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Verb classification and *Aktionsart* in Igbo

Abstract: The phenomenon of *aktionsart* is an important aspect of the verbal system of Igbo. This paper develops six syntactic tests for determining verb classes and *aktionsart* in Igbo, following Van Valin (2005) and Van Valin and La Polla (1997). Four of these tests include the co-occurrence of the various members of the verb classes with Igbo words that have adverbial notions. One of the tests has to do with the co-occurrence of the *na*`progressive marker, while the other tests for causative verbs.

The first test involves Activity verbs. Here, the obligatory co-occurrence of Activity verbs with the *na*`progressive marker distinguishes this class of verbs from others. In the second test, the adverbial noun *nwáyo*`‘slowly’ occurs with Active Accomplishment verbs and distinguishes this class from the rest. The third test has to do with the co-occurrence of the adverbial noun *ófúma*`‘well’ with Achievement verbs. This test is also relevant for determining State verbs from Attributive State verbs. However, it is the distinguishing test for Achievement verbs. In the fourth test, the adverbial noun *ozigbo*`‘immediately’ occurs with Semelfactives and distinguishes them from the other verb classes. Test 5 is for Causative verbs; all the verbs in our data fail this test because we have not selected causative verbs. The last test, to determine State verbs, involves the inability of State verbs to co-occur with any adverbial nouns or the *na*`progressive marker.

Key words: *Igbo, aktionsart, verb classes, telicity, logical structure*

1. Background

Igbo is a major language in Nigeria with eighteen million speakers (Adegbija, 2004). It belongs to the Kwa (Benue-Congo sub-branch) of language family (Bendor-Samuel, 1989). Igbo has two basic tones: High and Low. The phenomenon of downstep is present in the language. In this paper the tone pattern of each lexical item is provided to underscore the importance of tone in the language.

1.1. Data Collection

The constructions studied in this paper have been tested for grammaticality by speakers of the Nnewi and Nsukka dialects of Igbo. Many of the examples are utterances by broadcasters and Igbo gospel artistes, who are ingenious with the use of the language. In translating the examples I try to convey native speaker intuitions about the sentences. In other words, the translation of the sentences may have some *Igboness* in the background. However, we hope that this approach to translation does not come at the expense of clarity.

1.3. Theoretical Orientation

The study is undertaken within the framework of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) as developed in Van Valin (2005) and Van Valin and La Polla (1997). The RRG framework implements a system of lexical decomposition based on Vendler's (1967) theory of *Aktionsart*, the 'inherent temporal properties of verbs'. Van Valin (2005) proposes six classes of verbs, viz: State, Achievement, Accomplishment, Activity, Active Accomplishment and Semelfactives. A number of syntactic and semantic tests determine the *Aktionsart* of a clause.

The RRG framework implements a system of lexical decomposition of verbs with State and Activity predicates as basic. The lexical representation is known as the Logical Structure (LS) of the predicate. State predicates are represented as **predicate'** and Activity predicates include **do'**.

Accomplishment LS have the operator BECOME, while Achievements LS have the operator INGR, ‘ingressive’. Semelfactives include the operator SEML. See Van Valin (2005) and Van Valin and La Polla (1997) for details of the lexical representation for *aktionsart* classes.

The RRG framework is justifiable for this study because it classifies Igbo verbs based on lexical decomposition instead of by specification and abstraction.

2.0. Tests for determining *aktionsart* class of Igbo verbs

In this work, we have developed a number of syntactic tests for identifying the different classes of Igbo verbs (Table 1). We should note that these tests are not absolute but guides to classifying these verbs.

Test	Criterion	State	Attributive State	Activity	Achievement	Accomplishment	Active Accomplishment	Semelfactive
1.	Occurs with <i>na</i> ‘progr marker	No	No	Yes (obligatorily)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
2.	Occurs with the adverbial noun <i>nwayo</i> ‘slowly’	No	No	Irrelevant	No	No	Yes	No
3.	Occurs with the adverbial noun <i>ofuma</i> ‘well’	No	Yes	Irrelevant	Yes	Irrelevant	Yes	No
4.	Occurs with the adverbial noun <i>ozigbo</i> ‘immediately’	No	No	No	Irrelevant	irrelevant	No	Yes
5.	Occurs with the causative paraphrase marker <i>me</i> ‘do’, ‘cause’	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
6.	Fails all the criteria	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No

Table 1: verb class tests for Igbo

The first test, which involves the progressive marker *na`*, is the only relevant test for Activity verbs. This progressive marker occurs obligatorily with Activity verbs. This first test also serves to distinguish static verbs from non-static verbs.

The second test involves the occurrence of the adverbial noun *nwayo* ‘slowly’ and serves to distinguish Active Accomplishment verbs from the rest of the verb classes. The occurrence of the adverbial noun *nwáyo`* with Activity verbs is an irrelevant test because it does not establish whether a verb is an Activity verb or not. The adverbial noun *nwáyo`* ‘slowly’ cannot occur with the rest of the verb classes.

In the third test, the adverbial noun *ofúma`* ‘well’ serves a number of purposes. First, the occurrence of the adverbial noun *ofúma`* with State verbs is only marginally acceptable but it occurs grammatically with Attributive State verbs. This is a clear test to distinguish State verbs from Attributive State verbs. The occurrence of the adverbial noun *ofúma`* with Activity and Accomplishment verbs is an irrelevant test; however, it can occur with Achievement verbs and this test serves to distinguish Achievement verbs from the rest of the verb classes.

The Semelfactive class of verbs passes only one criterion out of the six. This is the fourth test and it is this test that distinguishes Semelfactives from the rest of the verb classes. In this test, the adverbial noun *ozigbo* ‘immediately’ occurs with Semelfactives. Accomplishment verbs can be distinguished by the fact that the only test they pass is the first test. However, the difference between Activity and Accomplishment verbs is that the *na`* progressive marker obligatorily occurs with Activity verbs while its occurrence with Accomplishment verbs is not obligatory, albeit, acceptable.

A fifth test is used to determine Causative verbs. To pass the Causative test, the verb should be a compound verb, it should also be paraphrased with the causative marker, *me`*, ‘do’ and

should have at least two arguments. All the verbs in our data fail this test, as none of them is a causative verb.

The sixth test is used to establish that a verb is a State verb. State verbs fail all the tests for determining the class of verbs. In the next section we shall illustrate the application of these tests to basic Igbo sentences.

2.1. State Verbs

State verbs from our data include the following in (1):

1. a. ípù árá 'to run mad'
- b. íkū ñgwóro 'to get lame'
- c. ídā ìbèribè 'to get daft'

2.1.1. Aktionsart Tests for State Verbs

The basic sentences in (2) below are grammatical because none of the tests in Table 1 above apply to them. However, the sentences in (3a, b, c, d and e) are ungrammatical because five of the six tests have been applied to them, while (3f) is grammatical because Test 6, which is specific to State verbs, is applied. Note that sentence (2a) is used as a representative for the tests in (3). This is because the verbs in (2a-e) all pass and fail the same tests. The semantic representations of the sentences are shown in (2a'-c').

2. a. òkónkwó pù-rù árá
 Okonkwo go out-IND madness
 'Okonkwo is mad'
- a'. **go out'** (Okonkwo, árá)
- b. nwāgbóghó áhù kù-rù ñgwóro
 Young lady DEM hit-IND lameness
 'That young lady is lame'
- b'. **hit'** (nwāgbóghó, ñgwóro)
- c. nwókē à dā-rā ìbèribè
 man DEM fall-IND daft
 'this man is daft'

c'. **fall-into'** (nwókē, ibèribè)

The logical structure (LS) of the verb is the semantic interpretation of the verb in the sentence which can differ from its meaning in other sentences. In (2a'), the LS indicate that 'madness' is not an attribute of Okonkwo but a result state which Okonkwo ran into. This action by Okonkwo is temporally unbounded. In other words, it is atelic. In (2b') the state of lameness of the young lady is interpreted as a condition that hit upon the young lady. It is also atelic. The interpretation of (2c') is that the man has fallen into a state of daftness, which is temporally unbounded, or atelic.

2.1.2. Constructions Failing the Tests for State Verbs

3. a. *okōṅkwó nà á-pù árá
Okonkwo PROG AGR-go out madness
'Okonkwo is habitually mad' ie, madness is a habit of Okonkwo
- b. *okōṅkwó pù-rù árá *nwayo'*
Okonkwo go-out madness slowly
'Okonkwo ran mad gradually'
- c. *okōṅkwó pù-rù árá *ofúma*
Okonkwo go-out madness well
'Okonkwo ran mad in a good way'
- d. *okōṅkwó pù-rù árá *ozigbo*
Okonkwo go-out madness immediately
'Okonkwo ran mad immediately' ie, Okonkwo ran mad only for a moment
- e. *okōṅkwó *me-re'* pù-rù árá
Okonkwo cause-IND go-out madness
- f. okōṅkwó pù-rù árá
Okonkwo go out-IND madness
'Okonkwo ran mad'

As sentence (3a) shows, the State verbs cannot occur with the progressive marker *nà*. The second test in Table 1, when applied to basic sentences with State verbs, results in ungrammatical sentences. This is illustrated with (3b) above, where the adverbial noun *nwayo* 'slowly' occurs in

the sentence. The third test in Table 1 is applied to sentence (3c), which is ungrammatical. Here, the adverbial noun *ofúma* ‘well’ occurs in the sentence. In sentence (3d) the adverbial noun *ózígbó* ‘immediately’ cannot occur in the sentence. This is test 4, which State verbs fail. State verbs are lexically not causative verbs, so they fail test 5, depicted by (3e). The causative paraphrase marker cannot co-occur with State verbs. The only test that State verbs pass in our criteria is test 6, which is used to determine the verb class that fails all the tests. This test is specific for determining State verbs

The test results for State verbs are illustrated in Table 2:

State verbs	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Test 6
	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

Table 2: test results for State verbs

2.2. Attributive State Verbs

The following are Attributive State verbs from our data in

4. a. *ípé mpē* ‘to be small’
b. *íká óbì* ‘to be courageous’
c. *íté ákā* ‘to be distant’

2.2.1. Aktionsart Tests for Attributive State verbs

The basic sentences in (5) include Attributive State verbs without the tests in Table 1 applied to them. However, the sentences in (6) are derived from (5a) which serves as a representative of all the sentences in (5) because all the verbs in (5a-c) can pass and fail the same tests. Note that (6c) is grammatical because it passes test 3, which is the distinguishing test between State and Attributive State verbs. The semantic representations of the verbs are illustrated in their logical structures in (5a’-c’).

5. a. *ńtī òké pè-rè mpé*
ear rat V-IND smallness
‘A rat’s ear is small’

- a'. **be'** (nti oke, [**m̀pé**])
 b. Tágbó kà-rà òbí
 Tagbo V-IND heart
 'Tagbo is courageous'
 b'. **be'** (Tágbó, [**kà òbí**])
 c. ùlò yá tè-rè áká
 house 3s(obj) V-IND V
 'His/her house is far'
 c'. **be'** (ùlò yá, [**tè áká**])

The LS represented in (5a'-c') indicates that the verbs are attributive predicates which encode the inherent qualities of the subjects of the sentence. The second argument positions of **be'** in (5a'-c') are filled by adjectival predicates (in bold face). They are not result State predicates. However, they are inherently unbounded in their action, hence atelic.

Therefore, the adjectival predicate *m̀pé* 'smallness' is an attribute of the rat's ear in (5a') while the predicate *kà òbí* 'courageous' is an attribute of Tágbó in (5b'). In (5c'), the predicate *tè áká* 'be far' serves to encode the property of remoteness of the house.

2.2.2. Constructions Failing the Tests for Attributive State Verbs

6. a. *ńtī oké na` e-pè m̀pé
 ear rat PROG AGR-V smallness
 b. *ńtī oké pè-rè m̀pé nwayo`
 ear rat V-IND smallness slowly
 c. ńtī oké pè-rè m̀pé ofuma
 ear rat V-IND smallness well
 d. *ńtī oké pè-rè m̀pé ozigbo
 ear rat V-IND smallness immediately
 e. *ńtī oké me`-re` pè-rè m̀pé
 ear rat cause-IND V-IND smallness

In (6a) the sentence is ungrammatical, as Attributive State verbs cannot occur with the *na`* progressive marker. Attributive State verbs cannot occur with the adverbial nouns *nwayo*

‘slowly’ and *ozigbo* ‘immediately’, so sentences (6b) and (6d) are ungrammatical. Since Attributive State verbs in this data are not causatives, (6e) is ungrammatical. The verb cannot undergo the causative paraphrase test, which is test 6. Note that (6c) is grammatical because Attributive State verbs pass test 3, which is its occurrence with the adverbial noun *ofuma*. Test 6 is irrelevant for determining Attributive State verbs. The test results for Attributive State verbs are illustrated in Table 3 below.

Attributive State verbs	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Test 6
	No	No	Yes	No	No	No

Table 3: test results for attributive State verbs

In this section we examine the application of the tests in Table 1 to Achievement verbs. **2.3.**

Achievement Verbs

Achievement verbs are illustrated in (7).

7. a. ígwò ñgwòngwò ‘to mix condiments’
 b. ígwòrò āgwòró ‘to squat’
 c. íwó àwòrò ‘to shed skin’

2.3.1 Aktionsart test for Achievement Verbs

The sentences in (8a-c) which include Achievement verbs are all grammatical. None of the tests in Table 1 have been applied to them. Following the pattern in this analysis, the sentences in (9) are derived from (8a), which serves as a representative of the Achievement verbs in our data. The example in (9a) is grammatical. The progressive marker *na* can occur with Achievement verbs, although this is not obligatory. Again, the sentence in (9c) is grammatical because the verb can occur with the adverbial noun *ofuma* ‘well’. This is the distinguishing test for Achievement verbs. The semantic representations of the verbs are illustrated in (8á-é).

8. a. Ngózi gwò-rò ñgwòngwò
 Ngozi mix-TNS condiments

Ngozi prepared 'ngwongwo'

a'. INGR **mixed**' (Ngozi, Ngwongwo)

b. Nwókē áhù gwò-rò àgwòrò
man DEM V-TNS squatting
'That man squatted'

b'. 'INGR **squatted**' (Man)

c. àgwó àhù wò-rò àwòrò
snake DEM change-TNS dead skin (of reptiles)
'that snake sloughed its skin'

c.' INGR **sloughed**' (snake)

The semantic representation of the verbs in (8a'-c') indicates that there is an instantaneous transition from one state to another. The transition in (8a') involves the state in which the condiments are yet unmixed to the state in which the condiments turn into a meal. The beginning of the action is the onset of the mixing of the condiments while the terminal point is when it evolves into a meal, *nègwòngwò*. Therefore, the verb in (8a') is telic or bounded. In (8b'), the transition involves the moment when the man is standing to the state when he crouches. This is an instantaneous action with a terminal point; thus the verb in (8b') is telic. Similarly, the transition in (8c') begins when the snake starts the process of sloughing its dead skin and continues to the state when it emerges with a new shining skin. This transition is instantaneous but inherently terminal or telic.

2.3.2 Constructions Failing the Test for Achievement Verbs

9. a. Ngózī nà a-gwò nègwòngwò
Ngozi PROG AGR-mix condiments
'Ngozi is mixing condiments'
- b. *Ngózī gwò-rò nègwòngwò *nwayo*
Ngozi mix-IND condiments slowly
- c. Ngózī gwò-rò nègwòngwò *ofúma*
Ngozi mix-IND condiments well
'Ngozi prepared well the ngwongwo meal'

- d. *Ngózi gwò-rò ñgwòngwò *ozigbo*
 Ngozi mix-IND condiments immediately
- e. *Ngózi *me-re* gwò ñgwòngwò
 Ngozi cause mix condiments

The sentences in (9b, d and e) are ungrammatical, as Achievement verbs fail Tests 2, 4 and 5 in Table 1. As seen in (9b), the verb cannot occur with the adverbial nouns *nwáyo* ‘slowly’, while in (9d) its occurrence with the adverbial noun *ozigbo* is irrelevant for this test, since the verb itself inherently encodes an immediate action. The Achievement verb in example (9) derived from (8a) is not a causative verb, so it fails the causative paraphrase test in (9e).

The test results for Achievement verbs are shown in Table 4:

Achievement verbs	Test1	Test2	Test3	Test4	Test5	Test6
	Yes	No	Yes	irrelevant	No	No

Table 4: test results for Achievement verbs

In the next section, we apply the tests in Table 1 to the Accomplishment verbs in our data.

2.4. Accomplishment Verbs

Accomplishment verbs include the following in (10) below.

10. a. ígbó ụfũfù ‘to froth’
 b. ídā mba ‘to backslide’
 c. ígbázè ‘to melt’

2.4.1. Aktionsart test for Accomplishment Verbs

The sentences in (11) below illustrate how Accomplishment verbs behave in basic sentences.

They are all grammatical. None of the tests in Table 1 has been applied to them. We shall take example (11a) as the representative of Accomplishment verbs in the data and apply the syntactic tests to the sentence. The examples in (12a-e) illustrate how Accomplishment verbs behave when our syntactic tests are applied.

11. a. mmányá áhù gbò-rò ùfùfù
 wine DEM vomit-TNS froth
 ‘that wine frothed’
 a’. BECOME **froth**’ (wine)
 b. òbí dà-rà m̀bà
 Obi fall-TNS supine
 ‘Obi backslid’
 b’. BECOME **backslidden**’ (òbí)
 c. mmánú áhù gbàzè-rè
 oil DEM melt-IND
 ‘That oil melted’
 c’. BECOME **melted**’ (oil)

The lexical representation of the verbs in (11a’-c’) above shows that the change of state brought about by the Accomplishment verbs is not instantaneous but a gradual process. Hence, in (11a’), the process of frothing is not instantaneous but it takes place over a period of time which has a terminal point. Accomplishment verbs are thus inherently bounded or telic. In (11b’), the period of when Obi lapses into a lower moral or religious status is not immediate, even though it has a terminal point. The verb encodes an inherently bounded action. This telicity is also exhibited in (11c’) where the process of melting of the oil is gradual as indicated by the logical structure of the verb.

In the examples in (12) only (12b and e) are ungrammatical. The adverbial noun *nwayo* cannot occur with an Accomplishment verb (12b), and for (12e) the Accomplishment verb fails the causative paraphrase test. In (12c and d) the occurrence of the adverbial nouns *ofuma* and *ozigbo* respectively is not relevant for determining the class of verbs because the modification they bring to the verbs can be dispensed with. We illustrate the test results for Accomplishment verbs with Table 5 below.

2.4.2. Constructions failing the test for Accomplishment Verbs

12. a. mmányá áhù na` a-gbò ùfùfù
 wine DEM PROG AGR-vomit froth
 ‘the wine is frothing’
- b. *mmányá áhù gbò-rò ùfùfù *nwayo*
 wine DEM vomit-TNS froth slowly
- c. mmányá áhù gbò-rò ùfùfù *ofuma*
 wine DEM vomit-TNS froth well
 ‘That wine frothed well’
- d. mmányá áhù gbò-rò ùfùfù *ozigbo*
 wine DEM vomit-TNS froth immediately
 ‘That wine frothed immediately’
- e. *mmányá áhù *me-re* gbò ùfùfù

Accomplishment verbs	Test1	Test2	Test3	Test4	Test5	Test6
	Yes	No	Irrelevant	irrelevant	No	No

Table 5: test results for Accomplishment verbs

2.5. Activity Verbs

The application of the syntactic tests to Activity verbs is the focus of this section. Activity verbs are presented in example (13) below.

13. a. íghú ányáókū ‘to act jealous’
 b. í mí āmı ‘to be slippery to the touch’
 c. ísí àgùgò ‘to doubt’

2.5.1 Aktionsart test for Activity Verbs

The examples in (14a-c) are sentences showing how Activity verbs behave. Our syntactic tests in Table 1 have not been applied to the examples in (14a-c). The lexical representation of these sentences is shown in (14a’-c’). Example (14a) is taken as the representative of Activity verbs and our syntactic tests are applied to it as depicted in examples (15).

14. a. ó nà- è-ghú ányáókū -
 3s PROG- AGR-burn hot eye

- ‘S/he is jealous’
- a. **do’** (3s, [**ányáókū’** (3s)])
- b. àlà à nà- à-mí ‘-anī
 Floor DEM PROG- AGR-slip AGRslip
 ‘the floor is slippery’
- b. **do’** (àlà [**mí’** (ϕ)])
- c. ó nà- è-sí àgùgò
 3s PROG AGR-cook doubt
 ‘S/he doubts’
- c. **do’** (3s, [**sí’**, (3s, doubt)])

Activity verbs in Igbo obligatorily co-occur with the *na* progressive marker. It is this progressive marker that gives the sentences in (14a-c) their inherent activity reading. Note that Achievement, Accomplishment, and Active Accomplishment verbs can also occur with the *na* progressive marker but this occurrence is not obligatory.

The lexical representations of Activity verbs in (14a’-c’) encode the temporally unbounded actions of the verbs. They show the demonstrable actions of the subjects of the sentences. These actions are atelic.

The representation in (14a’) specifies that the action of the subject is predicated on the ‘burning in the eye’ (jealousy in Igbo is conceived as a burning feeling in the eye). Neither the starting nor the terminal point of this burning feeling in the eye is encoded in the verb. It is an on going activity. In (14b’) the dynamic action of the verb is represented in the structure. The demonstrable slippery action of the ground is encoded in the verb. This action is atelic. The action of doubting in Igbo as conceived in (14c’) is an activity where the doubter repeatedly cooks the reasons for his doubts. In other words, doubting is not an occurrence but iterative. This makes the verb in (14’) atelic.

The sentences in (15) are the results of our syntactic tests on Activity verbs. (15a) is grammatical, as the *na* progressive marker obligatorily occurs with the verb. However, (15b-e)

are ungrammatical. These sentences fail in various ways fail the syntactic tests in Table 1. The tests in (15b and c) are irrelevant because the adverbial nouns (in italics) are vacuous in the sentence. Examples (15d and e) fail tests 4 and 5 respectively. Test 6 is not relevant for Activity verbs. The syntactic test results for Activity verbs are shown in Table 6 below.

2.5.2 Constructions Failing the Tests for Activity Verbs

15. a. ó nà- è-ghú ányáókù -
 3s PROG- AGR-burn hot eye
 ‘S/he is jealous’
- b. *ó nà- è-ghú ányáókù - *nwayo*
 3s PROG- AGR-burn hot eye
- c. *ó nà è-ghú ányáókù - *ofuma*
 3s PROG- AGR-burn hot eye
- d. *ó nà è-ghú ányáókù - *ozigbo*
 3s PROG- AGR-burn hot eye
- e. *ó nà *e-mé* è-ghú ányáókù -
 3s PROG AGR-do AGR-burn hot eye

Activity	Test1	Test2	Test3	Test4	Test5	Test6
verbs	Yes	Irrelevant	irrelevant	No	No	No

Table 6: test results for Activity verbs

2.6. Active Accomplishment Verbs

16. a. ígùgù ‘to console’
 b. ísē sìgá ‘to smoke cigarettes’
 c. ínwú íyī ‘to swear to an oath’

2.6.1. Aktionsart Test for Active Accomplishment Verbs

We follow the same pattern of analysis for example (17) below, where (17a-c) include examples of Active Achievement verbs without the syntactic tests, while (17a'-c') are the semantic representation of these verbs. Active Accomplishment verbs like Activity verbs involve dynamic

actions, but while Activity verbs are atelic, Active Accomplishment verbs in Igbo are telic, as the semantic representation in (17a'-c') indicates.

17. a. ózíomā gúgù-rù nwá yá
 Ozioma console-TNS child 3s (obj)
 'Ozioma consoled her crying child'
- a.' **do'** (ezioma, [**carry'** (ezioma, nwá)]) & INGR **consoled'** (nwá)
- b. èmeká sè-rè sìgá
 Emeka draw-TNS cigarette
 'Emeka smoked a cigarette'
- b.' **do'** (Emeka, [**pick'** (Emeka, sìgá)]) & INGR **smoked'** (sìgá)
- c. ó nwù-rù íyí
 3s drink-TNS oath
 'S/he swore to an oath'
- c.' **do'** (3s, [**go'** (3s, íyí)]) & INGR **drink'** (íyí)

The structure (17a') depicts the activity of Ozioma carrying her crying child but this activity terminates with the child being consoled. In other words, the verb is a result State verb. Carrying and consoling the child results in the state of the child not crying. This indicates that the verb is inherently telic. The structure in (17b') represents the activity of Emeka picking up a cigarette with this activity resulting in the state where the cigarette is smoked. The verb in (17b') is also a telic verb. (17c') can also be analysed along the lines of (17a' and b'). The structure in (17c') involves the activity of the subject going to the shrine, with this activity terminating in the taking of an oath of truthfulness at the shrine. The verb is inherently telic. Let us now look at the syntactic tests in example (18).

2.6.2. Constructions Failing the Test for Active Accomplishment Verbs

18. a. ózíomā na' gúgù-rù nwá yá
 Ozioma PROG console-TNS child 3s (obj)
 'Ozioma consoled her child'
- b. ózíomā gúgù-rù nwá yá nwayo
 Ozioma console-TNS child 3s (obj) slowly

- c. ózíómā gúgù-rù nwá yá ofuma
Ozioma console-TNS child 3s (obj) well
- d. *ózíómā gúgù-rù nwá yá ozigbo
Ozioma console-TNS child 3s (obj) immediately
Ozioma consoled her child'
- e. *ózíómā me-re` gúgù-rù nwá yá
Ozioma do-IND console-TNS child 3s (obj)

The *na`* progressive marker (of test 1) occurs in (18a) but this is not an obligatory occurrence. So it is not a distinguishing test for Active Accomplishment verbs. The adverbial noun *nwayo* 'slowly' (of test 2) can occur with Active Accomplishment verbs as shown in (18b). This test is the distinguishing test for Active Accomplishment verbs. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in practical speech the adverbial noun is repeated at least twice, for effect. The adverbial noun *ofuma* 'well' occurring in (18c), even though grammatical, is not a distinguishing test for Active Accomplishment verbs. Active Accomplishment verbs fail tests 4 and 5 which are represented in (18d and e). Test 6 is not relevant for this class of verbs. The table below shows the results for Active Accomplishment verbs.

Active Accomplishment verbs	Test1	Test2	Test3	Test4	Test5	Test6
	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

Table 7: test results for Active Accomplishment verbs

2.7. Semelfactive Verbs

The Semelfactive verbs in our data include the following in (19) below.

19. a. ísà n'ónū 'to confess'
b. ídú n'ùbú 'to ùbù'
c. ímē nà nkítí 'to do in vain'

2.7.1. Aktionsart Test for Semelfactive Verbs

The behaviour of Semelfactive verbs in sentences is illustrated with example (20a-c) below. The semantic representation of these verbs is shown in (20a'-c'). Example (20a) is used as a test case

for Semelfactives and the sentences in (21a-e) represent the results of these tests.

20. a. *ńdī óhí ahu sà-rà n'ónū*
 3pl thieves DEM V-IND in mouth
 'the thieves confessed'
 a'. SEML **do'** (ohi, [**confess'** (ohi)
 b. *Ngózí dù-rù n'úbú*
 Ngozi poke-IND in shoulder
 'Ngozi shrugged'
 b'. SEML **do'** (Ngozi, [**raise'** (úbú)
 c. *ékwéńsú mè-rè nà nkítí*
 Devil do-IND in idleness
 'the devil acted in vain'
 c'. SEML **do'** (ekwensu, [**nkiti'** (ekwensu)

Semelfactive verbs encode one-off events. The Semelfactive verbs in our data are based on one-off activities. The structure in (20a') encodes the fact that the action of using the mouth to confess done by the thieves happened once and was not repeated. A similar explanation can be given for the representation in (20b') where the action of raising the shoulders in a shrug was done only once and not repeated. In (20c') the structure represents the fact that the subject acted in vain only once.

The examples in (21) show that Semelfactives pass only test 4, that is, the co-occurrence with the adverbial noun *ozigbo* (21d). It fails all other tests. The test for Causatives is not relevant for this test. We show the test result for Semelfactives in Table 8.

2.7.2. Constructions Failing the Test for Semelfactive Verbs

21. a. **ńdī óhí áhù na' sà- n'ónū*
 3pl thieves DEM PROG V in mouth
 b. **ńdī óhí áhù sà-rà n'ónū nwayo*
 3pl thieves DEM V-IND in mouth slowly
 c. **ńdī óhí áhù sà-rà n'ónū ofuma*
 3pl thieves DEM V-IND in mouth well

- d. *ńdī* *óhí* *áhù* *sà-rà* *n'ónū* *ozigbo*
 3pl thieves DEM V-IND in mouth immediately
- e. **ńdī* *óhí* *áhù* *mè-re'* *sà* *n'ónū*
 3pl thieves DEM do-TNS V in mouth

Semelfactive verbs	Test 1	Test2	Test3	Test4	Test5	Test5
	No	No	No	Yes	No	No

Table 8: test results for Semelfactive verbs

3.0. Conclusion

The focus of this paper has been to provide a series of tests to distinguish verb classes in Igbo, following the presentation made in Van Valin (2005) and Van Valin and La Polla (1997). The first test distinguishes static verbs from non-static verbs and has to do with the ability of a verb to co-occur with the progressive marker *na'*. This test corresponds with Van Valin (2005) and Van Valin and La Polla (1997), where it is noted that such tests are useful only for languages with a progressive aspect. The *na'* progressive marker is particularly useful for distinguishing Activity verbs in Igbo because it obligatorily occurs with such verbs.

Tests 2-5 involve the co-occurrence with words that have adverbial notions in Igbo. Test 2 is the distinguishing test for Active Accomplishment verbs, where the verbs can occur with the adverbial noun *nwayo* 'slowly'. Active Accomplishment verbs inherently encode the concept of a terminal point in the action. The adverbial noun *nwayo* functions to interpret the manner in which the terminal point is achieved.

In Test 3, which distinguishes Achievement verbs from the rest of the verb classes involves the occurrence of the adverbial noun *ofuma* 'well' with Achievement verbs. In Test 4, is the distinguishing test for Semelfactives and this has to do with the occurrence of the adverbial noun *ozigbo* 'immediately' with Semelfactives. And Test 5 is the test for causatives which all the

verbs in our data fail because none of them is a causative verb. Test 6 is specific for determining State verbs. All members of the verb classes can occur with at least one of the adverbial nouns we have provided for the tests. However, State verbs cannot occur with any of these adverbial nouns or with the *na* progressive marker. This test distinguishes State verbs from other classes of verbs.

The lexical decomposition of the clauses applies the primitive elements of the verbs as the basis for classification. This is a step away from the theories which tend to give notional specifications for determining verb classes.

We have concentrated on non-causative verbs for this study. However, an area of research for further studies is the application of these tests to causative verbs.

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