TOWARDS A CLASSIFICATION OF IGBO VERBS: THE PROBLEM OF STATIVE VERBS IN THE ORLU DIALECT OF IGBO

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The criteria for the classification of Igbo verbs have generated controversies among old and modern linguists and grammarians of indigenous and foreign descents. Some maintain that stative verbs (also called State verbs) are marginal in number and are therefore not appropriate to be used among the criteria for classifying Igbo verbs. This study explores the Orlu variety of Igbo (a dialect spoken by a sizeable population in the Orlu area of Imo State in South-Eastern Nigeria) in order to justify the validity of including stative verbs among the criteria for the classification of Igbo verbs. Our empirical analyses show that though stative verbs are fewer in number than the dynamic verbs, (also called verbs of activity and movement) they have non-negligible, distinctive, morpho-syntactic and semantic behaviours which lend credence to their inclusion among the criteria for classifying Igbo verbs.

0. INTRODUCTION

Verbs are classified in languages using a number of criteria in accordance with their dominant forms and functions in a clause or sentence. In French language, for example, verbs are classified using four criteria, namely transitive, intransitive, pronominal and impersonal. In the English language, verbs are broadly classified into two groups namely main (or lexical) verbs and auxiliary verbs. The main or lexical verbs are subdivided into three major classes as follows:

i. Regular vs irregular verbs
ii. Transitive vs intransitive verbs
iii. Finite vs non-finite verbs

The auxiliary verbs are classified into two major types:

i. Primary auxiliary verbs (e.g. be, have, do)
ii. Modal auxiliaries (e.g. can/could; may/might; shall/should; will/would; must; ought to; used to).

In the Igbo language, the criteria for categorization of verbs and their appropriate terminologies have often generated controversies among linguists and grammarians. Anyanwu (2003:798) cites Emenanjo as having classified Igbo verbs into five groups:
i. Complement verbs
ii. Inherent complement verbs
iii. Prepositional verbs
iv. Ergative complement verbs
v. Bound complement verbs

Emenanjo does not recognize transitivity as a relevant parameter for the classification of Igbò verbs, and argues in Emenanjo (1984, 1986) that “transitivity is not necessary in the syntax of Igbò verbs since all Igbò verbs obligatorily occur with some complement in both underlying and surface structures” (see Anyanwu 2003:797). Nwachukwu (1983) bases his own classification of Igbò verbs on the following parameters:

i. tonal (variation of voice pitch levels)
ii. lexical (subdivided into auxiliaries and non-auxiliaries)
iii. copula
iv. stative and non-stative
v. causative
vi. complementizable verbs

Uwalaka’s classification (1983, 1997), though not identical with Nwachukwu’s above, could be subsumed under it, since both Uwalaka and Nwachukwu emphasize the indispensability of transitivity in classifying Igbò verbs, contrary to Emenanjo who rather favours complementation.

In his classification of Echie verbs (an Igboid lect), Ndimele (2003:129) uses four criteria:

i. morphological (simple vs complex verbs)
ii. tonal (high vs low tone verbs)
iii. syntactic (auxiliary (or helping) verbs vs lexical (or main) verbs)
iv. semantic (sub-divided into dynamic (action vs event verbs) and stative verbs)

Ndimele chooses not to discuss Echie verbs based on the dichotomy of transitive vs intransitive because, according to him, in the Niger-Congo languages, it is fairly difficult to neatly divide verbs into transitive and intransitive due to the fact that some verbs can, under different contexts, manifest the behaviour of both transitive and intransitive verbs.

From the above analysis, it is evident that in the classification of verbs of languages, linguists and grammarians often use a set of parameters they consider paramount in marking out a group of verbs from others. Sometimes, linguists may differ in what may be considered paramount parameters but their choices are normally inclusive and complementary. Some of their criteria may be simpler or more complex than others. From what we have seen so far, Ndimele’s model for the classification of Echie verbs seems to be more relevant to the classification of the Orlu dialect verbs because of its simplicity and clarity.
This study does not however aim at the classification of Orlu verbs. Our objective is rather to probe the problems posed by stative verbs in the Orlu dialect. This is because stative verbs constitute a subclass of verbs whose lexical status, morphosyntactic and semantic behaviours are problematic, especially in comparison to their dynamic verb counterparts whose characteristics are sometimes confused with those of stative verbs. In what follows, we shall define briefly the concepts of stative and dynamic verbs and compare their distinctive characteristics. We shall then isolate stative verbs for closer study in the Orlu dialect. Finally, we shall see from the results of our analyses if we can justify the validity of the status of stative verbs in the Orlu dialect of Igbo.

1. DYNAMIC VERBS

According to Ndimele (2003:135), ‘A dynamic verb expresses an action which an entity is carrying out or an event in which the entity is involved’. He further divides dynamic verbs into ‘action’ and ‘event’ verbs, describing action verbs according to Giering et al (1987:16) as verbs which ‘involve conscious and goal oriented activity of some participant individual and are in most cases of limited duration or occurring at a fixed point in time’. Examples of such verbs in the Orlu dialect include: igbú - ‘to kill’, kpókpó - ‘to call’, lọ: iọ - ‘to swallow’, shí: ọshí - ‘to cook’, etc. ¹


Crystal (1997) defines dynamic from linguistic point of view as a ‘term used in grammatical classification, referring to one of two main aspectual categories of verb use, the other is static or static’. He states that the distinguishing criteria between the two are syntactic and maintains that dynamic verbs occur in progressive forms and in the imperative. He also states that the semantics of dynamic verbs cover a wide range including activity, process (e.g. change, grow) and bodily sensation (e.g. feel, hurt), etc. From the foregoing, we observe that Crystal’s definition of dynamic verbs does not contradict Ndimele’s division of dynamic verbs into action and event verbs. Our dynamic verbs are equivalent to what Welmers (1973), Emenanjo (1978) refer to as active verbs – verbs that have the rV̀ aspectual suffix in the indicative construction to translate past time meaning. Some linguists refer to such a construction as factative, but stative when it refers to non-past time meaning. Welmers (1973:141) affirms that ‘a factative construction includes a replacive which can be identified with that of the stative’. In this study, we shall refer to the –rV̀ suffix as factative when it occurs with dynamic verbs and as stative when it occurs with stative verbs.

2. STATIVE VERBS

The term ‘stative verb’ has been a subject of recurring debate among Igbo linguists and scholars of old and recent times, foreign and indigenous, due to its morph-

¹ Tone-marking convention adopted: All high tones are unmarked; All mid tones are marked; All low tones are marked.
pho-syntactic and semantic peculiarities compared to dynamic verbs. Stative verbs have morpho-syntactic and semantic limitations because they cannot be used in all aspect formations in Igbo, just as dynamic or active verbs can.

Ward (1936) indicates in her discussion of the Ra-suffix verb form that there exists ‘a number of verbs frequently descriptive, mainly used in the Ra-suffix form to express present time’. What she is referring to is no doubt stative verbs.

Welmers (1973:346) asserts that in many Niger-Congo family, ‘a number of languages distinguish two types of verbs – in general ‘stative and active’; stative verbs usually include equivalents for most of the ‘private’ verbs of English’. He maintains that for stative verbs, ‘a reference to present time may use the same construction that refers to past time if an active verb is used, or more accurately the construction is timeless for stative verbs – a modifier may indicate that the reference is to past time’. Here we can infer that Welmers is implicitly referring to the -rV aspect suffix marker.

Welmers further affirms that ‘a morpheme consisting of low replacing stem tone occurs with a limited number of verb stems, marking a ‘stative construction’. He affirms in (Welmers 1973:359) that ’in Igbo, the stative is used only with a limited number of monosyllabic verb roots (…).’ For Crystal (1997), the distinguishing criteria for stativity are mainly syntactic; he asserts that stative verbs do not usually occur in a progressive form or in the imperative. Ndimele (2003), like Crystal, indicates that on semantic grounds, stative verbs can be said to express states of affairs rather than action. Welmers, however, points out that the classification is complicated by the existence of verbs which have both a stative and a dynamic use.

Onumajuru (1985) observes that like in many Igboi groups and dialects, stative verbs in the Orlu dialect can be used not only to express states of affairs but also quality, size, and location of living and non-living things. Static constructions in Igbo are morpho-tonally characterized by the neutralization of both high and low monomorphic verb roots to a grammatical low. Some stative verbs take the –rV asp ectual suffix to express present or timeless meaning, while dynamic verbs use it to express past time meaning.

It is, however, important to note that in some dialects including Orlu, high-tone dynamic verb roots and their inflectional past time suffix –rV occur in two morpho-tonal forms, used indiscriminately by speakers as free variations. The forms are:

a) CV-rV (HH) b) CV-rV (LL) e.g.

(1) ri eat

O riri ji

3s eat-FT yam

He/she/it ate yam.

(2) ri eat

O riri ji

3s eat-FT yam

He/she/it ate yam.

In (a) above, both the high verb stem and the inflectional past suffix carry high-high tones to express past time meaning, while in (b), they carry low-low tones to express the same past time meaning. In the Orlu dialect, the two forms are attested, but form (a) is used with a limited number of verbs. Form (b) is the one taught in the school as the standard Igbo form and it is used with all verbs. In the dialect, form (a) applies to some high stem verb roots while form (b) can apply to both high and low verb roots
in past time construction and is the form more prevalent in the Orlu dialect. We must, however, point out that not all dynamic verbs subject themselves to form (a) morpho-tonal pattern, e.g. kpN ‘call’, mÔ ‘give birth to’, etc. For our analyses in this work, we shall use form (b), since it applies to both high and low verb stems in the dialect without exception.

Similarly, in the Orlu dialect (and in certain other dialects of Igbo), where the above two morpho-tonal forms occur with some high verb roots in past time construction, the imperative forms follow a similar two-way tonal pattern used freely by speakers, where CV = verb root, -V = open vowel suffix that harmonizes with the verb root, e.g. O

(3) ri ‘eat’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rie</th>
<th>anụ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat-vowel suffix</td>
<td>meat</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Eat meat.

(4) ri ‘eat’

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>meat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eat meat.

These two forms of imperative constructions are attested among the Orlu dialect speakers but form (3) is used with a limited number of high verb roots while form (4) is invariably used for both high and low-tone verb roots in imperative construction.

3. DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF DYNAMIC AND STATIVE VERBS

Having defined and explained what is meant by dynamic and stative verbs, we shall now summarize their distinctive characteristics.

3.1 SYNTACTIC TABLE OF THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF DYNAMIC AND STATIVE VERBS IN THE ORLU DIALECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATIVE VERBS</th>
<th>DYNAMIC VERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a1) Characterized by neutralization of lexical high and low tones of monosyllabic verb roots to grammatical low tone. The stative wÔ ‘be’ does not obey this rule, as it is normally realized with a high tone in the Orlu dialect. Its equivalent in standard Igbo, bÔ ‘be’ does not exist in the Orlu dialect though it is used by some educated and travelled</td>
<td>a2) Both high and low tone monosyllabic verbs retain their inherent tones in all constructions except in a past construction using the -rV aspectual suffix which we refer to as factative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) ga to go: Ezè àgala ahịa v.perf. Eze has gone to market.</td>
<td>(9) pô out/leave:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
speakers in spoken Igbo. This official and standard form taught in schools. The proximity of Onitsha to Orlu is another factor which favours the use of -bÔt is therefore not uncommon to see an Orlu dialect speaker use the two items interchangeably.

(5) wÔbe’:
Ô wū Dikē (O.D)
He/it is Dike.

(6) bÔbe’:
Ô bō Dikē (O.D)
He/it is Dike.

(7) sò ‘follow’:
Ô sō nne yā
He/She follows his/her mother.

In example (5) the stative wụ changes to downstep due to its contact with the preceding high tone, thus H+H=H₁H. In examples 6 and 7, both high and low tone lexical tones change to grammatical low tone, typical of stative construction. The above statives do not accept the -rV aspectual suffix.

b1) Some statives take the -rV suffix which does not translate a past time meaning. We refer to this -rV suffix as stative (ST) in a stative construction using it e.g. bù ‘be big/fat’:

(10) Ada bùrù ibù v.-ST bigness
Ada is big/fat.

b2) All dynamic verbs take the -rV (or -rV́ in the Orlu dialect) aspectual suffix to translate past time meaning. We refer to this -rV as factative (FAC) e.g. gbu ‘kill’:

(12) Ôh gburù agwọ v.-FAC snake
Uba killed a snake.

The underlined elements are verb roots which retain their inherent tones in perfective construction. The vowel prefix is low for high tone roots, while the perfective suffix is high-high for both high and low inherent verb roots, as in the above perfective constructions.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATIVE VERBS</th>
<th>DYNAMIC VERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*chọ 'want':</td>
<td>*zà 'sweep':</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11) Ezè chọ egọ</td>
<td>(13) Ada zàrà ô</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.-ST money</td>
<td>v.-FAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezè wants money.</td>
<td>Ada swept the house.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**c1)** Most stative verbs in the Orlu dialect can feature in an imperative construction. Some cannot, due to their nature e.g.

- bù 'be big/fat':
  - (14)* Bùo ibù
  
  This construction, though grammatical, is not acceptable in the Orlu dialect due to the semantic nature of the verb. (See imperative of stative verbs).

**c2)** All dynamic verbs can feature in the imperative e.g.

- gá 'go':
  - 15. gàa ahìa – Go to market.
- pŊ 'leave/go out'
  - (16) pŊ go out, etc.

The morpho-tonal structure for both high and low verb roots is CV-V (LH).

**d1)** Some statives can take extensional suffix of the type -CV in order to be used in the imperative, e.g.

- kpù 'to wear/put on':
- kpùru: ikpùru: ‘to put on’:

  - (17) IMPERATIVE:
  
  Kpùru ţkpu – put on a cap.

  Some others cannot be so used ordinarily e.g.

- bù 'be big/fat':
- *bùru, ibùru: (does not exist)

  - (18) Bùru ibù
  
  This construction is unusual and meaningless in the Orlu dialect, and therefore inadmissible.

**d2)** All action dynamic verbs can be followed by the -CV extensional suffix, and all can feature in the imperative e.g

- bu ‘to carry’: Example:
- ibùru ‘to carry for oneself’:
  - (19) Bùru anũ – Carry meat (for yourself).
- ibute ‘to carry (for unspecified person)’:
  - (20) Bute anũ – Bring meat (for someone not explicitly indicated) e.g.
- ţũ ‘to buy’:
- ţũru ţəkũ ‘buy for oneself’:
  - (21), zũəkpu – buy yourself a bag.
- ţũta ‘to buy for’, etc:

  - (22) zũ ãkpu! - buy someone a bag!/buy a bag for someone!
What we have shown above are what seem to us to be the essential characteristics of stative and dynamic verbs. In what follows, we shall identify and classify stative verbs prevalent in the Orlu dialect. We shall then examine their imperative and past time forms.

3.2 INVENTORY OF STATIVE VERBS IN THE ORLU DIALECT OF IGBO

This inventory will be done in two stages. In the first stage, we shall identify all the stative verbs which do not take the –rV aspectual suffix and in the second, we shall feature those that take the –rV suffix to translate non-past time meaning. In the two inventories, we shall endeavour to identify the morpho-syntactic and semantic peculiarities of each stative verb.

3.2.1 Stative Verbs Without –rV Aspectual Suffix include:

i.  ṃbi: ṃbi to live, e.g.

(23)  Uché bì (nà) Àba. Uche lives at Aba.

Here the use of the preposition nà ‘at’ is optional. Its omission does not affect meaning.

ii.  ṃbu: ṃbū to carry

The meaning may change depending on the nature of the NP complement that goes with the verb:

(24)  Àda ṃbù òhù

Ada carry Mouth
Ada is fasting (Ada is carrying mouth).

(25)  Uché ṃbù oche

Uche carry chair
Uche is carrying a chair.

iii.  ṁgba: ṃgba to run/to wear

This verb can have both stative and dynamic uses, depending on the nature of the NP complement it goes with.

ST: ṃgba: ‘to wear (e.g. bracelet, ring, etc) on the hand or leg’:

(26)  Àda ṃgba wọchọ

Ada wear watch
Ada is wearing a wristwatch.

ST: ṃgba ṃn to be naked’:

(27)  Uché ṃgba ṃn
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Uche v. nakedness
Uche is naked.

3.3 DM DYNAMIC VERB USES OF GBA ‘TO RUN/WRESTLE’ + NP

gba ọsọ ‘to run a race’:

(28) a. Ezè  gbàrà  ọsọ
run-FAC race
Eze ran a race.

b. gba  mgbā
‘run’ ‘wrestling’
‘to wrestle’

c. gba  ibẹ
‘run’ ‘a bet’
‘to bet’

d. gba  afā
‘run’ ‘divination’
‘to foretell’

e. gba  akwàwà
‘run’ ‘book’
‘to sue’

f. gba  egwụ
‘run’ ‘dance’
‘to dance’

g. gba  ūrà
‘run’ ‘blood’
‘to bleed’

h. gba  àŋmà
‘run’ ‘secret’
‘to reveal a secret/betray’

i. gba  akpụ
‘run’ ‘cassava’
‘to plant cassava’

From the above examples (cf. (26), (27), (28) a-i, we observe that gba can be used in stative and dynamic constructions, depending on the noun complement which is used.

iv. ha: hà to be equal This stative must be followed by kà ‘as’ – a comparative marker – in order to be meaningful, e.g.

(29) Uchè  hà  kà  Ibe
Uche be equal as  Ibe = Uche is equal to Ibe
Uche is as big/tall/fat as Ibe.
v. ji: ijī to hold/ha: e.g.
(30)  Æda  jī  òō  ânÑ
Ada holds  children  four
Ada has four children.

vi. ka to be bigger than/be superior to, e.g.
(31)  Ibè  kà  ōu
Ibe  be greater than  Uba
Ibe is bigger than Uba.

vii. kpọ: îkpọ to call/to take along. This verb root can function both as stative and
dynamic, depending on its NP complement and this, as usual, involves change in
meaning. When it means ‘to call’, it can only be used as dynamic and takes the rV
suffix to translate past time meaning.
ST: kpọ: îkpọ ‘to take along’: kpọ
(32) Ezè  kpọ  òō  ya
Eze  take  children  his
‘Eze is with his children’.
kpọ can also take –rV aspectual suffix with a different NP to express present time
meaning.
ST: kpọ  ashØ  to hate’:
(33) Eke  kpọ  òō  m  ashi
Eke  v-ST  me  hatred
Eke hates me.
DM: kpọ  ‘call’ (uses the rV verbal suffix to express past time meaning).
(34) Ezè  kpọ  òō  ya
Eze  call-FAC  children  his
Eze called his children.

viii. kpù: îkpù ‘to wear (e.g. cap)’
(35) Ibè  kpù  ókpù
Ibe  wear  cap
Ibe is wearing a cap.

ix. kù: îkù ‘to carry in the hand e.g. baby’
(36) Æda  kù  nnwa
Ada  carry  child
Ada is carrying a child (in her hands).
x. *kwókwó* carry on one’s back

(37)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Ada} & \quad \text{kwó} & \quad \text{nnwa} \\
\text{Ada} & \quad \text{carry} & \quad \text{child} \\
\text{Ada} & \quad \text{is carrying a child on her back.}
\end{align*}

xi. *kwókwú* ‘to stand’

**ST:** *kwóto* ‘stand erect’:

(38)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Uché} & \quad \text{kwó} & \quad \text{ọtọ} \\
\text{Uche} & \quad \text{stand} & \quad \text{up} \\
\text{Uche} & \quad \text{is standing up.}
\end{align*}

**DM:** *kwóko* commit suicide/to hang oneself:

(39)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Ibè} & \quad \text{kwó} & \quad \text{ọdó} \\
\text{Ibe} & \quad \text{hang-FAC} & \quad \text{rope} \\
\text{Ibe} & \quad \text{hanged himself.}
\end{align*}

xii. *nóhó* be/to stay. In the Orlu dialect, this stative can be used with both animate and inanimate beings indiscriminately unlike in the Standard Igbo where it can only be used with animates. In the Standard Igbo, the stative *dị* ‘be’ is only used with inanimate objects. This stative does not exist in this form in the Orlu dialect, as we shall see later in this section.

(40)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Ezè} & \quad \text{nó} & \quad \text{n’} & \quad \text{ọ} \\
\text{Eze} & \quad \text{be} & \quad \text{in} & \quad \text{house} \\
\text{Eze} & \quad \text{is in the house/Eze is at home.}
\end{align*}

(41)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Eghu} & \quad \text{nó} & \quad \text{n’} & \quad \text{èzi} \\
\text{Goat} & \quad \text{be} & \quad \text{in} & \quad \text{outside} \\
\text{A goat is outside.}
\end{align*}

(42)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Oche} & \quad \text{nó} & \quad \text{ọgà} & \quad \text{à} \\
\text{Chair} & \quad \text{be} & \quad \text{place} & \quad \text{here} \\
\text{There is a seat/chair here/A chair/seat is here.}
\end{align*}

xiii. *nyà* ìnyà to drive. This verb can be both stative and dynamic depending on the NP complement that follows it and this affects also the meaning.

**ST:** *nyà* ‘to wear something’, e.g. jewellery:

\begin{align*}
\text{Ezè} & \quad \text{nó} & \quad \text{n’} & \quad \text{ọ dí} \\
\text{Eze} & \quad \text{be} & \quad \text{in} & \quad \text{house} \\
\text{Eze} & \quad \text{is in the house/Eze is at home.}
\end{align*}
(43) Àda nyà ọlàntì
Ada wear earring
Ada is wearing an earring.

DM: nyà: Ìnyà ‘to drive’:

(44) Uchè nyàrà ìgbọlà
Uche drive-FAC motor
Uche drove a motor vehicle.

(But Uchè nyà ìgbọlànà is not semantically clear in dynamic use)

xiv. Ọma: Ìọmà ‘to know’:

45). Ezè ìọmà ihe
Eze know thing
Eze is intelligent/Eze is knowledgeable.
(46) Ezè ọmà ahà m
Eze know name me
Eze knows my name.

xv. ru: Ṣù ‘to be’ (descriptive). This is the equivalent of the Standard Igbo (S.I.) stative di ‘be’ used with inanimate objects. This S.I. stative di ‘be’ does not exist in the Orlu dialect. Its use can be noticed with speakers living in border towns with Anambra state and among educated speakers who have learnt the S.I. at school, or who have travelled to other parts of Igbo-land where di is used. In Orlu heartland, rObe’ is predominantly used:

(47) Ûwà rO ọmà
World be good
The world is good.

(48) Oọkà rO ọtụtụ
Children Be many
Children are numerous.

(49) Oche rO ịrị
Chair be ten
The chairs are ten (in number).

(50) Ngozi rO ịmê
Pr.N be deep
Ngozi is pregnant.

xvi. shi: ishî ‘to come from/to cook’. This stative can also function as dynamic depending on the NP complement that follows it, and its actual meaning and structure depend on the nature of the NP complement.

ST: shi ‘to come from’

(51) Ezè shi Àba
Pr.N come from Aba
Eze comes from Aba/Eze is coming from Aba.

DM: shi nri ‘to cook food’

(52) Ezè shiri nri
Pr.N cook-FAC food
Eze cooked food.

xvii. sò: isò ‘to follow’
They follow us/They are following us.

It is worthy of note that the first person plural anyī ‘we’ is realized with high-high lexical tone in the Orlu dialect as against elsewhere where it is represented with low-high lexical tone.

d. wÔwû ‘to be’ (see 3.1 a1)

xiii. yi: iyī ‘to wear/to resemble’. This stative verb is peculiar in the sense that it can have two stative uses – either with the –rV aspectual suffix with descriptive, timeless meaning or state. The NP complement determines the meaning of the verb.

ST₁: yi ‘to wear’.

(54) Àda yi akwà
Ada wear dress
Ada is wearing a dress.

ST₂: yi: ‘to resemble’. This takes the –rV suffix.

(55) Eke yi: nnà ya
Eze resemble-ST father him
Eze resembles his father

3.4 OBSERVATION

Our inventory of stative verbs which does not take the –rV aspectual suffix in the Orlu dialect of Igbo is tentative and does not claim to be exhaustive. We notice in some cases where the same verb behaves at the same time like stative and dynamic, depending on the nature of the NP complements. We also witness few cases where the same stative is used with or without the –rV non-past time meaning.

For the verbs with both stative and dynamic uses, there is no rule to determine such a behaviour in advance. This complicates the classification of stative and dynamic verbs. It may be perplexing to note in our inventory that such statives like bÔbe’ and dî ‘be’ widely used in S.I. do not diachronically exist in the Orlu dialect where they now compete with wÔ and rÔ respectively.

3.5 INVENTORY OF STATIVE VERBS THAT TAKE THE –rV ASPECTUAL SUFFIX WITH NON-PAST TIME MEANING IN THE ORLU DIALECT OF IGBO

i. ba: ibā ‘to be rich’

This stative takes either a BCN or a noun complement formed from the verb root without change in meaning:

(56) Ibè bārà àba
Ibe v.-ST BCN
Ibe is rich.

Variant: Ibè bara àba

(57) Ibè bārà ū
Ibe v.-ST wealth
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Ibe is rich.

Variant: Òbè bara Òñ

ii. bà: bà to enter. This verb has both stative and dynamic uses, depending on their NP complements which also affect their meanings.

ST: bà urù ‘be useful’

enter gain

(58) Egô bàrà urù

Money enter-ST gain

Money is useful.

DM: bà ‘to enter’

(59) Òh bàrà n’ Ò

Uba enter-FAC prep. house

Uba entered the house.

In all examples of dynamic use, the –rV aspectual suffix has past time meaning as in the above example.

iii. bN̩bà ‘to become too soft’ (e.g. pounded yam/cassava).

(60) Òkàrà bÔr Ôb[N

Pounded food be soft-ST BCN

The pounded food is too soft.

Variant: Òkàrà bN̩bN

iv. bù: ibù ‘to be big/fat’

(61) Àda bùrù ibù

Ada be big-ST Fatness

Ada is fat.

v. chN̩hô ‘to look for/to want/to find/to need’

(62) Àda chÔ egô

Ada need-ST money

Ada needs money/Ada wants money.

vi. dà: àlà to fall. This verb can have both stative and dynamic uses and has different meanings with different NP complements.

ST: dà ogbù ‘be dumb’

fall dumb

(63) Ibè dàrà ogbù

Ibe fall-ST dumb
Ibe is dumb.

ST:  \( \text{dà bà: ìlà bà} \)  'be lazy'
     fall  dormancy

(64)  \( \text{Ibè dàrà bà} \)
     Ibe  fall-ST  dormancy
     Ibe is lazy.

DM:  \( \text{dà adà} \)  'fall down'
     fall (v)  fall (n)

(65)  \( \text{Ibè dàrà ada} \)
     Ibe  fall-FAC  fall (n)
     Ibe fell down.

dà àdà : idà àdà 'to fail', e.g. exam, election, contest, etc.

(66)  \( \text{Ibè dàrà àdà} \)
     Ibe  fall-FAC  fall (n)
     Ibe failed.
     Variant:  \( \text{Ibè dhàrà àdha} \)

vii. \( \text{gba run. We have already treated this verb under statives without } -rV \text{ suffix. With certain NP complements, it can take the } -rV \text{ aspectual suffix without past time meaning, in a stative construction (cf. 26, 27, 28)} \)

\( \text{gba ūkā} \)  'be sour'
     run  sour

(67)  \( \text{Ofe gbàrà ūkā} \)
     Soup  run-ST  sour
     The soup is sour.
     \( \text{gba mkp̃rù} \)  'to turn into small, seed-like lumps (e.g. pap, pounded yam, etc)'
     run  seed  'to be lumpy'

(68)  \( \text{gbàrà mkp̃rù} \)
     Pounded food  turn to-ST  seeds
     The pounded food is lumpy/full of small lumps.

viii. \( \text{jọ: jọ} \)  'to be ugly/bad'

(69)  \( \text{Ělizā j̣ọ} \)
     Eliza  be ugly-ST  ugliness BCN
     Eliza is ugly.

ix. \( \text{nwe: inwē} \)  'to have/possess'
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(70) Ọhụ nwërē egō
Uba have-ST money/cash
Uba has money/Uba is rich.
x. ŋma: ŋmā ‘to be beautiful/prett/pretty/handsome’

(71) Ada ŋmārā ŋmā
    Ada be beautiful-ST beauty
    Ada is beautiful.

xi. zi: izī ‘to be upright’.

(72) Okwu à ziyè izī
    Case this be-ST upright
    This case is upright.

This verb takes an inherent complement.

xii. pe: ipē ‘to be small’. This verb can function both as stative and dynamic, depending on the NP complement it takes and this results in a change of meaning.

ST: pe ëpe ‘be small’
    be small smallness

(73) Ada pèrè ëpe
    Ada v.-ST smallness
    Ada is small/smallish.

DM: pe nkû ‘to split or break firewood with an axe’
    break wood

(74) Ada pèrè nkû
    Ada v.-FAC wood
    Ada broke firewood.

xiii. shi: ishī to cook. This is normally a dynamic verb meaning ‘to cook’ when followed by a concrete NP complement but it can function as a stative if followed by a particular abstract complement as can be seen in the examples.

ST: shi ikē ‘be strong’ (be difficult or hard [metaphorically])
    be power

(But see also 3.2.1 i-xvi)

(75) Ezè shiri ike
    Eze v.-ST strong
    Eze is strong.
    Variant: Ezè shiri ike

DM: shi ‘cook’ (see #52)

xiv. to: itō to grow

(76) Ibè tòrò ogologo
    Ibe v.-ST tallness/length
Ibe is tall.

xv. tô: ịọ to be sweet. This verb can function as stative as well as dynamic with different meanings depending on the type of complement that follows the verb.

ST: tô ụtô ‘to be sweet’
be sweet sweetness

(77) Ofe ọ ọtô tô ọtô ‘to be sweet’
Soup this v.-ST sweetness
This soup is delicious.

ST: tọtọ to be in a fix’

(78) Anyị tọ ịtị ‘to be in a fix’
We v.-ST Fix
We are in a fix.

DM: tôtô ‘to unwrap’

(79) Ibè tọ letà ‘to unwrap’
Ibe unwrap-FAC letter
Ibe unwrapped/opened a letter.

xvi. yi: iyị ‘to resemble’. We have already seen that this stative can also function without the –rV aspectual suffix or with it in stative constructions (see 54, 55)

(80) Àda yiri nne yà ‘to resemble’
Ada v.-ST mother her
Ada resembles her mother.

xvii. za: izá ‘to be swollen’. This verb can also be used as a dynamic verb to mean ‘to answer’ depending on the complement.

ST: za ‘to swell’

(81) Òwụ Àda zàrà àza ‘to swell’
Leg Ada swell-ST swelling
Ada’s leg is swollen.

DM: za ‘to answer/reply’

(82) Ezè zàrà òkù ‘to answer/reply’
Eze answer-FAC call
Eze answered a call.
3.6 OBSERVATION

In the above inventory of stative verbs (in the Orlu dialect) that take the \(-rV\) aspectual suffix with non-past time meaning, we recorded seventeen verb roots out of which six share both stative and dynamic morpho-syntactic features. They are bà ‘enter’, dà ‘fall’, pe ‘be small’, shi ‘cook’, tNbe sweet’, and za ‘swell/answer’. The nature of their complements though unpredictable, determines the behaviour of the verb as stative or dynamic and consequently their meanings. We also recorded two stative verbs namely dà ‘fall’, tNbe sweet’ with two different stative meanings each, involving different complements (cf. 77, 78).

3.7 PAST TENSE OF STATIVE VERBS IN THE ORLU DIALECT

Past tense formation with stative verbs is problematic in the Igbo language, in the sense that stative verbs are poor or rather limited in the number of inflectional affixes they can co-occur with in order to express different nuances of tense and aspects. On the other hand, dynamic (or active) verbs are richer in the number of inflectional affixes they can co-occur with in order to express different tense values and aspects. However, our objective in this section is to examine how the two types of stative verbs form their past tenses in the Orlu dialect.

The two types of stative verb forms, namely, the simple CV form and the CV + \(rV\) form (both the CV and \(-rV\) bearing low tones) form their past tense using two different morpheme past markers namely, bù and bùbù respectively. Both low- and high-tone stative verbs of the two types as well as their corresponding past markers are reduced to low tones. The following examples are illustrative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATIVE PRESENT</th>
<th>STATIVE PAST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(83) a. Ha rÔ ndhÔ</td>
<td>(83) b. Ha rÔ ndÔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P be life</td>
<td>3P be-pst life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are alive.</td>
<td>They were alive/used to be alive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(84) a. Ibè bì n’ AbÔ</td>
<td>(84) b. Ibè bibù n’ AbÔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibe lives at Abuja.</td>
<td>Ibe used to live at Abuja.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(85) a. Eze nwèrè egô</td>
<td>(85) b. Eze nwèbùrù egô</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eze have-ST money</td>
<td>Eze have-pst money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eze has money/Eze is rich.</td>
<td>Eze used to be rich.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(86) a. Áda ngmârû ngmà</td>
<td>(86) b. Áda ngmâbùrû ngmà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr.N be beautiful-ST beauty</td>
<td>Pr.N be beautiful-pst beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ada is beautiful.</td>
<td>Ada used to be beautiful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above examples, (83a) – (84b) belong to the simple CV stative form (or type A) while (85a) – (86b) belong to the CV + \(rV\) form (or type B). Both forms of the two types have their corresponding past markers as bù for type A and bùbù for type B re-
respectively.

Nwachukwu (1984:94) indicates that the above stative past markers are also used in the Onitsha dialect and argues that these forms are becoming so popular among speakers and writers of standard Igbo that they may end up becoming the standard past tense marker for all stative verbs in all dialects of Igbo. Other Igbo dialects have other ways of presenting stative past tense forms which lie outside the scope of this study.

3.8 IMPERATIVE FORMATION WITH STATIVE VERBS IN ORLU IGBO

The two stative verb groups have different ways of forming their imperative, reminiscent of their past tense formation. We shall rapidly examine the imperative forms of the two stative verb types in what follows.

3.8.1 Imperative Form of Type A (Stative Verbs that Use the Simple CV Stem Without the –rV Suffix to Express Present Time Meaning)

Nwachukwu (1984) argues that by their nature, some stative verbs of this group cannot be used in the imperative, and he also states that ‘for those that can be so used, the imperative is formed by adding the open vowel suffix –V to the CV stem’. He cites few examples of such stems apt to imperative construction as kwe ‘agree’, só ‘follow’, to ‘grow’ and chè ‘think’.

The above rule of imperative formation applies in the Orlu dialect, but it is extremely unproductive with the stative verbs of this group due to the nature of their semantic content and application. For instance, it is unacceptable and unusual to give commands with such stative verbs of this group as to ‘grow’, nwe ‘have’, pe ‘be little’, ngma ‘be beautiful’, sa ‘ripen’, bà ‘be fat/big’, re ‘be rotten’, yi ‘resemble’, jńbe ugly/bad’, etc. Commands given with such statives can never be carried out or realized. However, only very few of this group of stative verbs can be used in the imperative in Orlu Igbo. Without pretending to be exhaustive, we can think of the following:

(87) chń to look for

Chń
Look for-VSF
Look for Ibe.

Ibè
Ibe (Pr.N)

egō
money

Search money.

(88) kwe ‘to believe’

Kwèe
Believe-VSF

dà
prep

Chukwu
God

Believe in God.
The two forms co-occur in the dialect.

(89) chè ‘to think’

Chèe
Think-VSF

màkà
about

okwu
case

ahń
Think about that matter/Think about that case.
In the above examples, we observe that both high- and low-tone stative verb roots are neutralized to a grammatical low tone, while the suffix imperative verbal marker -V carries a high tone for both high-tone and low-tone stative verb roots. The imperative formation of stative verbs of this group is identical to that of the dynamic verbs (cf: 3.4).

### 3.8.2 Imperative Form of Type B Stative Verbs (Those that Take the \(--rV\) Suffix to Express Present Time Meaning)

The stative verbs belonging to this group form their imperatives by adding a high-tone-\(rV\) suffix to the CV stem thus:

Imperative = CV (stem) + \(-rV\) (suffix)

Below are some examples with high and low tone stative verb stems:

(90) **bu ọnụ** ‘to carry mouth’

\[\text{Bụru} \quad \text{ọnụ} \quad \text{rùo} \quad \text{mgbèdè}\]

Carry-SF mouth reach-SF evening

Fast till evening.

(91) **kwọ** ‘to carry on the back’

\[\text{Kwọn} \quad \text{ọnwà} \quad \text{gị}\]

Carry-SF on back child you

Carry your child on the back.

(92) **nọ** ‘stay’

\[\text{Nọn} \quad \text{èzi}\]

Stay-SF prep premises

Stay outside.

(93) **ji** ‘to hold’

\[\text{Jìri} \quad \text{egō} \quad \text{gị} \quad \text{n’} \quad \text{aka}\]

Hold-SF money you prep. hand

Hold your money at hand.

From the above examples, we observe as follows:

- Stative verbs of the simple CV type form their imperative by adding a high-tone \(-rV\) suffix to the verb root (or stem).
- The vowel of the \(-rV\) suffix harmonizes with the vowel of the verb root.
- Both low- and high-tone stative verb roots carry a grammatical low tone.
4. CONCLUSION

Our inventory of the two forms of stative verbs (those that do not take the –rV aspectual suffix and those that take it) in the Orlu dialect of Igbo shows that of the 19 stative verb roots that do not take the –rV aspectual suffix, five of them (notably gba ‘run’; kwÔ ‘stand’; kpÑ ‘take along with’; nyà ‘wear something on the neck’; and shi ‘come from’) have both stative and dynamic uses under certain contexts, while seven (namely bà ‘enter’; dà ‘fall’; gba ‘run’; pe ‘be small’; shi ‘cook’; tÔ ‘be sweet’; and za ‘to be swollen’) out of the 17 stative verb roots that take the –rV aspectual suffix to translate non-past time meaning exhibit both stative and dynamic uses. That is to say statistically that about 34.3% of the Orlu dialect stative verbs have both stative and dynamic uses.

Consequently the question which arises is this: Is it pertinent to talk of stative verbs or simply of stative use of verbs in the Orlu dialect of Igbo? This question seems a puzzler. However, since about two thirds (65.7%) of stative verbs in the Orlu dialect behave purely as stative verbs and only about a third (34.3%) is apt to dynamic use, we can conclude that the concept of stative verbs is relevant in the Orlu dialect. In that case, we can envisage to some extent the dynamic use of some stative verbs in the Orlu dialect of Igbo or vice versa.

It is important to note that out of the three S.I. stative verbs of ‘being’, namely nÔ bÔ and dÎ only the first (nÔ exists in the Orlu dialect, but its usage is slightly different. Whereas nÔ bÔ is used to situate only animates in S.I., it is indiscriminately used to situate both the animate and the inanimate ‘beings’ in the Orlu dialect. In S.I., dÎ ‘be’ is used for only inanimate objects. In the Orlu dialect, the S.I. statives bÔ and dÎ are replaced by wÔ and rÔ respectively. Unlike its S.I. equivalent (bÔ wÔ ‘be’ of the Orlu dialect retains its inherent high tone in morpho-syntactic construction and does not automatically change to grammatical low tone associated with stative construction. It fulfils the same functions as bÔ in S.I. Similarly, rÔ is the Orlu equivalent of dÎ ‘be’ but its usage differs slightly from that of dÎ rÔ as descriptive and numeral functions (see 47-50) while dÎ rÔ has the two functions plus situative function, which rÔ does not have. In situative function, the stative nÔ bÔ doubles for both nÔ and rÔ (see 40-42) in the Orlu dialect. For proper understanding of stative verbs in Igbo, it may be necessary to study their forms and uses in other dialects of Igbo.

ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCN</td>
<td>Bound cognate noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Verb root (consonant + vowel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM</td>
<td>Dynamic use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAC</td>
<td>Factative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Nominal Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.D.</td>
<td>Orlu dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERF</td>
<td>Perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREP</td>
<td>Preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr.N</td>
<td>Personal name</td>
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<tr>
<td>pst</td>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-rV</td>
<td>r + Vowel</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.I.</td>
<td>Standard Igbo</td>
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<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Stative use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Verb</td>
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<tr>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Versus</td>
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<tr>
<td>VSF</td>
<td>Open vowel suffix</td>
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<tr>
<td>3s</td>
<td>3rd person pronoun</td>
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</table>
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