

TRANSITIVITY AND DOUBLE OBJECT CONSTRUCTION IN IGBO

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The classification of Igbo verbs by prominent scholars of Igbo grammar has been as contentious as it has been interesting. Even more controversial has been the question of transitivity in Igbo (Ubahakwe 1976, Uwalaka 1984, Nwachukwu 1984a, Emenanjo 1975, 2005 and other works). Following Emenanjo (2005), we highlight the relevance of complementation rather than transitivity in the classification of Igbo verbs. This paper combines Hopper and Thompson's (1980) Transitivity Hypothesis and Emenanjo's (2005) complementation based classification of Igbo verbs, to argue that the composite scores of morpho-syntactic and semantic parameters of each verb specifies the transitivity alternation of the verb and the arguments it subcategorizes for. We identify the significance of applicative constructions to the total transfer of an object from an agent to a patient and argue further that only constructions with general complement verbs have the potentials to participate in double object constructions in Igbo. Our conclusion that transitivity as a continuum can have validity strictly at the clause level may not be restricted to Igbo grammar since cross-linguistics evidence (Hopper and Thompson, 1980) shows that the specification of the transitivity features of a verb in isolation can turn out to be very misleading.

La classification des verbes de la langue igbo par d'éminents chercheurs reste une question litigieuse et intéressante. Elle est d'autant plus controversée lorsqu'il s'agit de la transitivity en igbo (Ubahakwe, 1976, Uwalaka 1984, Nwachukwu 1984a, Emenanjo 1975, 2005 et d'autres). A l'instar d'Emenanjo (2005), nous mettons en relief la pertinence du complément plutôt que celle de la transitivity dans la classification des verbes igbo. Cet article fait l'apologie de la synthèse de l'hypothèse de la transitivity de Hopper et Thompson (1980) et la classification des verbes igbo fondé sur le complément de Emenanjo dans la mesure où il soutient que les composantes caractéristiques de paramètres morpho-syntactiques et sémantiques de chaque verbe concourent à spécifier l'alternance de la transitivity du verbe et les arguments de sa sous-catégorisation. Nous identifions l'importance de constructions de l'applicatif au transfert complet d'un objet de la position agent à celle du patient, et nous soutenons plus loin que seules les constructions qui ont des verbes à compléments généraux sont à même de participer aux constructions d'objet double en igbo. Notre conclusion selon laquelle la transitivity en tant que continuum ne peut avoir sa validité qu'au niveau de la phrase pourrait ne pas se limiter à la grammaire igbo puisque les preuves provenant de plusieurs langues (Hopper et Thompson, 1980) démontrent que la spécificité des traits de la transitivity d'un verbe en isolation peut conduire à l'erreur.

0. INTRODUCTION

The question of transitivity in Igbo syntax has remained controversial. Prominent scholarly works on the subject (Emenanjo 1975, 1978, 2005; Nwachukwu 1984a; Uwalaka 1984, 1988 and Ubahakwe, 1976) have focused on the rigid split of Igbo verbs into transitive and intransitive classes. No doubt, Igbo is a verb language¹ and the study of any subclass of its verbs amounts to the study of the language². However, the notion of transitivity transcends the verb and its complements. 'Transitivity is traditionally understood as a global property of an entire clause' (Hopper and Thompson, 1980). This claim is in tandem with Halliday's (1968:179), definition of transitivity as the 'experiential component of meaning' and this includes the verbs, subject, predicate and other features and conditions of the clause. According to Halliday (1967:52) the

¹ For the Igbo language, a study of the syntactic and semantic properties of any class of its verbs can stand as a study of the language (Uwalaka, 1988; 1984).

² The examples in this paper were taken mostly from the daily utterances by speakers of the Nnewi and Nsokwa dialect clusters of Igbo. The examples were tested for grammaticality with five native speakers of the dialects. One of the authors is also a native speaker of the Nsokwa variety. Because of their basic forms, these utterances also are acceptable within the circles where standard Igbo is the variety of choice.

classification of verbs as ‘transitive’ and ‘intransitive’ is meant for the verb classes to represent the potentiality on the part of the verb to be part of a transitive or intransitive clause as the case may be. Givon (1995:76) cited from Arrese (1997) identifies three core features of a typical transitive clause. They are the agent, patient and the verbal modality. The agent is the causer and controller of the transitive event while the patient registers the effect of the action of the agent. The verb of the typical transitive clause codes an event that is ‘completed, real and perceptually-cognitively salient’. Ross (2002) distinguishes between semantic and morphosyntactic transitivity. Semantic transitivity involves clauses denoting two participants in an event, while morphosyntactic transitivity is based on the idea that there are two core arguments in a clause. For an argument to be core, it must have a morphosyntactic relationship to the verb. This is marked by coding on the verb in the case of agreement affixes or by coding on the argument in case-marking.

Our foregoing discussion brings to the fore the consensus in the literature that transitivity involves two participants (*viz.* an agent and a patient) in the clause and the transfer of an effective action from the agent to the patient. In this paper, we pursue this line of investigation. Nwachukwu, (1984a:105) remarks that for Igbo, ‘the direction of the action or situation is immaterial’ for the participants in the clause. In our subsequent discussion, we follow the traditional argument that the action must be effective and intense and (contrary to Nwachukwu (1984a) it must be directed from the agent to the patient.

1. THE TRANSITIVITY HYPOTHESIS

Our analysis does not follow a given syntactic theory but a hypothesis of transitivity as explored in Hopper and Thompson (1980). This hypothesis does not have an explicit formal status but investigates a composite of scores of morphosyntactic and semantic parameters to describe a transitivity continuum. This analysis is akin to Emenanjo’s (1975, 1978, 2005) autonomous syntax approach, albeit, more elegant and distinct. In Section 1 we present the Transitivity Hypothesis and its parameters.

Hopper and Thompson (1980) follow the traditional view of transitivity as an action involving two participants within a clause. Here, the action of one of the participants results in a concrete change in the circumstances of the second participant. Although the presence of the two participants is a necessary condition for the clause to be interpreted as transitive, this necessity is not sufficient. This leads Hopper and Thompson (1980) to investigate methods through which different languages express the concept of transitivity. In their attempt to clearly present the distinctive features of a transitive clause, they have evolved statutory limitations (parameters) that limit the notion of clausal transitivity. Each of these parameters specifies various degrees of the intensity with which an action is carried out between one participant and the other. We present a brief interpretation of Hopper and Thompson’s (1980:252) parameters as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

A.	Participants	No transfer at all can take place unless at least two participants are involved.
B.	Kinesis	Actions can be transferred from one participant to another; states cannot.
C.	Aspect	An action viewed from its endpoint, i.e. a telic action is more effectively transferred to a patient than one not provided with such an endpoint.
D.	Punctuality	Actions carried out with no obvious transitional phase between inception and completion have a more marked effect on their patients than actions which are inherently ongoing.
E.	Volitionality	The effect on the patient is typically more apparent when A is presented as acting purposefully.
F.	Affirmation	This is the affirmative/negative parameter.
G.	Mode	Mode refers to the distinction between ‘realis’ and ‘irrealis’ encoding events.
H.	Agency	Participants high in Agency can effect a transfer of an action in a way that those low in Agency cannot.
I.	Affectedness	The degree to which an action is transferred to a patient is a function of how completely that patient is affected.
J.	Individuation	Individuation is the distinctness of the patient from A and its distinctness from its own background.

When these distinctive features of transitivity are considered collectively, they facilitate the characterization of a clause as ‘more or less’ transitive. This is the path that we have taken in our analysis which leads us to our findings and conclusion.

Hopper and Thompson’s (1980:252) idea of transitivity as involving the ‘carrying-over’ of an action from one participant to another leads them to tease out transitivity into ten different parts. These component parts serve to emphasize the different aspects of this ‘carrying-over’ of the action in the clause. In sum, these parts characterize transitivity as a continuum. Clauses are ranked ‘more or less’ transitive according to a scale of morphosyntactic and semantic parameters. The ten parameters are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Components of Transitivity

Parameters	Property	High	Low
A.	Participants	2 or more	1
B.	Kinesis	Action	Non-action
C.	Aspect	Telic	Atelic
D.	Punctuality	Punctual	Non-punctual
E.	Volitionality	Volitional	Non-volitional
F.	Affirmation	Affirmative	Negative
G.	Mode	Realis	Irrealis
H.	Agence	Agent high in potency	Agent low in potency
I.	Affectedness of object	Object totally affected	Object not affected
J.	Individuation of object	Object highly individuated	Object not individuated

From Table 2 above, Hopper and Thompson (1980:255) state that A to J evaluates and relates transitivity alternation of verbs and arguments they subcategorize for. Once transitivity is appraised as High, the concomitant grammatical/semantic difference is equally High elsewhere in the clause.

We concentrate on the parameters of *participants*, *kinesis*, *aspect*, *volitionality*, *agency*, *affectedness* and *individuation*. These parameters feature prominently in the Igbo clause and are most relevant for our discussion. The parameters of *volitionality* and *agency* are features of the agent, while *affectedness* and *individuation* are most relevant for identifying the patient in the clause. *Aspect* and *kinesis* are features of the whole clause. The feature of *mode* does not exist for the Igbo clause and all our examples include *affirmative* sentences.

In Section 2 we follow these parameters to explore the issue of transitivity in Igbo. Our data include simple Igbo sentences. We avoid the use of complex sentences for the sake of clarity in the presentation of data. Besides, ours is not a mere skeptic exercise but a valid contribution to a serious issue in Igbo syntax. The principled and natural account we present supplies evidence for the transitivity hypothesis, which has cross-linguistic bearing.

2. TRANSITIVITY IN IGBO

As stated in Section 1, Igbo is a ‘verb language’, and any serious study of its grammatical features is inextricably linked to the study of its verbs. In existing literature, Igbo verbs have been classified from diverse orientations. The abiding consensus in all these works is that Igbo verbs, (belonging to whatever class) obligatorily co-occur with a nominal element. Emenanjo (2005) employs the inherent nominal elements which Igbo verbs select to sub-classify Igbo verbs into five major classes. Our preference for Emenanjo’s (2005) classification of Igbo verbs is informed by his recognition of the argument that the action specified by the Igbo verb must be effective, intense and directed to the patient from the Agent. From section 2.1 to 2.5, we employ Emenanjo’s five major classes as a platform for our discussion of transitivity.

2.1 GENERAL COMPLEMENT VERBS AND TRANSITIVITY

General Complement Verbs (GCVs) are verbs that ‘take general noun complements’. Put differently, the verbs co-occur with common nouns that can be further specified to specific nouns. The following verbs in Example 1 are GCVs.

- (1) a. **írŃ** ‘to work’ takes the common noun **árŃárŃ** ‘workables’
 b. **íré** ‘to sell’ takes the common noun **éremér** ‘sellables’
 c. **íyí** ‘to wear’ takes the common noun **éyíméyŹ** ‘wearables’

The common noun **árúmárŃ** is a cover term for things that can be worked on for example **Ń** ‘house’ **Ń** ‘road’ and **hpa** ‘bag’. The common noun **éremér**, is the cover term for things that can be sold. For example **ósè** ‘pepper’ **jí** ‘yam’ **Ńwá** ‘breadfruit’. The common noun **éyíméyŹ** is the term for things that can be worn; for example, **ákwá** ‘cloth’ **òkpú** ‘cap’ **Ńèdò** ‘gold jewelry’. These common nouns can be further specified as the examples in 2 below illustrate.

- (2) a. **Òbí** **rÖrù** **úlò**
 Obi work-IND house
 Obi built a house.
- b. **Àdá** **rè -rè** **ósè**
 Ada sell-IND pepper
 Ada sold pepper.
- c. **Òbí** **yì** **ákwà**
 Obi wear-IND cloth
 Obi has dressed.

In examples (2a-c) the nouns co-occurring with the verbs are narrow specifications of the general nouns represented in (1) and discussed above. Examples (2a-c) display the features of high transitivity. All the clauses have two participants and display the features of *kinesis*, where an action is transferred from one participant to the other. The parameters of volitionality and agency help to identify fully the agents in the clauses. The agents in 2a-c precede the verbs in the construction. The action depicted by each of the agents is on purpose and this action is perceptibly transferred to the patients. The verbs denote actions that have conceptual boundaries. Therefore, the events in (2a-c) are telic.

(2c) is not a Stative sentence. To be Stative it would be

- (2) d. **Òbí** **kpÖhì-rì** **àkpÖhĩ**
 Obi closed up-IND close-up
 Obi is well dressed (= tightly dressed)

The parameters of *affectedness* and *individuation* identify the nouns that are patients in (2a-c). The patients follow the verbs in (2a-c) and are distinct from the agents because they are definite and referential. They are highly individuated in the sense that they are concrete and have no morphosyntactic relationship to the verbs. The action of the agents totally affects the patients. Taking (2a) as an example, the agent **Òbí**, on purpose, effectively, transfers the action of building to **úlò** the patient. The patient is totally affected by the action of the agent because the building of the house is done from scratch to completion. In other words; the clauses in (2a-c) are rated high on transitivity as presented in 3. We propose that GCVs are not only high on the transitivity scale they can be classified as close to CARDINAL transitivity.

Table 3. Transitivity features of GCVs

Property	High	Low
Participants	2	
Kinesis	Action	
Aspect	Telic	
Volitionality	Volitional	
Agence	Agent high in potency	
Affectedness of object	Object totally affected	
Individuation of object	Object highly individuated	

Table 3 shows that GCVs rate 'High' for all the transitivity parameters (cf Table 2). In other words, the GCVs have the highest quantity of transitivity components.

2.2 INHERENT COMPLEMENT VERBS AND TRANSITIVITY

The specifications of Inherent Complement Verbs (ICVs) for Igbo is credited to Nwachukwu (1976, 1984a) by Emenanjo (2005). According to Nwachukwu, (1984:111), ICVs are 'verbs the citation form of which always includes a nominal element which may or may not be cognate with the verb'. We have the examples of ICVs in (5) below.

- (3) a. **ímá Òwà** 'to peel bread fruit'
 b. **íkwù áj³** 'to scale a fence'
 c. **íjò ñj^Y** 'to be evil'

The nominal elements **Òwà** 'breadfruit' and **ájá** 'fence' in (3a) and (b) are not cognate with the verbs that occur with them while the nominal element **íjò** 'evil' in (3c), although, has an independent existence, is a derivative of the verb it occurs with, hence cognate with it. The native speaker always uses the verbs in (3a-c) the way they are represented. In other words, they are 'dual unit morphemes' which must always be cited together for conceptual integrity. In Example (4) below, we demonstrate the constructions in which these verbs occur.

- (4) a. **Ádá mà-àikwà**
 Ada peel-IND breadfruit
 Ada peeled the breadfruit.
 b. **Òbí kwù - rù áj³**
 Obi jump-IND fence
 Obi scaled the fence.
 c. **Àdá jò -rò ñj^Y**
 Ada bad-IND badness
 Ada is evil.

The clauses in (4a) (4b) and (4c) have two participants but the patient participants in these clauses do not receive any action. They are not true patients. The agents have the features of volitionality. So the action of peeling of the breadfruit (cf. 4a) and scaling the fence in (cf. 4b) and being evil (cf. 4c) are deliberate actions by the agents. However, for the patients in the clauses the features of affectedness and individuation are less prominent when compared to the patients in the examples (2a-c). The transfer of the action by the agents to the patients is not as intense too. This is because the patients are only partially affected by the action of the agents. The patient **Òwà** only undergoes the process of being deprived of its skin while the other parts of it are intact. The transfer of the action to the patient in (4b) is even less intense. Here, **áj³** is only affected by being the obstacle that the agent jumps over. Therefore, the agency of the action in (4a) has more perceptible consequences than (4b). An analysis of (4c) reveals that the agency of the action is even lower in the transfer of the action by the agent. The volitionality in the action of the agent

áá, does not register a ‘perceptually-cognitively salient’ effect on the patient **ńj**. It is completely a matter of an internal state of being. The patients in (4a-c) are not highly individuated. Their backgrounds show that they are not entirely distinct from their verbs. This is because of the class of verbs they co-occur with (Nwachukwu, 1984a). In other words, although **ńwá** (cf 4a) has an independent meaning in an event depicting the peeling of its skin it always co-occurs with the verb **má** and in an event depicting ‘jump over a fence’ the verb **kwó** always co-occurs with **áj**³ (cf 4b). The patient **ńjo** in (4c) is a derivative of its verb **jó**. This even reduces its distinctness from the agent. Although it may have an independent existence as an adjective in the language, it has neither referentiality nor definiteness, hence not individuated. Note that the events in (4a-c) are telic. Our submission is that ICVs record more features of ‘low’ on the transitivity parameter scale. This is graphically represented in Table 4 below where it records four features on the ‘low’ column and only three on the ‘high’.

Table 4. Transitivity features of Inherent Complement Verbs

Property	High	Low
Participants		1
Kinesis	Action	
Aspect	Telic	
Volitionality	Volitional	
Agence		Agent low in potency
Affectedness of object		Object only partially affected
Individuation of object		Object not highly individuated

2.3 PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE COMPLEMENT VERBS AND TRANSITIVITY

Another class of verbs identified by Emenanjo (2005) are Prepositional Phrase Complement Verbs (PPCVs). These verbs co-occur with prepositional phrases and constitute ‘one indivisible semantic unit’ with the prepositional phrases. The examples in (5a-c) illustrate this class of verbs.

- (5) a. **ímé n̄t̄t̄** ‘to do in vain’
 b. **ídj n̄ù bú** ‘to shrug’
 c. **íkwú n̄éfù** ‘to speak empty words’

The verbs **ímé** ‘to do’ co-occurs with the prepositional phrase **n̄t̄t̄** ‘in nothing’ (5a); the verb **ídj** ‘to poke’ co-occurs with the prepositional phrase **n̄ù bú** ‘in the shoulder’ (5b); while the verb **íkwú** ‘to speak’ co-occurs with the prepositional phrase **n̄éfù** ‘in emptiness’ (5c). We illustrate in (6a-c) below the constructions where these verbs occur.

- (6) a. **Há m̄è -r̄è n̄t̄t̄**
 3PL do-IND in nothing
 They acted in vain.

- b. **Àdá dǫǫ n' ùbú**
 Ada poke-IND in shoulder
 Ada shrugged.
- c. **Há kwù-rù n'éfí**
 3PL speak-IND in emptiness
 They spoke nonsense.

The agents in (6a-c) (**há**, **Àdá** and **há** respectively), lack the features of volitionality. In (6a) and (6c), the agents could not, on purpose, have decided to say or do unproductive deeds, while in (6b), the action of **Àdá** is an instinctive response to a stimulus and not a deliberate act. Again, the clauses denote only one participant in each case. There is no action transferred from this participant to another. So the feature of *kinesis* is not represented in the clauses. The agents also lack the features of *agency* because the events do not have tangible results. The features of *individuation* and *affectedness* are completely absent from the clauses because there are no identifiable patients. The prepositional phrases are essential morphosyntactic constituents of the verbs and not patients. The events in (6a-c) have endpoints. In Table 5, we present the transitivity features of PPCVs.

Table 5 Transitivity features of Prepositional Phrase Complement Verbs

Property	High	Low
Participants		1
Kinesis	Action	
Aspect	Telic	
Volitionality		Non-volitional
Agence		Agent low in potency
Affectedness of object		Object not affected
Individuation of object		Object not individuated

Table 5 indicates that The PPCVs record five features on the 'low' column of the transitivity parameter scale and only records two features on the 'high' column. A comparison of Table 4 and Table 5 indicate that ICVs are higher in transitivity than PPCVs.

2.4 BOUND COMPLEMENT VERBS AND TRANSITIVITY

Bound Complement Verbs (BCVs) often occurs with Bound Verb Complements 'without the nuances of emphasis which is inherent in BVCs'. The example in (7) below illustrates these verbs.

- (7) a. **íwǫǫ** 'to slough off dead skin'
 b. **ílé ùlé** 'to write examination'
 c. **ǫǫ** 'to deny'

The complements of the verbs in (7a-c) **ǫǫ** 'dead skin', **ùlé**, 'examination' and **ǫǫ** 'denial' are all derivatives of the preceding verb and they have very close syntactic and semantic

relationships. These verbs precede only their bound complements in any clause they appear in. Let us examine the following clauses, (8a-c).

- (8). a. **agwòhu wóó àé**
 snake DET slough-IND dead skin
 That snake has sloughed off its skin.
- b. **ñkwèwòlè -rè ùlé**
 students look-IND examination
 The students sat for an examination.
- c. **ńí góó àgò**
 obi deny-IND deny (emphasis)
 Obi denied it (emphatically).

The clauses in (8a-c) are one-participant clauses with only patients. They lack the features of *volitionality* and *kinesis*. There is no tangible evidence of the transfer of the action of an agent. The features of *individuation* and *affectedness* are pronounced in the clause. In (8a), **ágwò** 'snake' is highly individuated because it is referential and animate. It is distinct from the verb it occurs with because it has a concrete existence. The sloughing off of the skin totally affects all parts of **ágwò** 'snake'. This high individuation and complete affectedness of the action of the verb on **ágwò** 'snake' marks it out as the patient in the clause. Again, the sloughing off of skin is not a deliberate action but a biological event beyond the scope of **ágwò** 'snake'. The transitivity features of the nouns in (8b) and (8c) with human features follow a similar pattern to (8a). In (8b), **ñkwèwòlè** 'students' are highly individuated and are totally affected by the action, the verb, **lé ùlé** denotes. The same can be said of (8c), where the patient **ńí** is prompted to deny an action or an event. The transitivity features of BCVs are illustrated in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Transitivity features of Bound Complement Verbs

Property	High	Low
Participants		1
Kinesis		Non-action
Aspect	Telic	
Volitionality		Non-volitional
Agence		Agent low in potency
Affectedness of object	Object totally affected	
Individuation of object	Object highly individuated	

The patients of this class of verbs are highly individuated. The objects of the clauses are totally affected by the action of the verb. The only feature that indicates a 'transfer of action' is telicity. However, this clearly indicates the 'low' transitivity features of BCVs.

2.5. ERGATIVE COMPLEMENT VERBS AND TRANSITIVITY

The transitivity features of the ergative verbs were first seriously discussed by Uwalaka, (1988). This class of verbs is identified as verbs which undergo ‘subject-object switching’. Nwachukwu (1984a) calls this class of verbs ergative, while Emenanjo, (2005) calls them ergative complement verbs. We follow the terminology of Emenanjo, (2005) because it captures both the features of these verbs and the type of complements that co-occur with them.

The nominal complements of Ergative Complement Verbs (ECVs) can be ‘switched’ either way to precede or follow the verbs. This is why Uwalaka, (1988) remarks that they have the features of ‘subject-object switching’. The following verbs in (9) are ergative complement verbs.

- (9) a. **ídá ógbž** ‘to be dumb’
 b. **ímé ihér** ‘to be ashamed’
 c. **ígbá ǫ** ‘to burn’

The complements **ǫž** ‘dumbness’, **ihér** ‘shame’ and **ǫ** ‘fire’ in (10a-c) respectively have abstract meaning. The co-occurrence of the verbs with abstract nouns is one defining feature of ergative complement verbs. In (10) below, we illustrate the feature of ‘subject-object switching’ in clauses where these verbs occur.

- (10) a. (i) **ǫž dǎrà ǫgbž**
 Obi fall-IND dumbness
 Obi is dumb
 (ii) **ǫgbž dǎrà ǫž**
 dumbness fall-IND Obi
 Obi is dumb
 b. (i) **ímé mè-rè ihérè**
 Obi do-IND shame
 Obi is ashamed
 (ii) **ihérè mè-rè ím**
 shame do-IND Obi
 Obi is ashamed
 c. (i) **ígbá ǫ dǎrà ǫž**
 fire V- IND Obi
 Obi was burned
 (ii) **ím gbàrà ǫž**
 Obi V-IND fire
 Obi was burned

Note that the structural subjects and objects in the clauses in (10a-c) exchange positions as the case may be but the meaning of the clause remains the same. We illustrate this

phenomenon with (10 a(i)-(ii)). In (10) a(i) the structural subject of the clause is **áí** and its object is **ógbǎ**. However, in (10) a(ii) there is an exchange of positions between the subject and object but this does not result in a change in meaning.

ECVs in (10) are state verbs. State verbs occur in single-participant clauses that denote atelic events. Again, the clauses are devoid of the features of *volitionality* by the participants. The features of *individuation* and *affectedness* score high for these clauses. This is because the participants are all patients who register the effect of the action of the verb. In (10) a(i), the noun **áí**, (the patient) has the features *+human*, *+concrete*, *+referential*, hence, highly individuated. In addition, the patient is totally affected by the action of the verb. Obi cannot be partially dumb. It is an all-or-none event for the clauses in (10a) and all the clauses in (10). The transitivity features of ECVs are as in Table 7.

Table 7 Transitivity features of Ergative Complement Verbs

Property	High	Low
Participants		1
Kinesis		Non-action
Aspect		Atelic
Volitionality		Non-volitional
Agence		No agent
Affectedness of object	Object totally affected	
Individuation of object	Object highly individuated	

The class of ECVs records ‘lowest’ on the transitivity continuum. It takes no agents and its only features for ‘high’ transitivity are the features of the patient whose function is to register the effect of the transfer of the action of an agent.

A careful look at Tables 4 and 4 will reveal that the difference in transitivity between GCVs and ICVs lies in the *potency* of the agents and the *affectedness* and *individuation* of the objects. While GCVs have the features of high potency of agents, ICVs have low *potency* of agents, and while GCVs have totally affected and highly individuated objects, ICVs have only partially affected and individuated objects. So on a transitivity scale, GCVs are nearer to CARDINAL transitivity than ICVs.

Table 5 shows that PPCVs contain single-participant clauses bearing agents. These agents do not transfer an action because there is no perceptible patient as the objects are not affected nor individuated. In Table 6, BCVs take single-participant clauses with patients. However, they still have the single ‘high’ feature of telicity which makes BCVs higher on the transitivity continuum than ECVs in Table 7. ECVs occur in clauses with atelic readings. Therefore, on a transitivity scale of one-to-five, with 1 being the value closest to cardinal transitivity and 5, the lowest value for transitivity in Igbo, GVCs have the highest value of 1 while ECVs have the lowest value of 5. In between them are the ICVs with a value of 2, PPCVs with a value of 3 and BCVs with a value of 4. In Table 8 below we represent the complete picture of the transitivity features of the five classes of Igbo verbs we have studied in this work.

Table 8 Parameters of transitivity

Class of verbs	participants	kinesis	Aspect	Volitionality	Agence	Affectedness of object	Individuation of objects
General Complement verbs	2	Action	Telic	Volitional	Agent high in potency	Object totally affected	Object highly individuated
Inherent complement verbs	2	Action	Telic	Volitionality	Agent low in potency	Object partially affected	Object not highly individuated
Prepositional Phrase Complement Verbs	1	Action	Telic	Non-volitional	Agent low in potency	Object not affected	Object not individuated
Bound Complement Verb	1	action	Telic	Non-volitional	Agent low in potency	Object totally affected	Object highly individuated
Ergative Complement Verbs	1	Non-action	Atelic	Non-volitional	No agent	Object totally affected	Object highly individuated

The illustration in Table 8 shows that the Transitivity Hypothesis is relevant for transitivity in Igbo. Note that component features for transitivity co-vary systematically for all the classes of Igbo verbs we have studied thus far. The features of high-transitivity co-vary explicitly with the GCVs, while the features for low-transitivity co-vary explicitly for ECVs. In between these two classes of verbs is a continuum of transitivity for the other classes.

3. TRANSITIVITY AND DOUBLE OBJECT CONSTRUCTIONS

Double object constructions in Igbo are applicative constructions (Uwalaka, 1995). Applicative constructions in Igbo denote the effective transfer of an object from an agent to a patient. This means that the agent must have all the features of high-transitivity and the patient must be highly individuated and affected in order to effectively and totally receive the object from the agent. Double object constructions in Igbo include the Benefactive/Malfactive applicatives. 'It is pertinent to point out that locative applicatives and instrumental applicatives do not occur in Igbo' (Uwalaka, 1995:166). In Igbo double object constructions, the indirect object immediately follows the verb while the direct object follows the indirect object.

With reference to our analysis in this paper, only GCVs, with features close to cardinal transitivity can effect the transfer of an object from the agent to the patient. This is because, in Benefactive/Malfactive applicatives, the patient must be able to register the ‘perceptively-cognitively-salient’ effect of benefitting or otherwise from the transfer of the object by the agent. The examples in (11) below show BCVs that can occur in double object constructions.

- (11). a. **ìp̣̀ỵ̀** ‘to carve’
 b. **íẉ̀³** ‘to split’
 c. **íṃ̀j̣̀** ‘to deliver of a baby’

Let us consider the occurrence of these verbs in double object constructions.

- (12) a (i) **âí ḅ̀ṛ́̀ó** éẉ̀ú
 Obi carve-IND goat
 Obi carved the carcass of a goat
 (ii) **âí ḅ̀ṛ́̀ó nná ỵ̀³ éẉ̀j̣̀**
 Obi carve-BEN-IND father 3SG (obj) goat
 Obi carved the carcass of a goat for his father
- b. (i) **Ezè ẉ̀àà nkú**
 Eze break-IND firewood
 Eze split firewood
 (ii) **Ezè ẉ̀àà nné ỵ̀³ nkú**
 Eze break-BEN-IND mother 3SG firewood
 Eze split firewood for his mother
- c. (i) **Àdá ṃ̀ṛ́̀ö nwá**
 Ada bore-IND child
 Ada delivered of a baby
 (ii) **Àdá ṃ̀ṛ́̀ö âí nwá**
 Ada bore-BEN-IND Obi child
 Ada had a child for Obi

Examples (12) a(i), b(i) and c(i) have similar transitivity features to examples (12) a(ii), b(ii) and c(ii) in Section 2.1 above. However, examples (12) a(ii), b(ii) and c(ii) include the transfer of an object (the indirect object) from the agent to the patient. This indirect object as earlier stated, immediately follows the verb in the construction and it is morphosyntactically coded on the verb by an applicative suffix. This applicative suffix is a reduplicated vowel of the verb. Hence in (12) a(ii) the applicative suffix is **ṛ́̀** in (12) b(ii) it is **à** and in (12) c(ii) it is **ö**. These applicatives denote that there is a physical transfer of an object (the indirect) from the agent to the patient and the object becomes wholly possessed by the patient. It is also equally relevant to note that only a definite and referential object can be transferred from the agent to the patient. This type of transfer can only be possible

when the agent and the patient are distinct from each other and when none of them is derived from the verb. This analysis leads us to conclude that only constructions involving GCVs have the potential to be double object constructions in the language. This is a further indication that the Transitivity Hypothesis is relevant for Igbo because high-transitivity features co-vary with events denoting a TOTAL transfer of an object from an agent to a patient. Recall that totality is one of the features of high transitivity.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have provided data to support our claim that the issue of transitivity in Igbo is beyond a dichotomous classification of Igbo verbs into transitive and intransitive. Resting on the past works of Igbo grammarians, we have tried to show that transitivity includes various features which tend to co-vary in order to indicate high or low transitivity. Transitivity as a continuum can have validity only at the clause level. Our analysis, which is based on the Transitivity Hypothesis, has cross-linguistic evidence (cf Hopper and Thompson, 1980). This paper has yet contributed another evidence to support the hypothesis. We hope that the paper will also contribute to shifting the transitivity debate from the 'verbo-centric' level to the sentence and text level.

ABBREVIATIONS

BEN	Benefactive	3PL	Third-person plural pronoun
DET	Determiner	3SG	Third-person singular pronoun
IND	Indicative	V-IND	Here the verb is lexically empty
obj	object		

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