An account of the syntax of Igbo reconciliation verbs

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Abstract
This paper sets out to examine the syntax of Igbo reconciliation verbs, their morphological structures and how they manifest in the syntactic structures of the language. The data for this work were obtained through oral interviews and also through recording of natural speech of the Igbo native speakers. The paper adopts a descriptive method in the analysis of the data. The findings show that Igbo reconciliation verbs are overtly morphologically marked in the syntactic structures of the language. It is observed that not all the verbs are used in making reconciliation between human beings. The verbs involve two or more participant NPs. The verbs are: [+ human] and [+ concrete noun]. The verbs can be employed to express reflexive and reciprocality notions in the language. They can also be used to express imperative in Igbo.

1.0 Introduction

The term "reconciliation" has been defined by scholars in various disciplines according to individual's perspective. Etymologically, the word "reconciliation" comes from Latin word 'reconcilio'. Reconciliation is a universal human phenomenon which involves human activities. Reconciliation means to find a way in which two situations or belief that are opposed to each

other can agree and co-exist. It also means to recreate or to restore friendly or amicable relationship between two or more people in order to bring back harmony among them. It is a very important concept in all spheres of human experiences. The process of reconciliation simply means termination of schism, hostility and undue alienation. It is a major distinguishing phenomenon between man and other creatures because the act of reconciliation occupies central place in-our-day-to-day lives and the experimental reality associated with it. It is usually performed with verbal communication in form of spoken or written which involves specific type of verbs in different languages of the world. In other words, it involves a range of linguistic behaviours associated with verbs cross-linguistically.

Reconciliation is inevitable in one's life and to the society at large. Human beings are bound to face various degrees or forms of challenges, conflicts and problems which must have caused a lot of abuses and anguish situations in them as long as they are alive. Reconciliation, however, is recognized as a necessary component of post-violence reconciliation and an important part of post-conflict peace building process. It is both a goal and a process which can happen in various contexts (examples, between two parties, husband and wife, offender and victims, friends, communities or nations). Since reconciliation is a universal human phenomenon and it can involve verbal or written form of expressions, certain specific verb forms are involved in the act of reconciliation in natural languages. Therefore, many languages of the world have different verb forms used in performing the act of reconciliation. These verbs constitute part of the basic vocabulary of all human languages. Like the lexical verbs commonly found across languages to be subject to grammaticalization, (examples, come, leave, strike etc), the verbs of reconciliation are one of those

that frequently occur in our daily speech. It is on this premise that this paper seeks to examine the syntax of Igbo reconciliation verbs.

2.0 Syntax: An overview

Syntax is a branch of linguistics that concerns itself with the arrangement of words, phrases, clauses in the syntactic structures of a language(s). Syntax uses as a building block, words, which are properly arranged together in a rule-governed way to form meaningful sentences. According to Finegan (2008:140) "the study of syntax addresses the structure of sentences and their structural and functional relational relationships to one another". The speaker of a language is obliged to follow the specific rules of the language which he/she has internalized. It is the tacit innate knowledge of rules that we try to capture in the study of syntax. This why every language has its regular and specific patterns in which, words must be arranged in order to build up sentences in that language.

3.0 Verb: An overview

The centrality of the verbs in any language is an acknowledged fact. The category verb is a universal phenomenon. It is central in the grammatical constructions of any natural language. This implies that the category verb is always present in all languages of the world. Words belonging to verb class, in any language, refer to a wide range of actions and states. The meaning of a verb can be analyzed into a structure representation of events it designates. A verb has been defined traditionally as a word which states the action performed by the subject or denotes its state. It tells us what the subject does in the sentence or what someone or something is, or experiences. This is why it has been defined as an "action" or "doing" word. Verbs have an important

influence on the overall structure of the sentence verbs sometimes express action, existence or condition of an entity or object. Crystal (2007:490) refers to a verb as "an element which can display morphological contrasts to tense, aspect, voice, mood, person and number". Radford (2004:363) posits that a verb is "a category of word which has the morphological property that it can carry a specific range of inflections and syntactic property that it can head the complement of infinitival to". Eyisi and Akaegbobi (2014:224) maintain that the verb "is the heart of any well meaning sentence". They further add that almost all spheres of human endeavours revolve around it. Fillmore (1968:23) notes that "any sentence of any language in its basic structure consists of verb in a particular case relationship".

From all indications, verbs count for any meaningful utterance and grammatical constructions in a natural language. Its important position in the language is adequately demonstrated in the syntactic classification of languages, which is done according to some of the fundamental characteristics of the verb. The classification includes ergative language, active language, and accusative language (Trask, 1993:4, 5 and 93). Verbs have grammatical features, tense, aspect, mood, person, number and negation associated with them. In some languages like English, these grammatical features manifest in verbs as affixes.

4.0 Igbo verbs

Like many natural languages, verbs play significant roles in the grammatical constructions in Igbo language. The Igbo verb form is complex and it is the most interesting of all the parts of speech in the language. This is why Mbah (2011:19) describes Igbo language as "a verb language". This is as a result of significant roles it plays in the grammatical structures of the

languages hence every aspect of the Igbo grammar requires the verb to make complete sense, grammatical and meaningful. Chafe (1970:95) states that:

> … a verb is always present though it may in some utterances be deleted before a sentence structure is reached. A somewhat more interesting assertion is that the nature of the verb determines what the rest of the sentence will be like, in particular, that it determines what nouns will accompany it, what the relation of these nouns to it will be, and how these nouns will be semantical specified.

Ndimele (1999:96) adds that the verb is typically the most important word in the predicate area of the sentence". He maintains that predicate is the part of a sentence which says something about the subject. In Igbo many words are formed from the verb. According to Nwachukwu (1978) no verb is formed from any other part of speech. Some verbs in Igbo need complements inherently to specify their meanings. The verbs are classified into syntactic and semantic classes in their different domains in the sentences. Emenanjo (2005) classifies Igbo verbs thus:

i. General complement verbs (GCVs)
ii. Inherent complement verbs (ICVs)
iii. Bound complement verbs (BCVs)
iv. Prepositional phrase complement verbs (PPCVs)
v. Ergative complement verbs (ECVs)

The concept of ICVs is credited to Nwachukwu (1976). Nwachukwu (1983 and 1985) give further attention to the verbs.

These verbs include a nominal element which may or may not be cognate with verbs such as *ịtụ anya* (to expect), *ịgba aja* (to consult a diviner), *ịta arụ* (to bite) and so on. Uwalaka (1983) also attempts a general classification of verbs according to their syntax and semantic. It is worthy to note that we are not going into details of all these contentions or classifications. There is a class of verbs in Igbo, as well as in other languages, which are used specifically by human beings in making reconciliation. The members of this class of verbs are referred to as verbs of reconciliation. However, this class of verbs may involve one, two or more arguments in the sentences. They may or may not take direct objects in the sentences.

4.1 **Igbo reconciliation verbs**

Although many linguists such as Green and Igwe (1963), Ubahakwe (1976), Emenanjo (1978), Nwachukwu (1983) and Uwalaka (1983) have done extensive works on Igbo verbs, little has been written on this class of verb in Igbo syntax. The Igbo verbs of reconciliation belong to the class of action verbs or dynamic verbs. These verbs involve some actions, that is why they involve some activities or actions by a person(s), offender and victims which affect some other entities to restore and sustain humanity by harmoniously bringing two belligerent heads together.

The verbs in this group denote a relation in which one, two or more arguments are involved, that is, the subject NPs as well as object NPs. The verbs in this group are few in number. Below are the verbs of reconciliation that will be used in this analysis:

1.	a.	imēzī	‘to reconcile’
	b.	idōzī	‘to reconcile’
	c.	ikpēzī	‘to reconcile’

d. ịgbāghàrà ‘to reconcile/forgive’
e. ịnāgīde ‘to forgive’

Following Nwachukwu (1976, 1983 and 1984) treatment of inherent complement verbs (ICV), some of the above verbs can take inherent complements thus:

2. a. imē mmezi ‘to reconcile’
b. idōzī ndozi ‘to reconcile dispute’
c. ikpēzī mkpezi ‘to reconcile dispute’
d. ịghāghàrà mgbàghàra ‘to forgive/ reconcile forgiveness’
e. ịnāgīdē nagide ‘to forgive forgive’

4.2 **Features of Igbo reconciliation verbs**

The Igbo reconciliation verbs are characterized with certain morphological, syntactic and semantic features such as:

a. They have the usual CV phonotactic pattern for simple verb and a CV structure that goes beyond the simple CV complex verbs.
b. They cannot be ergative in form.
c. They cannot undergo subject-object switching
d. They co-occur with animate nouns.
e. They can indicate reflexive and reciprocal meanings.

5.0 Analysis of the syntax of Igbo reconciliation verbs

Below are the analyses of Igbo reconciliation verbs in the syntactic structures:

3. a. Chikē nà Àda dòzìrì èsèmokwu ha.
Chike Conj Ada reconcile-rvpst conflict 3pl.
Chike and Ada have reconciled their conflict.

b. Naịjirịa na Cameroon dòzìrì èsèmokwu àlà ahụ̀.
Naịjirịa Conj Cameroon reconcile-rvpst dispute land Dem.
Naịjirịa and Cameroon have reconciled over that land dispute.

c. Uchènnà chọ̀rọ̀ idōzī èsèmokwu dị n'ètitì ụmụnne yā.
Uchenna want-rvpst pr-reconcile conflict be prep-between siblings 3sg.
Uchenna wanted to reconcile the conflict between his siblings.

d. Ezè nà nne yā mèzìrì nke ọma.
Eze Conj mother 3sg reconcile-rvpst well.
Eze and his mother reconciled well.

e. Ọ̀kọnkwọ̄ kpèzìrì Òkekē nà nwunyè ya ụ̀nyàahụ̀.
Ọkọnkwọ reconcile-rvpst Okeke Conj wife 3sg yesterday.
Ọkọnkwọ reconciled Okeke and his wife yesterday.

f. Òbi gbāghàrà Ijèọma ihe ō mèrè yā.
Obi forgive-ovs-rvpst Ijeọma thing 3sg do-rvpst 3sg
Obi has forgiven Ijeọma what she did to him.

g. Chikà yọ̀rọ̀ di yā mgbaghàra.
Chika beg-rvpst husband 3sg forgiveness
Chika begged her husband for forgiveness.

h. Èberè ghaghààra Chukwudị̀.
Ebere forgive-rvpst Chukwudị.
Ebere has forgiven Chukwudị.

i. Chukwukā nàgìdèrè nwunyè yā màkà ọgụ ọ̄ lụsòrò yā.
Chukwuka forgive-rvpst wife 3sg for fight 3sg fight-rvpst 3sg
Chukwuka has forgiven his wife for fighting him.

From the above data, in example (3a), *Chike* na *Ada*, (3b) *Naịjirịa* na *Cameroon*, (3c) *Uchenna* na *ụmụnne* ya, (3d) *Eze* na *nne* ya, (3e) *Okonkwo, Okeke* na *nwunye* ya, (3f) *Obi* na *Ijeọma*, (3g) *Chika* and *di ya*, (3h) *Ebere* and *Chukwudi*, (3i) *Chukwuka* and *nwunye* are the participants in the events described by the verbs.

This implies that they constitute the syntactic elements that are obligatory require by the above verbs respectively. Therefore, Igbo reconciliation verbs have been defined as verbs that may have two or more participants in their semantic structures. In other words, these verbs describe the activities in which participants (NPs) are engaged. These verbs are always [+human] and [+concrete].

5.1 **The structure of the Igbo reconciliation verb forms**

The reconciliation verb forms in Igbo can indicate progressive, perfective, pulperfective and future aspects. Like other verbs in Igbo, reconciliation verbs can take the vowel prefix to indicate these aspects. The following examples illustrate this respectively:

4. a. Chikē nà Àda nà-èdozi èsèmokwu hā.
Chike Conj. Ada prog-pre-reconcile quarrel 3pl.
Chike and Ada are reconciling their differences.

b. Chikē nà Àda edoziela èsèmokwu hā.
Chike Conj Ada pre-reconcile-perf quarrel ha.
Chike and Ada have reconciled their differences.

c. Chikē nà Àda edozìelarịị èsèmokwu hā.
Chike conj Ada pr-reconcile-perf-pulp dispute 3pl.
Chike and Ada have reconciled their dispute.

d. Chikē nà Àda gà-èdozi èsèmokwu hā.
Chike Conj Ada Fut-reconcile conflict 3pl.
Chike and Ada will reconcile their conflict.

5. a. Hà nà-emezi èsèmokwu ahụ̀ dị n'ètitì hà.
3pl prog-pr-reconcile dispute Dem be prep-between 3pl.
They are reconciling that dispute between them.

b. Ha emezīela èsèmokwu ahụ̀ dị n'ètitì hā.
3p pr-reconcile-ovs-perf dispute Dem be prep-between 3pl.
They have reconciled that dispute between them.

c. Ha emezīelarịị èsèmokwu ahụ̀ dị n'ètitì hā.
3pl pre-reconcile ovs-perf-pulp dispute Dem be prep-between them.
They had reconciled that dispute between them.

d. Ha gà-èmezi èsèmokwu hā echi.
3pl Fut pre-reconcile dispute 3pl tomorrow.
They will reconcile their dispute tomorrow.

6. a. Ndị Ògidi nà ndị Ōbosi nà-èkpezi ùgbu à.
Those Ogidi Conj those Obosi prog-pr-reconcile now.
The people of Ogidi and Obosi are reconciling now.

b. Ndị Ogidi na ndị Obosi ekpezīela ùgbu à.
Those Ogidi Conj those Obosi pr-reconcile-ovs-perf now.
The people of Ogidi and Obosi have reconciled now.

c. Ndị Ògidi nà ndị Ōbosi ekpezīelarịị.
The people of Ogidi and Obosi pr-rerconcile-perf-pulp.
The people of Ogidi and Obosi had reconciled.

d. Ndị Ògidi nà ndị Ōbosi gà-èkpezi.
The people of Ogidi Conj ndị Obosi fut-pr-reconcile.
The people of Ogidi and Obi will reconcile.

7. a. Egō nà-àgbàghara di yā ihe ō mèrè.
Ego pro-pr-forgive husband 3sg thing 3sg do-rvpst.
Ego is forgiving her husband what he did.

b. Egō agbaghārala di yā ihe ō mèrè.
Ego pr-forgive-perf husband 3sg thing 3sg do-rvpst.
Ego has forgiven her husband what he has done.

c. Egō agbaghāralarịị di yā ihe ō mèrè.

Ego pr-forgive-perf-pulp husband 3sg thing 3sg do-rvpst.
Ego had forgiven her husband what he did.

d. Egō gà-àgbaghàra di yā ihe ō mèrè.
Ego fut-pr-forgive husband 3sg thing 3sg do-rvpst.
Ego will forgive her husband what he did.

The verbs indicating the perfective and pulperfective take open vowel suffix (ovs) to extend meanings. Sentences (a) of (4 - 7) indicate progressive aspect. Sentences (b) of (4 - 7) indicate perfective aspect. Sentence (c) of (4 - 7) indicate pulperfective aspects. Sentences (d) of (4 - 7) indicate future aspect. The tone of the reconciliation verbs changes in the grammatical constructions.

5.2 **Igbo reconciliation verbs can indicate reflexive notion**

Reflexivization is a process by which a participant acts on himself or herself rather than on any other. The verbs of reconciliation can indicate reflexive reading. This means that the verbs can take reflexive anaphor *onwe* (self) as object. The use of *onwe* (self) and an appropriate pronominal element encode person and number properties of the antecedent. Examples:

8. a. Ejìọ̀fọ na Uchè dòzìrì èsèmokwu hā.
Ejiọfọ Conj. Uche reconcile-rvpst dispute 3pl.
Ejiọfọ and Uche have reconciled their dispute.

b. Ejìọ̀fọ na Uchè dòzìírì onwe hà èsèmokwu.
Ejiọfọ Conj. Uche reconcile-rvpst self 3pl dispute

Ejiọfọ and Uche have reconciled themselves the dispute.

9 a. Àda mèzìrì ndụ̀ yā.
Ada reconcile-rvpst life 3sg.
Ada has reconciled her life.

b. Àda mèzìírì ònwe yā ndụ̀.
Ada reconcile-rvpst self 3sg life.
Ada has reconciled her life herself.

10. a. Ùju gbaghàárà Obìnnà.
Uju forgive-rvpst Obinna
Uju has forgiven Obinna.

b. Ùju na Obìnnà gbaghàárà onwe hā.
Uju Conj. Obinna reconcile-ovs-rvpst self them.
Uju and Obinna have reconciled/forgiven themselves.

11. a. Òkekē nàgìdèrè nwunye ya.
Okeke forgive-rvpst wife 3sg.
Okeke has forgiven his wife.

b. Òkekē nà nwunyè yā nàgìdèrè onwe ha.
Okeke Conj. wife 3sg forgive-rv pst self 3pl.
Okeke and his wife have forgiven themselves.

Examples (a) of (8 - 11) and (b) examples of (8 - 11) indicate reflexive readings. In examples (a) of (8 - 11), the reflexive anaphor *onwe* does not reflect overtly in the constructions but

semantically, it reflects in the underlying structures of the verbs. However, in the examples (b) of (8 - 11), the subjects and the objects refer to the same person(s) and the reflexive anaphor is overtly represented. It is important to note that though there is no overt anaphors in the examples (a) of (8 - 11) the verbs still depict action(s) denoted by the participant NPs which reverts to the same participant NPs. In examples (a) of (8 - 11), the verbs are said to be implicitly reflexive in the underlying structure. In examples (b) of (8 - 11) the NPs: *Ejiọfọ* and *Uche, Uju* and *Obinna,* Okeke and *nwunye* ya are coreferential with the reflexive anaphor *onwe ha*. They both agree in number and person. *Ejiọfọ* and *Uche, Uju* and *Obinna, Okeke* and *nwunye ya*, take the 3rd person plural reflexive anaphor *onwe ha*.

On the other hand, in example (ab), the subject Ada, is a singular NP, and as such, it takes a 3rd person singular reflexive anaphor *onwe ya* in order to agree in number and person. Note that the presence of the overt reflexive anaphors in examples (b) of (8 - 11) make the reflexive interpretations to be explicit than in examples (a) of (8 - 11), where the reflexive anaphors are covert. Sentence (9a and b) give the semantic interpretation which indicate that *Ada* has reconciled her life with a Being not seen. In this case, it expresses spiritual activity.

5.3 **Igbo reconciliation verbs can be used to express reciprocality**

Many languages have constructions to express actions or states in which two participants bear “mirror image” thematic relations to one another, that is, one participant relates to a second just as the second relates to the first (Okeke, 2008:194). Moreover, a reciprocal needs to have the right kind of syntactic relationship with its antecedent. Mbah (2006) claims that reciprocality is

indicated by *-ṛịta* in the verb form. Therefore, the verbs of reconciliation can take *-ṛịta* to indicate reciprocality thus:

12. a Òbi nà Uchè dòzìritàrà ònwe hā èsèmokwu.
Obi Conj. Uche reconcile each other self 3pl conflict.
Obi and Uche have reconciled with each other.

b. Ànyị mà nà di nà nwunyè à gbaghàrịtàrà ònwe hā.
1pl know Conj husband Conj wife Dem forgive-each-other self 3pl.
We know that this couple have forgiven each other.

c. Òbi nà nne yā kpèzìrìtàrà ònwe hā.
Obi Conj mother 3sg reconcile-one another self 3pl.
Obi and his mother have reconciled with each other.

d. Ụmụ̀ akwụkwọ̄ nà-èdozirịtara onwe hā nsògbu.
Children book prog-pr-reconcile-one another self 3pl problem.
The student are reconciling each other/one another's problem.

e. Ha nà-ànagideritara onwe hā àgwà ọjọọ̄ hā.
3pl prog-pr-forgive-one another self 3pl character bad 3pl.
They are forgiving/tolerating each other/one another's bad behaviour.

In example (12d) and (12e), the verbal structure of Igbo reconciliation verbs take progressive marker *na* to indicate progressive readings.

Furthermore, the reconciliation verbs can express imperative with onwe (self) in the following constructions:

13. a. Dòzie èsèmokwu ahụ̀.
Reconcile-ovs dispute Dem.
Reconcile that dispute.

. b. Dòzienụ̀ èsèmokwu àlà ahụ̀.
Reconcile-ovs-encl dispute land Dem.
Reconcile that land dispute.

c. Dòzierenụ̀ ònwe unù èsèmokwu àlà ahụ̀
Reconcile-ovs-suff self 2pl dispute land Dem.
Reconcile that land dispute between yourselves.

14. a. Mèzie ndụ̀ gī nà Chinēkè.
Reconcile-ovs-suff-end life prep God.
Reconcile yourself life with God.

b. Mèzienụ̀ ndụ̀ unù nà Chinēkè.
Reconcile-ovs-encl life 2pl prep God.
Reconcile your lives with God.

c. Mèzierenụ̀ ònwe ndụ̀ unù nà Chinēkè.
Reconcile-ovs-suff-encl self life 2pl prep God.
Reconcile yourselves with God.

15. a. Kpèzie ikpe ahụ̀ ǹkè ọma.
Reconcile/settle-ovs dispute Dem well.
Reconcile/settle that dispute well.

b. Kpèzienụ̀ ikpe ahụ̀ nke ọma.
Reconcile/settle-ovs dispute Dem well.
Reconcile/settle that dispute well.

c. Kpèzierenụ̀ ònwe unù ikpe ahụ̀ ǹkè ọma.
Reconcile/settle-ovs-suff-encl self 2pl dispute Dem well.
Reconcile/settle that dispute well among yourselves.

From the above data, the sentences (a) of (13 - 15) take the ovs to indicate the imperative. In sentences (b) of (13 - 15) the ovs and the enclitic *nụ* constitute the imperative construction. In sentences (c) of (13 - 15), the ovs, suffix –re and enclitic *nụ* constitute the imperative construction. The suffix *–re* extends the meanings of the verbs in sentences (c) of (13 - 13).

6.0 Conclusion

This paper examines the syntax of Igbo reconciliation verbs. The paper shows that Igbo reconciliation verbs are overtly morphologically marked in the syntactic structures. Not all the verbs are used in making reconciliation. The verbs involve two or more participant NPs. The verbs are [+human] and [+concrete noun]. The Igbo reconciliation verbs can be used to express reflexive and reciprocality notions. They can express progressive, perfective, pulperfective and future aspects. They can also be used to express imperative in Igbo.

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