaning give in all instances of occurrence. Section 4 is the summary and conclusion.

1.   ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF IGBO VERBS

As evident in the literature, the Igbo verb has been classified descriptively in different dimensions. In terms of tonal behaviour, The Igbo verb is generally classified into tone class I and tone class II (cf. Green and Igwe, 1963, Williamson, 1972, Emenanjo, 1978, etc). However, Nwachukwu (1983) identifies a third class, hence, tone class III. Tone class I verbs are verb stems with a high tone; tone class II verbs are verb stems with a low tone, while tone class III verbs are verbs which behave like tone class I verbs in their citation form but in certain other forms behave like tone class II verbs. There are other classifications. For example, Igwe (1999:xvi), identifies a class which he also designates tone class III verbs. The verbs in this class have a CVCV reduplicated form with high-low tones:

(1)   a.   **gbụgbù**[2]   'wave'   b.   **wụwù**   'wear something too big.'

Igbo verb has also been classified morphologically as either simple, complex or compound (cf. Mbah 2006, Uwalaka 1997). The simple verbs have a citation form and nothing else; the complex verbs add at least one affix; and compound verbs contain at least two independent simple verbs: their independence may manifest in vowel disharmony. Example (2-4) illustrate this distinction.

(2)   a.   **bya**   'come'   e.g.   **Ọ   bya, ànyị a-ga-wa**
                                            3S   come 1P   Agr-go-INCEP
                                            'If he comes, we go.'

       b.   **nọ̀**   'be at'   e.g.   **Ngọzị nọ̀   n'ụlọ̀**
                                            Ngozi be.at P house
                                            'Ngozi is at home.'

(3)   a.   **bàtá**   'come in'   e.g   **Ba-ta   n'ime   ụlọ**
                                            come-towards P inside   house
                                            'Enter into the house.'

    b.   **chịkọ**   'pick together'   e.g.   **Ada chị-kọ-rọ   nkụ**
                                                  Ada pick-together-rVPAST fireword
                                                  'Ada gathered firewood.'

(4)   a.   **gbabà**   'run enter'   e.g.   **Obi gba-bà-rà   ọhịa**
                                                  Obiran-enter-rVPAST bush
                                                  'Obi ran into the bush.'

    b.   **gbudà**   'cut fall'   e.g.   **Ike gbu-dà-rà osisi**
                                                  Ike cut-fell-rVPAST tree
                                                  'Ike felled a tree.'

(2) illustrates simple verbs, (3) illustrates complex verbs, while (4) illustrates compound verbs.

    It is important to note that there are certain complex verb forms with the CVCV structure such as (5),

(5)   a.   **kele**   'greet'
      b.   **bido**   'start'
      c.   **gosị**   'show'

    The CV parts of the verbs in (5) could not be assigned any identifiable meaning. However, Uwalaka (1997) views (5) as cases of two bound roots that are meaningless in isolation. She maintains the position that all Igbo verbs have the simple CV root.This classification has some relevance for the present work because it introduces us to the existence of compound verbs in Igbo. In (4), the verbs can be decomposed into two independent verbs as shown in (6) and (7).

(6)   **Òbi gbà-rà   ọsọ   bà-a   n' ọhia**
      Obi run-rV(past) running   enter-OVS P bush
      'Obi ran and entered the bush.'

(7)   **Ike gbù-rù   osisi, ọ̀ dà-a**
      Ike cut-rVPAST   tree   3S fall-OVS
      'Ike cut a tree and it fell.'

What we have in (6) and (7) are cases of verb serialisation/consecutivisation where the first verb appears at the beginning of the series with the inflectional suffix, followed by the second verb which takes an open vowel suffix (OVS).[3]

    It is also important for this study to look at the type of suffixes that occur with the verb. It is more generally accepted that Igbo verb morphology incorporates two types of affixation: inflectional and extensional. Emenanjo (1978:91) points this out, '… the syntactic behaviour of all Igbo verb suffixes in verbal derivative and verb forms will show that these elements can be divided into at least two classes: inflectional and extensional.' The inflectional suffixes identified by Emenanjo are '-**rá/-ré** (rv-Past); **-e/-a** *and* **-o/-ọ** (Open Vowel Suffix); **-ghị/-ghi** (Negative); **-le/-la** (Negative Imperative); **-(v)le/-(v)la** (Perfective); and –**beghi** (Negative Perfective). Oluikpe (1979:123) increases the tally by identifying –**fụghị** (Negative Subjunctive). Many other suffixes are extensional. Emenanjo (1978:97) identifies about ninety of

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[3]Igbo serial verb constructions are marked by the second and subsequent verbs in the series taking an open vowel suffix.

them from different dialects of Igbo. The suffixes **–ta** and **–kọ** in (3) are good examples. He describes the extensional suffixes as 'meaning modifiers' i.e. extending the meaning of the verb with which they are attached. From the foregoing discussion, we could see that theIgbo verb form could either be V+ Ext suffix (complex) or V+V (compound). We therefore want to demonstrate that V+**nye** is an example of V-V compound in Igbo.

From a semantic point of view, the Igbo verb, as it is the case in many other languages; African and non-African, is either dynamic or stative. While the dynamic verbs express an action which an entity is carrying out or an event in which the entity is involved, the stative verb expresses a state of affairs of an entity (cf. Ndimele, 2003:13). One peculiar thing about the semantics of Igbo verbs is the existence of some verbs, which according to Anyanwu and Iloene (2004) lack semantic content or are opaque or indeterminate. These verbs are only determinate with an accompanying nominal element and have an implication for the unresolved controversy in studies in the syntax of Igbo verbs. Here are some examples.

(8)   a. **Ezè gbàrà**

egwu	dance	'Eze danced.'
m̀gba	wrestiling	'Eze wrestled.'
egbè	gun	'Eze shot a gun
ọsọ	running	'Eze ran.'

      b. **Àda kpọ̀rọ̀**

ọkụ	fire	'Ada burnt something.'
òkù	call	'Ada called somebody.'
anwụrụ̀	snuff	'Ada took some snuff.'
ụ̀ga	clapping game	'Ada played a clapping game.'

With this restrictive relation, some Igbo linguists analyze that each instance of a verb with a nominal specifies it is a lexeme. For example in (8a), **gbaegwu** is a verb not **gba** to distinguish it from **gbamgba** or **gbaegbe** or **gbaọsọ**. This is corroborated in the following words of Anyanwu and Iloene (2004), 'In the lexicon of the Igbo, the v + nominal sequence … is taken as a lexeme and therefore entered as a category'. The controversy originates from Nwachukwu's (1976) inherent complementation thesis, which, of course, is founded on the restrictive relation illustrated, and it borders on how the Igbo verb may be better classified: along the line of transitivity/intransitivity or complementation. Uwajeh (2003) supports the former. That is, the nominal elements share the grammatical relation of object with the verbs. Emenanjo (2005) is more comfortable with the latter, hence, his classification of Igbo verbs into general complement verbs, inherent complement verbs, bound complement verbs, prepositional phrase complement verbs, and ergative complement verbs. That is, Igbo verbs are basically monovalent, specified only for the grammatical relation, subject.

The verbs studied in this paper do not provide the locus for an argument about whether the Igbo verb is more adequately classified with recourse to transitivity/intransitivity or complementation since the verbs are evidently dynamic and clearly transitive as we will soon see. Moreover, we have seen that syntax may not be entirely separated from semantics: it is a semantic issue that has generated different analyses of the syntax of Igbo verbs. Mbah (2006:208) agrees with this, 'syntax and semantics, no doubt, are not the same both in materials and methods, yet they are almost always used inseparable collocates.' Herein, we draw support for our use of the term, semantax. We insist on using it owing to the reality of the product of the interrelation as evident in the analysis of the syntax of Igbo verbs. Of course, this

may not be a matter peculiar to Igbo and is unavoidable in studies in syntax outside theoretical bases, that is, studies that are simply descriptive such as this one.

The discussion of the semantic issues above has an implication on the inherent theta roles assignable by any giving verb form and the argument valency of the verb. We turn now to the discussion of compound verbs in Igbo and the nature of semantic roles assigned to their arguments and the argument valency of such verbs.

2. COMPOUND VERBS IN IGBO

Lord (1975:30-33) draws attention to the compound verbs in Igbo. She identifies verb-verb compounds like those of (9). We have earlier, presented data illustrating the presence of compound verbs in Igbo (see (4) above). Below are more examples of compound verbs in Igbo.

(9)   a.   **Àda tụ-fù-rù   akwụkwọ**
              Ada throw-lose-PAST   book
              'Ada lost a book.'

       b.   **Òbi kụ̀-gbù-rù   agwọ**
              Obi hit-kill-PAST snake
              'Obi hit to death a snake.'

       c.   **Òbi ga-fè-rè   ụlọ `akwụkwọ   yā**
              Obi go-cross-PAST   house book   his
              'Obi passed his school.'

       d.   **Àda tì-wà-rà   efere**
              Ada strike-break-PAST plate
              'Ada broke a plate.'

We identify the verbs in (9) as compounds because they are made up of simple verbs that can exist independently. However, it is important to note that sometimes the meaning of a verb inside the V-V compound could have a metaphorical meaning which may not be clear when viewed in isolation. For example, in (9a) the meaning of **tụ** 'throw' is not clearly discernable from the composite meaning of **tụ-fu** 'lose'. The meaning extension is clear when one considers that throwing away something implies losing it. This meaning is made clear with the second verb **fu** 'get lost'. In many other cases, the meaning of the verbs are easily discernable as in (9b, c, d).

The verbs in (9) could be decomposed into their simple roots by either serialization or consecutivisation or as analytic causative/resultative constructions. The sentences in (9) could be paraphrased as in (10).

(10)   a.   **Àda tụ̀-rù   akwukwo, ò   fù-o**   (resultative)
              Ada throw-PAST book   3SNOM   got.lost-OVS
              'Ada threw away a book and it got lost.'

       b.   **Òbi kụ̀-rụ̀   agwọ ihē gbu-o   yā**   (resultative)
              Obi hit-PAST   snake thing, kill-OVS   3SACC
              'Obi hit a snake with something and killed it.'

   c.   **Òbi gà-rà   ijè, fè-e   ụlọ̀ akwụkwọ yā** (consecutive)
        Obi go-PAST   walk, cross-OVS house book   3SGEN
        'Obi walked passed his school.'

   d.   **Àda tì-rì   efere n' àlà,   ọ̀   wa-a**   (resultative)
        Ada strike-PAST plate P   ground, 3SNOM break-OVS
        'Ada struck a plate on the floor and it broke.'

(9) and (10) show that Igbo compound verbs derive from serial constructions where verbs in series could undergo head-head incorporation. (9) and (10) show that V-V compounding is a common feature in Igbo. We turn now to V-V compounds with **nye** as V2.

<div align="center">3.   V+nye COMPOUND VERBS</div>

There are very many verbs in Igbo with this structure. In fact, we have evidence that most verb stem can combine with 'nye' to form a compound verb. As we have illustrated, the theta role assigned by this compound verb to the grammatical object is consistent with the role **nye**, as an independent verb, assigns to its indirect object. Here, we mean to point out that **nye** as an independent verb is trivalent (a three-place predicate verb) and as we can see in (9b) it imposes this trivalency on the output compound verb and goes beyond this to be the locus for the assignment of theta-role to the indirect object. The theta role assigned by **nye** is that of Recipient (or Goal in a more inclusive sense) This is demonstrated in the examples below.

(11) a.   **Àda zụ̀-rụ̀unènè**
          Ada buy-PAST banana
          'Ada bought some bananas.'

     b.   **Àda nyè-rè nneyāunènè**
          Ada give-PAST mother her banana
          'Ada gave her mother some bananas'

     c.   **Àda zụ̀-nyè-rè   nne   yā unènè**
          Ada buy-give-PAST   mother her   banana
          'Ada bought some bananas for her mother'

There are instances where the theta-role assigned by the v+**nye** compound is not clearly that of recipient in applying the sense encoded by "receive", which includes the feature [+Human] as evident in (11b and c). Consider (12) below.

(12) a.   **Àda tì-nyè-rè   òròma n'àkpà**
          Ada put-give-PAST   orange in bag
          'Ada put an orange into a bag.'

     b.   **Òbi sụ̀-nyè-rè   ọdụ̄   n'ikwè**
          Obi pound-give-PAST pestle in mortar
          'Obi pounded in a mortar.'

     c.   **Òbi bà-nyè-rè   akwa   ˋn'm̀mirī**
          Obi soak-give-PAST   cloth   in water
          'Obi soaked the cloth in water.'

Here, **nye** expresses the notion of illativity. This notion, we argue, is a metaphorical extension of the give-meaning of **nye**. We think that Emenanjo (1978:116) does not consider this. Hence, he analyzes **nye** as an extensional suffix. Moreover, this is the basis, we strongly believe, for its analysis as a category incorporated preposition. Our thinking is that the metaphorical extension of the give-meaning of **nye** is concluded with an entity made to be received by something which lacks such ability of receiving hence that thing becomes the location of the entity. This is what translates to the illativity notion and Mbagwu (2013) applies this notion in characterizing location verbs in Igbo, verbs which focus on the location into or onto which an entity is moved in contradistinction to verbs which focus on the entity that is located, locatum verbs. Of course, most of the Mbagwu's location verbs are marked by **nye**, even though contrary to the position here he analyzed it in the verbs as an illative suffix. This analysis is appealing because the illativity notion drowns the original give meaning of the verb **nye**which leads to its misrepresentation as prepositional.

The common feature of **nye** in all the examples cited, is its ability to assign the GOAL role to an argument. When the GOAL argument is a [+Human] recipient, it occurs as the indirect object of the verb as in (11b and c), but when it is a [-Human] recipient, the illativity notion is encoded with a preposition as in (12).

There are syntactic evidence to show that **nye** is a verb in all contexts of use. The Goal-Theme[4] word order is the usual word order in Igbo double object constructions as shown in the **V-nye** compounds below.

(13) a.   **Àda zù̀-nyè-rè   nne   yā   akwà**   (Goal Theme)
        Ada buy-give-PAST mother his   cloth
        'Ada bought clothes for her mother.'

     b.   **Ike bì-nyè-rè Òbi egō**   (Goal Theme)
        Ike lend-give Obi money
        'Ike lend some money to Obi.'

     c.   **Òbi lù-nyè-rè   Ogù nwaanyì**   (Goal Theme)
        Obi marry-give-PAST   Ogu woman
        'Obi got a wife for Ogu.'

However, when the illativity notion is implied, the usual order is Theme-Goal. Examples in 12 are repeated as (14) for illustration

(14) a..   **Àda tì-nyè-rè   òròma n' àkpà**   (Theme   Goal)
        Ada put-give-PAST   orange in bag
        'Ada put an orange into a bag.'

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[4]Saah and Eze (1997:140) observes that Igbo allows the Theme-Goal order in double object, if the Theme is expressed with a pronoun and the Goal is not. Egs
   a. ****Òbi nyèrè Àda ya**   (Goal Theme)
      Obi gave Ada 3S
   b.   **Òbi nyèrè yà   Àda**   (Theme Goal)
      Obi gave 3S   Ada
      'Obi gave him/her/it to Ada'
   They go further to explain why the pronoun will allow such word order in Igbo double object construction. But, the theoritical explanations given are outside the purview of the present paper

b.   **Òbi sụ̀-nyè-rè**   **ọdụ̄**   **n' ikwè**   (Theme Goal)
Obi pound-give-PAST   pestle   in mortar
'Obi pounded in a mortar.'

c.   **Òbi bà-nyè-rèakwàn'm̀mirī**   (Theme Goal)
Obi soak-give-PAST cloth in water
'Obi soaked the cloth in water.'

It is interesting to note that the sentences in (14) could be paraphrased using the Goal-Theme order without the occurence of the locative prepositions. This is comparable to the Dative Shift transformation in English. This is illustrated in (15).

(15)   a.   **Àda tì-nyè-re**   **`akpà òròma**   (Goal Theme)
Ada put-give-PAST   bag   orange
'Ada put an orange into a bag.'

b.   **Òbi sụ̀-nyè-rè**   **ikwè**   **ọdụ̄**   (Goal Theme)
Obi pound-give-PAST mortar   pestle
'Obi pounded in a mortar.'

c.   **Òbi bà-nyè-rè**   **mmiriakwà**   (Goal Theme)
Obi soak-give-PAST   water   cloth
'Obi soaked the cloth in water.'

The tone pattern of the double Objects differs from the associative tone pattern of Noun-Noun Igbo NP constructions. Compare the tone pattern of (15a) with (16) below.

(16)   **Àda tì-nyè-rè**   **àkpa òròma n' ime motò**
Ada put-give-PAST   bag   orange P inside car
'Ada put a bag of orange inside a car.'

Because **àkpa òròma** in (16) is conceived as an entity because of the associative tone pattern, another argument is required to satisfy the theta requirement of the verb **nye** 'give' which occurs as part of the **tinye** compound verb, in this case a PP **n'ime moto** which is the Goal (locative) The syntactic behaviour of **v+nye** structures in (14), (15) and (16) shows that **nye** assigns the same goal-theme role to its arguments whether the goal is introduced by a preposition or not.

The fact that every structure involving **nye** must be trivalent explains why (17a-c) are unacceptable.

(17)   a.   ***Àda tì-nyè-rè**   **òròma**
Ada put-give-PAST orange

b.   ***Òbi sụ̀-nyè-rèọdụ̄**
Obi pound-give-PAST pestle

c.   ?**Òbi bà-nyè-rè**   **akwà**[5]
   Obi soak-give-PAST   cloth

In all, where the **v+nye** compound assigns a Recipient(Goal) role the argument structure, <agent-goal-theme>. Moreover, in cases where illativity applies, the Goal is interpreted as Locative and the argument structure changes to<agent-theme-goal>. We justify this based on our argument that the spatial oblique NP is a complement and not an adjunct. Of course, originally the NP is the indirect object but because it is [-Human], the Goal argument could be expressed as   a spatial oblique NP. (15a) repeated here as (18a) is therefore derived from (14a) repeated here as (18b)

(18)   a.   **Àda tì-nyè-rè**   **àkpà òròma**
         Ada put-give-PAST   bag   orange
         'Ada put and gave a bag orange.'

       b.   **Àda tì-nyè-rè**   **òròma n'àkpà**
          Ada put-give-PAST orange in bag
          'Ada put an orange into a bag.'

Note that (18a) is also an acceptable structure in the language which patterns like the Dative shift optional transformation in many languages.

The premise of our position is as expressed by Onukawa (1999), 'if the second constituent element of a verb compound has a theta-role assigning property and assigns a theta role to a complement, the second constituent element is a verb'. With recourse to this, we posit that **nye** assigns the roles Theme and Goal to its double objects and therefore a verb in all contexts.

4.   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We have pointed out that there is hardly any Igbo verb stem either of the tone class I or tone class II that may not take **nye**-element. The output of this is a compound if the **nye-**element is a free morpheme but if this is not its status, a compound is ruled out. By our analysis **nye** is a free morpheme; hence, we have talked about **v+nye** compound verbs. This is a departure from what is in the literature concerning the **nye**-element. There is a position that it is a preposition as it applies in Mbah (1999, 2005 and 2010) category incorporated preposition. In fact, other examples illustrating this idea are questionable if we apply Onukawa's (1999) thesis, 'if the second constituent element of a verb compound has a theta-role assigning property and assigns a theta role to a complement, the second constituent element is a verb'; or, an extensional suffix as it is evident in Emenanjo (1978:118). Our position that it is a verb is clearly representative of Onukawa's thesis. It is the locus for the assignment of the theta roles: Theme and Goal to its double objects, which are the same roles assigned when **nye** occur as a simple verb form. That is, its trivalent capacity as an independent verb applies to the compounds. We have demonstrated that there are caseswhere the Goal argument may appear as a spatial oblique NP. These cases are manifestations of the metaphorical extension of illativity of the **nye**-element of the compounds.

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[5] We note that some Igbo speakers may accept (17c). This receives impetus by the pragmatic force that "soak" includes "put in water".

ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Accusative Case	P	Preposition
Agr	Agreement	PAST	Past Tense
GEN	Genitive Case	-rV	Igbo Verbal Suffix
INCEP	Inceptive Aspect	1P	1st Person Plural Pronoun
NOM	Nominative Case	3S	3rd Person Singular Pronoun
OVS	Open Vowel Suffix		

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