

RV APPLICATIVE IN IGBO

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The **rV**¹ affix is perhaps the most studied affix in the Igbo language. However, the studies are mainly based on its morphological characteristics. This paper studies the applicative from a syntactic perspective. In the available literature, the affix has been described as a benefactive, an applicative, a stative, an imperative, a perfective and a preposition marker. In performing the above functions, it sometimes appears as a suffix. This shift in morphological positions has made scholars describe it in different ways. This study therefore provides an alternative model of description for this affix. The approach adopted in the study is syntactic. It uses the structure to find out its thematic role in its various positions. Furthermore, after accounting for the thematic structure, it explains the change that results to the surface structure. It distinguishes where this affix functions as an inflectional affix from where it functions as a syntactic head. This character goes a long way in determining the kind of transformation that affects them and the order in which the transformation may apply. We believe that a syntactic model of analysis provides an alternative and hopefully, a better model of analysis.

L'affixe **rV** est peut-être l'affixe le plus étudié dans la langue igbo. Cependant, les études se sont surtout basées sur les caractéristiques morphologiques. Cet article étudie l'applicatif à partir d'une perspective syntaxique. Dans la littérature en cours, l'affixe a été décrit comme un bénéfactif, un applicatif, un statif, un impératif, un perfectif et un marqueur de préposition. Dans sa performance de ces fonctions, elle apparaît parfois de plusieurs manières. Cette étude tient à proposer un modèle alternatif de description pour cet affixe. L'approche adoptée dans l'étude est syntaxique. Elle utilise la structure pour trouver son rôle thématique dans ses différentes positions. En outre, après avoir rendu compte de la structure thématique, elle explique le changement qui donne lieu à la structure de surface. Elle arrive à distinguer où cet affixe fonctionne comme un affixe inflectionnel des positions où il fonctionne comme une tête syntaxique. Cette caractéristique aide à déterminer le type de transformation qui les affecte et l'ordre dans lequel la transformation peut s'appliquer. Nous croyons qu'un modèle syntaxique d'analyse fournit une alternative et, nous l'espérons, un meilleur modèle d'analyse.

0. INTRODUCTION

Igbo belongs to the West Benue Congo (formerly called the Eastern Kwa) of the Proto Benue-Congo phylum (Williamson and Blench (2000)). It is one of the three official languages of Nigeria. It is spoken in the South Eastern Nigeria, namely Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Imo and in parts of Rivers and Delta states.

¹ For purposes of convenience, we shall continue to use, even though without any particular reason, the form **rV** as in the existing literature.

It is a truism that most African languages are agglutinating. In other words, some lexical items may be made up of many morphemes. Each morpheme may express a unique meaning different from the meanings of the other lexical items. In Igbo, the affix may extend the meaning of the verb root to which it is attached. Emenanjo (1978: 97) has therefore called the affix an extensional affix. He writes, 'The term 'extensional' is used in African linguistics for referring to elements, usually affixes, which function principally as meaning-modifiers, i.e. extending the meaning of the words with which they are used'. Even when the affixation is inflectional in the sense that it does not alter the word class of the derivative, the meaning of the root word is still added to the host.

Variations exist across languages in the way their lexical classes accept affixes either to inflect for grammatical variations or for word formation. For instance, Owolabi (1995) observes that Yoruba produces lots of nouns by the morphological process of prefixation to the roots. In Igbo, it appears that out of the entire lexical classes, it is only the verb that accepts inflection. Some scholars have consequently described the language as a verb language (see Nwachukwu (ed.) (1983)). The verb accepts all kinds of affixes: prefix, inter-fix and suffix. The affix that is of interest to us in this study is the **rV** affix which may appear as a suffix or infix. The **rV** affix is perhaps the most studied affix in Igbo because it occupies many morpho-syntactic positions and expresses many grammatical meanings and functions in the positions. We wish to add to the literature on the affix and provide an alternative syntactic model of analysis to account for its different positions of occurrence.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section is the introduction which gives a highlight of the paper. The second section reviews the existing literature on the **rV** affix. The third section offers an alternative method of analysis to the existing ones. The final section summarises the findings of the paper and concludes the discussion of the paper.

1. RV AFFIX IN LITERATURE

The **rV** is used in Igbo grammar to denote a bound morpheme which is usually attached to the verb to express some structurally determined meaning. In its different forms, the **r** segment is constant while the **v** segment is determined by vowel harmony. The nature of the **v** arises from the vowel of the verb root. The **v** always copies the vowel of the verb root so that the verb can be any of the eight vowels in the standard Igbo and nine vowels in some dialects of the language such as Nsukka, Ika and Ngwa. The following set of examples illustrates this point:

- (1) **bà** + **rV** = **bà-rà** 'entered'
che + **rV** = **chè-rè** 'waited'
bẹ + **rV** = **bẹ-rẹ** 'filled everywhere' (Nsukka Dialect)
dì + **rV** = **dì-rì** 'endured'
fị + **rV** = **fị-rị** 'twisted'
to + **rV** = **tò-rò** 'grew'
kọ + **rV** = **kọ-rọ** 'was scarce'
vu + **rV** = **vù-rù** 'carried' (Ngwa)
dụ + **rV** = **dụ-rụ** 'pricked'

In the above examples, the vowel of the **rV** is determined by vowel harmony, which copies the vowel of the verb root. The **rV** follows this pattern irrespective of its function or the environment in which it occurs in the grammar.

One of the first attempts to study this affix in Igbo was done by Green and Igwe (1963). They recognize only the **-ra** time and non-time suffix. They contend that the suffix obeys the rule of vowel harmony except where it expresses a negative time meaning. They assert that the vowel of the suffix reduplicates the vowel of the preceding syllable. They claim that where it reduplicates, it harmonises as **-ra** or **-re** with the vowel of the preceding syllable. It is necessary to clarify that **-ra** or **-re** here refers to the two major harmonic sets of the Igbo vowels: 'set **a**' and 'set **e**'. The 'set **a**' vowels include **a**, **i**, **o**, and **u** while the 'set **e**' vowels comprise **e**, **i**, **o**, **u**³. They give the following examples:

- (2) a. **O rì-ri ji** 'He ate yam'
 b. **Ọ ch̀-ri eghu** 'He herded goats'
 c. **O bighi-re ñga à** 'He used not to live here'.
 d. **Ọ dighi-ra n' ìgbe** 'It wasn't in the box'

They point out that the suffix has a narrow distribution relative to many other suffixes and attribute it to the fact that there is a homonymous suffix, the **-ra** (non-time). They make a point, which is of interest to us in the following citation:

The **-ra** (time) suffix is found frequently with Subject Verb Form 1⁴, except with the conditional form. It does not, so far as we know, occur with the imperative or narrative verb forms. In the negative forms, it occurs with Subject Verb Form I, main (p.54)

They distinguish between the **-ra** time and non-time suffix in the following way.

The question arises as to how we distinguish between these two homonymous suffixes. In the first place, they are distinguished in meaning. We find **O v̀ ab̀** 'He is (was) carrying a basket' and **O v̀-rù ab̀** 'He carried a basket'. In the second example, the **-ra** time suffix has been added to Subject Verb Form I, main, and gives a past time meaning. This is its normal significance. In the imperative on the other hand we find **V̀uo ab̀!** 'Lift and carry to its destination the basket', and **v̀uo-ro ñ ab̀!** 'Lift and carry to its destination the basket for me'. Here no past time meaning comes in but the meaning 'for', 'on account of', which is so often introduced by the **-ra** (non-time) suffix (p.57)

Emenanjo (1978) also recognizes the **rV** affix. He distinguishes between two types of affix under which one can discuss the different shades of the **rV**. The distinction is between inflectional and extensional suffixes. Emenanjo (1978) claims that unlike the inflectional suffix, whose absence or presence does not change the meaning of a construction, the presence or absence of an extensional suffix changes the meaning. Secondly, while the inflectional suffix is each limited in usage to one construction or one set of syntactically related constructions, the extensional suffix can, in principle, be used in any and all constructions. He illustrates with the following examples:

- (3) **Ọ gẁ** 'It is finished'

- Ọ gwū-la** 'It has finished'
Ọ gwū-wa-la 'It is beginning to finish'
Ọ gwū-kpọọ-la 'It is completely finished'

- (4) **Ọ jè** 'He went'
Ọ jè-rè 'He went'
Ọ jè-wè-rè 'He began to go and continued so'
Ọ jè-kpò-rò 'He completely went'

He explains that the meaning of the extensional suffix demonstrated in examples 3 and 4 is fixed irrespective of the verb that is involved. On the other hand, the inflectional suffix is each limited to a particular usage. Thirdly, he claims that some extensional suffixes are used with or without some other things to express prepositional ideas in Igbo.

Uwalaka (1981) agrees with (1984) on the notion of **-rV** suffix. For avoidance of repetition and for the fact that Nwachukwu's analysis is more elaborate, we will review Nwachukwu (1984). First, he identifies the high tone **-rV** suffix, which marks the imperative form of the verb as in the following example:

- (5) a. **Bù-ru onye isi anyị** 'Be our leader'
 b. **Dị-rị ndụ** 'Stay alive'
 c. **Bù-ru ọnụ bịa** 'Come on an empty stomach'
 d. **Kwò-rọ ya n'azụ gị** 'Carry him/her on your back'

He deduces from the above examples the fact that all the stative verbs which occur in the simple CV form express a present state from their imperative form by adding a high tone – **rV** suffix. Furthermore, he contends that the **-rV** suffix has the same distribution as the high tone open vowel suffix, which is the imperative marker for verbs of activity. They both occur in the following construction types: open conditional construction, serial verb form and perfective form (PERF).

- (6) a. **Àda bi-ri ebe à anyị àma-ra ihe o bù n'uchè.**
 Ada live-if place this we know thing she carry in mind
 'If Ada lives here then we know what she has in mind.'
 b. **Nnennà mèchà-rà ma-ra akwà yi-ri akpukpo ukwu kù-ru nwa che-re.**
 Nnenna do.finish-PAST, tie cloth, wear leather leg, carry child wait
 'Nnenna finished, tied her wrapper, put on her shoes, carried her baby and waited'
 c. **Àda eku-ru-lē nwa n'azụ.**
 Ada carry-PAST.PERF child at back
 'Ada has carried the baby on her back'

Example (6a) illustrates the open conditional construction, (6b) the serial verb form and (6c) the perfective verb form. The **-rV** suffixes are in italics. Nwachukwu argues that there is an obvious complementarity between the **-rV** imperative, conditional construction, serial verb form and perfective verb form in that whereas the open vowel suffix occurs with non-stative verbs, the **-rV** suffix occurs with the stative verbs in such contexts. He

further identifies **-rV** suffixes which take a low tone to express a present time meaning. See example (7). This class of **-rV** is found in many construction types. The construction types include the following: verbs of emotion and mental attitude, verbs of permanent disability, verbs of maturation or deterioration, verbs of aesthetics and value judgment, verbs of content and verbs of ownership. They are illustrated as follows:

(7) a. Verbs of emotion and mental state

- (i) **Ànyị chọ-rò ùdo.**
We want-STATIVE peace
'We want peace'
- (ii) **Unù kwè-rè nà Chukwu**
You(pl) believe-STATIVE in God
'You believe in God'

b. Verbs of Permanent Disability

- (i) **Ogbū dà-rà nwa à.**
Dumbness fall-STATIVE child this
'This child is dumb'.
- (ii) **Ụkwụ rụ-rụ nwokō à**
Leg spoil-STATIVE man this
'This man is deformed'

c. Verbs of maturation or deterioration

- (i) **Anụ ahụ rè-rè ère.**
Meat that decay-STATIVE decaying
'That meat is rotten'
- (ii) **Ùbe à gò-rò ègo.**
Pear this darken darkening
'This pear is ripe'

d. Verbs of Aesthetics and value judgment

- (i) **Ọ mà-rà mmā.**
He/She/It be-STATIVE beauty
'She is beautiful'
- (ii) **Ọ jò-rò njọ.**
He/She/It be-STATIVE ugly
'She is ugly'

e. Verbs of Content

- (i) **Ìte à jù-rù nà òmiri.**
Pot this fill-STATIVE in water
'This pot is full of water'
- (ii) **Mmadù zù-rù èzù.**
Persons complete-STATIVE completing
'The people are complete'

f. Verbs of Ownership

- (i) **Ogù nwè-rè egō.**
 Ogu has-STATIVE money
 ‘Ogu has money/Ogu is rich’

Nwachukwu further observes that these stative verbs form their past forms in two different ways. These ways are illustrated in Mbah (1999) as follows, e.g.

- (8) **Òkeke nwè-re-re egō.**
 Okeke has-STATIVE-PAST money
 ‘Okeke had money/Okeke used to be rich’

The majority of the other dialects of Igbo drop the first **r** such that they have a double vowel before the last syllable as follows:

- (9) **Òkeke nwè-e-re egō.**
 Okeke has-STATIVE-PAST money
 ‘Okeke had money/Okeke used to be rich’

What is not yet settled is the nature of the ordering of the suffixes in the above verb complex, that is, whether the first **-rV** is the past tense marker or the stative marker. Onukawa (1994) believes that the first is the past tense marker while the second is the stative **-rV**. On the other hand, Nwachukwu (1984) and Uwalaka (1995) contend that the first one is the stative marker whereas the second one is the past tense marker. In the analysis, we shall adduce different syntactic evidence from syntax to support the position of Nwachukwu and Uwalaka. Nwachukwu (1984) further observes that the **-rV** suffix is also found in the perfective form of stative verbs in relative clauses. He distinguishes the perfective verb form from the past tense form in the sense that the perfective form has the force of present meaning while the past tense expresses an action which has taken place and seized to be felt in the present. Let us examine the following examples as discussed in Nwachukwu (1984):

- (10) **Nkwù à achaala.**
 Palm ripe.PERF.
 ‘Palm fruits are ripe’
Ofe agwùla.
 Soup finish.PERF.
 ‘The soup is finished’

The examples in (10) are present perfective verb forms (though wrongly tone marked). The **rV** suffix is involved in transforming them into relative clauses, e.g.

- (11) (i) **Ogù nà-ègbu nkwù cha-ra-lā.**
 Ogu be-felling palm ripe-STATIVE-PERF.
 ‘Ogu is felling palm fruits that are ripe’
 (ii) **Ì nà-àjụ màkà ofe gwụ-rụ-lā?**
 You(sg.) be-asking about soup finish-STATIVE-PERF.
 ‘Are you asking after the soup that is finished?’

In example (11), the **-rV** suffix is added to create the perfective meaning. However, it is to be noted that the preverbal prefix that is observed in **achaala** and **agwula** in example (10) is absent in example (11). Nwachukwu wonders whether the same **-rV** relative is the same as the **-rV** non-past marker. He offers three possible explanations to the problem. The first is to assume that the **-rV** stative occurs in relative clauses. The second point of view is to assume that there is a different species of **-rV** which marks the relative clause, which occurs in the perfective form. We tend to look at the phenomenon from a slightly different angle. If it is assumed that stative verbs are verbs, which express some actions that have some inherent quality (Uwalaka (1981)), which are not transient (Nwachukwu (1976, 1983) which according to Lakoff (1966) may be regarded as a subclass of adjectives, then both the relative clause and perfective verb form fall under the same category. We believe that both the relative and perfective verb forms assert the truth of what they say; this fact expressly means that they have some permanence about them. Logically, it is not surprising that the same morpheme is used to express the same notions.

Onukawa (1994) identifies the **-rV** suffix in Igbo. He observes that the **-rV**, among other roles, functions as a preposition. It points to the beneficiary or goal of an action. He agrees with the earlier scholars on the many roles that the **-rV** performs in Igbo grammar. However, he believes that it is the medial **-rV**, which marks tense while the last one marks the preposition function of the **-rV**. As we have already observed, this position is diametrically opposed to the position of Nwachukwu (1976, 1983) and that of Uwalaka (1995). These scholars contend that the reverse is the case. In other words, the last **-rV** suffix marks tense whereas that the medial one marks the preposition/benefactive function (We shall, for a different reason support the view that the medial **-rV** marks the preposition function while the last one marks tense).

Uwalaka (1995) contends that the way Emenanjo (1978) classifies affixes in Igbo can be modified. She does not support Emenanjo's (1978) lumping of the affixes together as extensional suffixes. She argues that the extensional suffixes can be de-classified into subheads such as preposition. She contends that there are no locative and instrumental applicatives in the Igbo language. This position contradicts her recognition of the **-rV** preposition as an instance of locative applicative. Furthermore, she claims that applicatives are analysed as cases of preposition incorporation.

2. AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF ANALYSIS

Emenanjo (1978) classifies affixes in Igbo into two broad categories: inflectional and extensional affixes. The classification is based on the distinction, which he draws from the two. He claims that an inflectional affix is the type of affix whose absence or presence does not change the meaning of a construction. On the other hand, the presence or absence of an extensional affix in a construction changes the meaning of the construction. In other words, the litmus test to determine whether an affix is inflectional or extensional is to examine the meaning of a construction before and/or after affixation. Meaning is therefore a *sine qua non* in this test. However, it is difficult to think of any word or construction whose meaning remains the same after another constituent has been added to it whether the added constituent is a free or bound morpheme or a mere grammatical formative assigned meaning structurally. Furthermore, Uwalaka (1981) has observed that what Emenanjo lumps together as extensional suffixes in the language is a

mosaic of different grammatical categories. The semantic criterion appears to satisfy morphological analysis. Though it may be descriptively adequate, it does not explain how the structure manifested at the surface level of spoken language is arrived at nor does it advert to the dependency of either of the constituents on the other. This observation also goes for the analyses offered by Green and Igwe (1963) and Nwachukwu (1976, 1984). A theory of the grammar of a language should be able to show what a speaker of a language knows when he learns to speak his language (Chomsky (1965, 1989)). That is the reason we offer an alternative model of analysis from the point of view of the argument structure.

2.1 STRUCTURE OF THE IGBO VERB

Nwachukwu (1983), Uwalaka (1995) and Mbah (1999) have observed that the Igbo language centers on the verb. The verb is the only grammatical class, which accepts inflection, including the **rV** affix, in the language. This is why it is difficult to discuss inflection without mentioning the verb. The physical structure of the verb is one reason that some scholars have analysed it the way they have chosen to do so. The basic syllabic structure of the Igbo verb is summed up by Emenanjo (1978) as C^T_s where the C stands for the consonant; T represents the tone while S is a vowel but never a syllabic nasal. Ogwueleka (1987) argues that the Igbo verb whether simple, complex or compound generally begins with a consonant. Its structure is CIV where C stands for the consonant, I for palatalisation while V stands for vowel. However, the verb can take an additional head or suffix. This additional form may result in either a compound or complex verb form. Ogwueleka (1987) has asserted that the test to differentiate between a compound and a complex verb form in Igbo is subjecting the added element to the rule of vowel harmony. If the added constituent obeys the rule of vowel harmony, it means that the verb form is a complex verb form rather than a compound one. In other words, the added element is not independent. On the other hand, if the added element maintains its original form, then it means that the new element is a compound rather than a complex verb form. Mbah (1999) contends that the structure of the simple Igbo verb is **CsaT**. Here, the C stands for the consonant, **sa** for secondary articulation and T stands for the tone. Mbah (1999) observes that tone is a sine qua non in the verb structure because the tone cannot be without a vowel to bear it in any particular position. On the other hand, putting V in that particular position in line with Ogwueleka's postulation does not presuppose that it bears a tone but which in fact is a precondition. Mbah (1999) goes on to demonstrate that the Igbo verb hardly occurs in its simple syllabic structure without taking on some other element. However, the syllabic structure has both syntactic and semantic implications. The added elements may have meanings in the sense of extensional suffixes proposed by Emenanjo (1978) but others may have meanings, which hardly relate to the verb root hosting them. These differences in the semantic properties of the added elements have their syntactic reflexes which are better seen when the argument structure of the verbal complex is shown. In other words, the verbal complex is an end product of syntactic transformation².

² Some scholars have argued that the verbal complex is a product of morphological derivation. Such scholars include Lord (1975) and Anagbogu (1995). Thompson contends that the productive processes of language are not represented in transformations. She claims that compounds involve two derivational processes. The first is that the set derives from lexical rules while the other is that it is listed in the lexicon. Lord (1975) contends that transformations cannot adequately account for compound. She argues that compounds exert some idiosyncratic relationship on their constituents. She also claims that the

2.2 ARGUMENT STRUCTURE OF THE IGBO VERB

The way the verb subcategorises arguments depends on the syntactic structures of the language. Manfredi (1987) proposes a correlation between two parameters on the argument structure of the verb. The verb assigns theta role and accusative case to the argument. In other words, the verb may follow two ways in assigning argument and accusative case: either the verb observes either conditions or it does not exhibit any of them. When a verb assigns both theta role and accusative case, it is said to be transitive (see the table below). Sometimes however, the verb may assign a theta role to an argument but it does not assign the accusative case to it. This category of verbs is what Perlmutter (1978) and Manfredi (1987) call inchoative or unaccusative and lexical causative respectively. The above contentions are summarized by Manfredi (1987) in table 1.

Table 1. Causative Verb

	[+A +DO]	[+A -DO]	[-A]
[+ θ_s]	<u>Transitives</u> John cut the cake John bribed the bureaucrat	<u>Intransitives</u> John talked (his head off)	ruled out
[+ θ_s]	<u>Lexical Causatives</u> The navy sank the ship		<u>Inchoatives</u> John arrived The ship sank
	ruled out	ruled out	<u>Middles</u> The ship sinks easily <u>Passives</u> The ship was sunk by the navy

The Table 1 shows the argument structure of the English verb. In the first column, the verb class assigns a theta role to *John* and the accusative case to *cake* and *the bureaucrat*. The same argument structure is true for the lexical causative *sink*. In the second row is the class of verbs referred to as inchoatives. They are the verbs, which take complements but do not assign the accusative case to the complements. The other class of verbs is the verb complements which appear in the grammatical subject position though such complements are logical objects. This class of verbs includes the inchoative, middle and passive verb. The above structure follows from the arguments of Chomsky (1981), Hale and Keyser (1989). They contend that the proper representation of the predicate structure is itself syntax. In other words, lexical items and their complements enter into a system of representations which in essence is lexical but governed by syntactic principles.

Stowell (1981) claims that lexical heads enter into transitive relationships but never contract intransitive ones. This claim means that all verbs are transitive. Ihionu (1992) and Mbah (1999) have held this position for Igbo. Mbah (1999) has gone further to show that

meaning of compounds translate to action-result, which are coincident with the meaning of the constituents of the compounds.

even the glossary of the unaccusative and unergative verbs in English as demonstrated by Levin (1987) subcategorise complements obligatorily in Igbo, e.g.

(12) Unergatives

a. Verbs of communication

Sarà kwù-ru okwu
Sarah speak-PAST speech
'Sarah spoke'

b. Verbs of manner of speaking

O tì-ri mkpu
He/She/It shout- PAST shout
'She shouted'

c. Verbs of sounds made by animals

Nkìtā ahù gbọ-rọ ụja.
Dog that bark- PAST bark
'The dog barked.'

d. Verbs of bodily process

Pọ̀òl kwa-ra ụkwara
Paul cough- PAST cough
'Paul coughed'

e. Verbs of gestures and signs

Jeèn kwe-re n'isi
Jane agree- PAST on head
'Jane nodded'

f. Verbs of performance

Chikà gba-ra egwu
Chika dance- PAST music
'Chika danced'

(13). Unaccusative verbs

a. Verbs of change of state

Jọ̀ọ̀n nwụ-rụ ọnwụ
John die- PAST death
'John died'

b. Verbs of change of colour

Ụtụ ahù gbaji-ri ojii
Apple that dark- PAST black
'The apple blackened'

c. Verbs of existence and occurrence

Ọ dị ndụ
 He/She/It be life
 ‘She exists’

d. Verbs of appearance and disappearance

Okeke dè-re mmiri
 Okeke wet- PAST water
 ‘Okeke disappeared’

The above English examples and their Igbo translations show that the structures which are assumed to be intransitive in English in the traditional grammar are transitive in Igbo in the sense that they subcategorise arguments which are absent in the English examples. This argument shall be supported with the case of the **rV** affix in the grammar.

One feature of the Igbo language which is not common in the English language is consecutivisation. Consecutivisation is the coming together of two or more lexical heads without an intervening variable in a verbal complex. In this kind of structure, each head is a lexical head in its own right. In other words, the classification of suffixes by Emenanjo (1978) needs to be modified. What he classifies as extensional suffixes may further be broken down into two: extensional suffixes and consecutivised heads. Extensional suffixes refer to the suffixes which add to the meaning of the head while the consecutivised heads are lexemes whether free or bound which happen to be linked together with the verb by morpho-syntactic rules to make meaning. Among the consecutivised heads is the **rV** which is not an extensional suffix but a preposition which does not extend the meaning of the verb. This classification is in accord with the **rV** past and **rV** non-past identified by Green and Igwe (1963) and Nwachukwu (1984). The argument structure of the two types of **rV** will attest to this analysis.

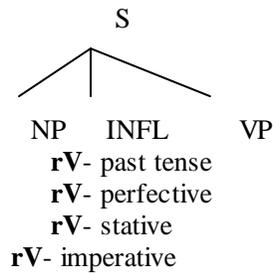
Green and Igwe (1963) identify two types of the **rV**: the ra-time and the non-time **rV**. Emenanjo (1978) argues for the extensional and inflectional **rV**. Nwachukwu (1984) identifies the **rV** which marks the imperative, open conditional construction, serial verb form and the perfective verb form. Onukawa (1994) and Uwalaka (1995) observe that the **rV** functions as a preposition or benefactive and as an applicative. A close observation of the above classifications reveals that the categories are based on function but not on the syntactic structure. We contend that the **rV** identified in literature may be reclassified into two. The **rV** that marks stative, imperative, perfective, negative, serial verb construction, open conditional construction fall under agreement (AGR) in the government and Binding model of grammatical analysis. We argue that the **rV** which Onukawa (1994) and Uwalaka (1995) identify as the benefactive or the preposition marker is an **rV**-head. In other words, what we call **rV** agreement marker may refer to what Emenanjo sometimes call the inflectional marker and at other times the extensional suffix. Our **rV**-head is a full morpheme in the grammar which belongs to a different grammatical class from the verbal category. It coincides with what Uwalaka and Onukawa call the benefactive or preposition marker. We believe that the function which each of them performs within a given syntactic position arises out of context.

The syntactic feature of the two classes of the **rV** may be demonstrated as follows:

- (13) **Anụ ahụ rẹ-rẹ ère.**
Meat that decay-STATIVE decaying
'That meat is rotten'
- (14) **Nkwụ àchaā-la.**
Palm ripe-PERF.
'Palm fruits are ripe'
- (15) **Ogù nà-ègbu nkwụ cha-rā-la.**
Ogu be-falling palm ripe-STATIVE-PERF.
'Ogu is felling palm fruits that are ripe'
- (16) a. **Bùrụ onye isi ānyị**
'Be our leader'
- b. **Dịrị ndụ**
'Stay alive'
- (17) **Chikà gbà-rà egwu**
Chika dance-PAST music
Chika danced

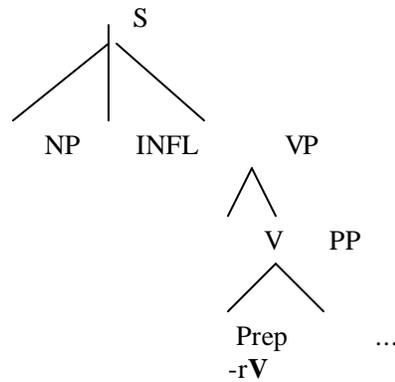
Examples (13-17) demonstrate some of the sentence structures where the **rV** functions in different capacities. In (13), it marks the stative, in (14) and (15) the perfective whereas in (16) and (17) it marks the imperative and past tense respectively. All of them come under the inflection phrase.

Fig 1



In Fig. 1, the **rV**-agreement marker comes under the same grammatical node, namely the inflectional node. In the case of the **rV**-head, it appears under a different node from these ones identified in Fig. 1. Let us examine Figure 2:

Fig. 2



In Fig. 2, the **rV** expresses a preposition notion, which is realised as benefactive in theta-theory. The verb in this structure is a three place predicate. It subcategorises the subject (agent), the direct object (theme) and the indirect object (beneficiary), e.g.

- (18) a. **Odò rù-ù-rù** **m̄ ụgbọ àlà**
 Odo work-for-PAST I vehicle land
 Odo repaired my car
- b. **Ogè rè-è-rè** **m̄ azụ**
 Oge sell-for-PAST I fish
 Oge sold fish for me

As in examples 8 and 9, **-ù-** and **-è-** are shortened forms of the **-rV** preposition, which usually translates to for or against in English. The **-rV** preposition marker is seen in three place predicate verbs.

The **rV** affix appears in the verbal complex despite its status in the structure. This can be explained within the axiom of antisymmetry in syntax developed by Kayne (1994). The axiom holds that in a linear ordering of a syntactic structure, the relationship between the constituents must be transitive and total. This means that the lexical items must each unite with one another. In other words, if there are three uniting items (let us assume A, B, C) in the linear ordering, A unites with B, B unites with C and A unites with C by the fact that B which unites with A also unites with C. The second limb of the axiom is that it must be total. It must involve all the elements in the linear ordering. Meaning is therefore generated whether the constituents of a sentence, after the base generation stage, are concatenated or consecutivised. The ordering of the lexical items at the base generation stage which amounts to the argument structure of the construction is vital to its overall meaning. This is why we need to comment on the argument whether it is the first or the second **rV** in a series of **rVs** that marks past tense or preposition. This argument arose when Onukawa (1994) posited that it is the first in a series of two **rVs** that marks tense and the other preposition. This contention departs from the position of Nwachukwu who holds that the reverse is the case. Nwachukwu's position is supported by Uwalaka (1995) hence the debate. We support the position of Nwachukwu (1984) and Uwalaka (1995) with a new piece of evidence. This evidence is the head to head movement principle. From Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 above, it is observed that the **rVs** fall under different heads. The **rVs** in

Fig. 1 are agreement features while the one in Fig. 2 is a prepositional head. At the morphophonemic level, where the merging of grammatical formatives takes place, the head and the affixes come together at their relevant slots. The order of so doing is that the heads must merge together first before the affixes do. This requirement was formulated by Travis (1984) and Chomsky (1986). The implication is that the **rV** which is the head must merge with the verb before the one that is an affix (see also Fodor and Katz (1964), Oluikpe (1979), Radford (2004, 2006) and Mbah (2006)). Therefore, the **rV** which is closest to the verb is the preposition while that which follows, in the absence any other head, is the tense marker. Consequently, we agree with the position of Nwachukwu (1984) and Uwalaka (1995).

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have argued that the discussion on the **rV** affix in Igbo is based on its function in different construction types. The discussion on the subject matter may be descriptively adequate but it does not explain the underlying principle behind its behaviour. This paper has therefore argued that it behaves in different ways because the argument structure is different. This is in spite of the fact that sometimes it appears to share the same morphological form with the other types of **rVs** performing different functions. The major finding of the paper is that the argument structures of the **rVs** differ from one another and so account for the different meanings they have in varying contexts. Furthermore, when the lexical items and the grammatical formatives, which form a given sentence structure have taken their structural positions, transformation applies to rearrange them to their positions at the surface structure level. Once the argument structure has been formed, it is semantically immaterial whether concatenation or consecutivisation of the lexical items takes place.

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