

A RECLASSIFICATION OF THE IGBO =rV SUFFIXES

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The =rV suffixes play quite significant morphological, syntactic and semantic roles in the Igbo verbal system, but their classification in the available literature is not fully satisfactory revealing what they are and do in Igbo syntax. This article, therefore, attempts a reclassification of these suffixes.

The picture emerging from Igbo =rV suffixes does not call for a dichotomy of inflectional and derivational, or inflectional and non-inflectional, or a trichotomy of inflectional, extensional and derivational. The facts of these suffixes suggest a more appropriate and convenient dichotomy of derivational and non-derivational. We further subclassify the non-derivational =rV suffixes into three, namely =rV₁, =rV₂, and =rV₃, based on their syntactic and semantic functions.

Dans le système verbal de l'igbo, les suffixes =rV jouent des rôles morphologiques, syntaxiques et sémantiques assez importants, mais dans les écrits disponibles, leur classement manque de révéler leurs natures et fonctions dans la syntaxe igbo. Cette communication tente un reclassement de ces suffixes. Le classement des suffixes =rV de l'igbo, dans l'ensemble, ne nécessite ni une dichotomie entre suffixes flexionnels et dérivationnels, ou entre flexionnels et non-flexionnels, ni une division tripartite entre suffixes flexionnels, dérivationnels et extensionnels. Nous proposons un classement plus logique et pertinent entre suffixes dérivationnels et non-dérivationnels. Eu égard à leurs fonctions sémantiques et syntaxiques, on peut reclasser les suffixes non-dérivationnels en =rV₁, =rV₂ et =rV₃.

0. INTRODUCTION

Igbo has various categories of =rV suffixes, i.e., homophonous suffixes consisting of the constant consonant r plus a copy of the preceding vowel.

The =rV suffixes are quite enigmatic in occurrence and have been classified according to their observable distinctive meanings and syntactic functions. They have also been given various semantic labels. Numerals are used, in some cases, to distinguish the various =rV suffixes.¹

1. CLASSIFICATION OF THE =rV SUFFIXES IN THE LITERATURE

A review of the available literature on Igbo =rV suffixes reveals that analysts in Igbo studies do not agree on the number and classification of the said suffixes in the language. They also vary in their use of terminology, semantic labels, and other details. Analysts whose works are available include Green and Igwe (1963), Igwe and Green (1964), Carrell (1970), Welmers (1970), Williamson (1972, n.d.), Winston (1973), Okonkwo (1974), Emenanjo (1978), Nwachukwu (1983), Onwuemene (1983-84), and Uwalaka (1988). These works will be reviewed in the above order.

Green and Igwe (1963:54-58) distinguish between two =rV suffixes which they refer to as the ra (TIME) suffix and ra (NON-TIME) suffix. They state that the vowel of either of these suffixes "reduplicates the preceding syllable except in the negative verb form where it either reduplicates or harmonizes as ra or re." Their examples include the ones in (1).

- (1) o vùrù abọ ra (TIME) suffix
 He carried a basket.
o vùùrù abọ ra (TIME) and (NON-TIME) suffixes
 He picked up a basket.
ọ zùrù eghu ra (TIME) suffix
 He bought a goat.

¹ This article has gained immensely from the useful suggestions of Professor Kay Williamson for which the author is very grateful.

Tones are marked herein using Green and Igwe's (1963) convention whereby all low tones (˘) and downstepped tones (ˉ) are overtly represented, leaving only high tones unmarked. The citation form of verbs and morpheme boundaries is marked with hyphen (-) and the citation form of suffixes, except for quoted forms, is marked with an equal sign (=).

- o zùùrù ìmeghu** **ra** (TIME) and (NON-TIME) suffixes
 He bought a goat for me.
o zùùrù eghu **ra** (TIME) and (NON-TIME) suffixes /
 ra (TIME) and **ra** (TIME) suffixes
 He bought a goat for himself. /
 He used to buy a goat.

Igwe and Green (1964) hold about the same view as Green and Igwe (1963), though they discuss the occurrence of the =**rV** suffixes in more detail in their first (1963) work. They state in (1964) that "when both **ra** (TIME) and **ra** (NON-TIME) suffixes are used together as they may be with both tenses of the verb and also with the participle, one of them appears as a vowel which lengthens the stem vowel of the verb" as in (2).

- (2) **o zùùrù ìm anù**
 He bought meat for (or from) me.

Next, Carrell (1970:113) recognizes two =**rV** suffixes which she labels "the benefactive and assertive suffixes." According to her "Two morphemes, the benefactive meaning-modifying suffix Adv₃, and assert are listed in the lexicon with the phonological distinctive features for **r** No other morphemes have been found in Igbo which have their segments totally assimilated to the preceding vowel." Some of her examples which have been orthographically modified are given in (3).

- (3) **o riri nri** He eats food.
o nwèrè ego He has money.
o wàrà àwa It is broken.
o zùtààrà yà ji He buys yam for him.

She also states that "when the benefactive and assertive occur in sequence Adv₃ Assert, the first is realized as a vowel segment only." An example is in (4).

- (4) **o zùtàràrà yà ji** > **o zùtààrà yà ji**
 He bought yams for him.

Welmers (1970) recognizes two =**rV** suffixes which he labels -**rV** (FACTATIVE) and -**rV** (APPLICATIVE).

In the introductory portion of her dictionary, Williamson (1972) records four =**rV** suffixes in Onjcha: -**lù(-lu)** (FACTATIVE), -**lù(-lu)** (BENEFACTIVE), -**lù** (EMPHATIC), and -**lù** 'from away'. In her other work, Williamson (n.d.) recognizes two =**rV** suffixes which she refers to as =**rV** (PAST) and =**rV** (STATIVE).

Winston (1973) identifies four =**rV** suffixes and distinguishes them as -**rV**₁ 'for oneself', -**rV**₂ 'for (the specified person)', -**rV**₃ (PUNCTUAL), and -**rV**₄ (PAST).

According to Okonkwo (1974:42) "A suffix made up of **r** and the same vowel as the vowel of the verb root is attached to the verb root to form the perfect tense" as in (5).

- (5) verb root: **ta**
 suffix: **rà (r + a)**
 perfect: **tàrà**

The simple deduction from Okonkwo's analysis is that he recognizes just one =**rV** suffix in Igbo which marks what he calls (PERFECT TENSE).

Emenanjo (1978:95-96) recognizes two =**rV** suffixes, one inflectional =**rV** suffix which he labels the (INDICATIVE AFFIRMATIVE) suffix, and one extensional =**rV** suffix which he labels the (APPLICATIVE) suffix.

In Nwachukwu (1983), he recognizes three =**rV** suffixes: =**rV**₁ (STATIVE PRESENT) suffix with examples in (6), -**rV** (PAST) suffix which marks the past tense with examples in (7), and the -**rV** (PREPOSITIONAL) suffix with examples in (8).

- (6) **òbí nwèrè ego** Obi is wealthy.
àda bùrù ibù Ada is fat.
- (7) **o gbùrù eghu** He killed a goat.
o zùrù ohí He stole.
- (8) **bikò gàra m̄ ozi** Please go on the errand for me.
nàra yá ego Take money from him.
wèrè yá gáwa Take it along with you.

For Onwuemene (1983:84), whose work appears to be modelled on Winston's (1973), there are four =rV suffixes in Igbo. They are =rV₁ the (SUBJECT ADHESIVE) suffix, -rV₂ the (INDIRECT OBJECT) suffix, =rV₃ the (ASSERTIVE) suffix (which he claims is latent in his North Western Igbo), and =rV₄ which he believes is a (TIME) suffix in Oghuḥ Igbo but does not occur in the North Western dialects. Some of his examples from (1983:7) are given in (9) and (10).

- (9) CV rV₃ rV₁
 o vùrùrù abọ
 Oghuḥ: o vùrùrù abọ
 Isele Uku: o ò bùùlù m̄ abọ
 He carried off a basket.
- (10) CV rV₃ rV₄
 ọ zùrùrù jí
 Oghuḥ: ọ zùrùrù jí
 Isele Uku: o ò te go jí
 He used to buy yam (in the past).

Uwalaka (1988) records three =rV suffixes. They are -rV (ASSERTIVE), -rV (PAST), and -rV (BENEFACTIVE).

The table in (11) summarizes the =rV suffixes as recognized by the various analysts, listed under the classification of the suffixes in this article.

	=rV ₁	=rV ₂	=rV ₃
Green and Igwe (1963)	-ra (TIME)	-ra (TIME)	-ra (NON-TIME)
Igwe and Green (1964)	-ra (TIME)	-ra (TIME)	-ra (NON-TIME)
Carrell (1970)	-rV (ASSERTIVE)	?	r Adv ₃ (BENEFACTIVE)
Welmers (1970)	-rV (FACTATIVE)	?	-rV (APPLICATIVE)
Williamson (1972)	-lụ(-lụ) (FACTATIVE)	-lụ (EMPHATIC)	-lụ(-lụ) (BENEFACTIVE) -lụ 'from away'
Winston (1973)	-rV ₃ (PUNCTUAL)	-rV ₄ (PAST)	-rV ₁ 'for oneself' -rV ₂ 'for (the specified person)'
Okonkwọ (1974)	-rV perfect	?	?
Emenanjọ (1978)	=rV (INDICATIVE) (AFFIRMATIVE)	?	=rV (APPLICATIVE)
Nwachukwu (1983)	-rV (STATIVE PRESENT) -rV (PAST)	?	-rV (PREPOSITIONAL)
Onwuemene (1983-84)	-rV ₃	-rV ₄	-rV ₁ (ADHESIVE SUFFIX) -rV ₂ (INDIRECT OBJECT)
Uwalaka (1988)	-rV (ASSERTIVE)	-rV (PAST)	-rV (BENEFACTIVE)

The following observations can be made from the works reviewed:

- a. Many analysts recognize no more than two =rV suffixes.
- b. Some analysts give the impression that some of the =rV suffixes mark (TENSE).
- c. Many analysts do not deem it necessary to distinguish the =rV suffixes with numerals.
- d. In those works where the =rV suffixes are distinguished with numerals, no reasons are stated for the order of numbering.
- e. Some =rV suffixes which are clearly functionally the same are classified as different suffixes in some of these works.
- f. In some case different =rV suffixes are identified as one.

2. THE PRESENT CLASSIFICATION

2.1 BROAD CLASSIFICATION

We observe that the Igbo =rV suffixes are either inflectional, extensional² (meaning modifiers), or derivational in function.

The derivational =rV suffix is completely different from the others on the basis of its morphological function of forming words which belong to a different form class from the source word. Some =rV suffix-derived words (nouns) are given in (12).

(12) àmàrà (à-mà-rV)	<	-ma
lenience		be good
àsìrì (à-sì-rV)	<	-sì
gossiping		say
èkperè (è-kpe-rV)	<	-kpe
prayer		request
oburu (o-bu-rV)	<	-bu
porter		carry
ùsòrò (ù-sò-rV)	<	-sò
order/arrangement		follow

The inflectional and extensional =rV suffixes are more related: each of them can occur in verb forms and sentence types; they even co-occur in some cases.

It is deemed more appropriate and convenient to classify the =rV suffixes into two broad classes: derivational and non-derivational.

The derivational class consists of one suffix and the only derivational =rV suffix as shown in (12). This =rV suffix (=rV₄) is discussed elsewhere (see Onukawa (1992-93)). The non-derivational class, on the other hand, is made up of the inflectional and the extensional =rV suffixes. We devote the rest of this article to the discussion of the non-derivational =rV suffixes.

2.2 SUB-CLASSIFICATION OF THE NON-DERIVATIONAL =rV SUFFIXES

We believe that, from their meanings and roles they perform in verb forms, it is proper to subclassify the non-derivational =rV suffixes into three with the numbers 1-3. It is our view that Igbo has the non-derivational =rV suffixes in (13).

- | | | |
|------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| (13) | =rV ₁ | assertive suffix (inflectional) |
| | =rV ₂ | previous suffix (inflectional) |
| | =rV ₃ | applicative suffix (extensional) |

² We owe this term to Emenanjo (1978).

2.2.1 In defense of our numbering

The grouping and numbering presented in this article deviate somewhat from what is contained in familiar grammar books and analyses of Igbo. Our numbering is based on some considerations with regard to the occurrences of the =rV suffixes given in the following paragraphs.

In all cases where the =rV suffixes co-occur (e.g., the indicative affirmative sentence type), the co-occurrence must be either

=rV (ASSERTIVE) and =rV (PREVIOUS), or

=rV (ASSERTIVE) and =rV (APPLICATIVE).

For this *prominence* of the =rV (ASSERTIVE) in these co-occurrences of the =rV suffixes, we number it =rV₁.

The =rV (PREVIOUS) cannot be suffixed alone to a verb. It must occur with the =rV (ASSERTIVE) suffix (=rV₁). For this obligatory co-occurrence with the *most prominent* =rV suffix, we number it =rV₂.

Though the =rV (APPLICATIVE) suffix co-occurs with the =rV (ASSERTIVE) suffix (=rV₁), their co-occurrence is not obligatory. This is considered as *less degree of attachment to the (prominent) =rV₁* and therefore is numbered =rV₃.

The sentences in (14)–(17) justify the claim for this numbering.

- (14) o gbùrù (gbù-rV₁) òke
 he kill-rV(ASSERTIVE) rat
 He killed a rat.
- (15) o gbùrù (gbù-rV₂-rV₁) òke
 he kill-rV(PREVIOUS PAST)-rV(ASSERTIVE) rat
 He used to kill a rat.
- (16) o gbùrù (gbù-rV₃-rV₁) m òke
 he kill-rV(APPLICATIVE)-rV(ASSERTIVE) me rat
 He killed a rat for me.
- (17) o nà-ègburu (gbu-rV₃) m òke
 he AUX-PFX^hkill-rV(APPLICATIVE) me rat
 He kills/is killing a rat for me.

In (17) the function of the =rV₁ has been shifted to the auxiliary verb *na* and =rV₃ is left as the only (=rV) suffix on the verb.

2.2.2 In defense of our ordering of the =rV suffixes

The indication of which =rV suffix comes before the other is so committing that many analysts tend to avoid it. We will use some sentences involving other suffixes to account for our ordering of these suffixes in (18) and (19).

- (18) o gbùtèrè (gbù-tè-rV₁) òke
 he kill-te(DIRECTIONAL)-rV(ASSERTIVE) rat
 He killed a rat and brought it forward (home).
- (19) o gbùwèrè (gbù-wè-rV₁) òke
 he kill-wa(INCEPTIONAL)-rV(ASSERTIVE) rat
 He began to kill.

In (18) and (19) the suffixes *-te* and *-we* occur before the =rV₁ (ASSERTIVE) suffix. We believe that the other =rV suffixes and other suffixes which occur with the =rV₁ (ASSERTIVE) suffix also occur in this position (i.e., they also precede the =rV₁). This therefore accounts for our regarding the first =rV suffix in a sequence of two, as either =rV₂ or =rV₃ depending on the meaning expressed.

2.2.3 Dialectal variants of the =rV suffixes

Some variants of the =rV suffixes have been recorded in the dialects given in the table in (20).

(20)	=rV ₁	=rV ₂	=rV ₃
North Western dialects (NW)	-lɔ/-lu; -li/-li	—	-lɔ/-lu; -li/-li
Onicha dialect	-lɔ/-lu	-lɔ	-lɔ/-lu
Ohuhu dialect	-ra/-re	—	-ra/-re

Speakers of the North Western Igbo dialects use the auxiliary verb *-te* in place of the =rV₂. We have also noted that speakers of Onicha dialect use the *-bu* suffix in place of the =rV₂. Few speakers of this dialect use the variant *-lɔ*. In the Ohuhu dialect³ the harmonizing variants are optionally used with the copying variants. The =rV₂ does not have the harmonizing variants. The dialectal variants are used in the sentences in (21) and (22).

- (21) o gbùrù (gbù-rV₁) òke He killed a rat.
 o gbùlù/gbùlì òke (NW)
 o gbùlù òke (Onicha)
- (22) o gbùrù (gbù-rV₂-rV₁) òke He used to kill a rat.
 o ò te gbu òke (NW)
 o gbùbùlù òke (Onicha)
 o gbùàre òke (Ohuhu)

3. THE =rV₁ SUFFIX

The =rV₁ is an inflectional suffix. It affirms the action, state, etc., specified by the verb. It is a *fact indicator* in Igbo. This suffix has been given various semantic labels by various analysts (see the table in (11)) but we have chosen to adopt the label 'assertive suffix' used by Carrell (1970).

The =rV₁ occurs in all semantic classes of the Igbo verb as shown in (23)–(27).

- (23) OVS⁴ o gbùrù (gbù-rV₁) òke
 ACTIVE he kill-rV(ASSERTIVE) rat
 He killed a rat.
- (24) ZERO o hùrù (hù-rV₁) ego
 SUFFIX he see-rV(ASSERTIVE) money
 ACTIVE He saw some money.
- (25) STATIVE- o yìrì (yì-rV₁) ùwe
 ACTIVE he wear-rV(ASSERTIVE) dress
 He wore a dress.
- (26) OVS o màrà (mà-rV₁) mmá
 STATIVE he be^handsome-rV(ASSERTIVE) handsomness
 He is handsome.

³ The author is a native speaker of the Ohuhu dialect of Igbo.

⁴ These are the semantic classifications of the Igbo verb in Williamson (n.d.) and Nwachukwu (1983). Williamson (n.d.:2-3) subclassifies the active and stative verbs as shown based on the suffixes they take in the imperative, subjunctive, and perfect verb forms.

ACTIVE
 open vowel suffix (OVS)
 zero-suffix
 STATIVE
 open vowel suffix (OVS)
 -rV suffix

Nwachukwu (1983:32) has a subclass of verbs he calls 'stative - active verbs'.

- (27) -rV SUFFIX \varnothing n̄m̄r̄m̄ (n̄m̄-rV₁) ebe à
 STATIVE he stay-rV(ASSERTIVE) place this
 He stayed in this place.

Some analysts have not identified the unique role of this suffix in the Igbo verbal system as to classify it appropriately. This is because the suffix is often associated with 'tense' and 'aspect' in Igbo, for instance Nwachukwu (1983:66). According to him "The stative present suffix -rV₁ combines with stative verbs to express a stative present meaning." Two examples are in (28).

- (28) \varnothing màrà mma nwā She is really a pretty girl.
 òbí nwèrè ego Obi is wealthy.

He also states that "The -rV past suffix is the only tense marker in Igbo" (1983:69). His examples for this include those in (29).

- (29) o gbùrù eghu He killed a goat.
 ezùrù hà ohì They stole.

Uwalaka (1988:53) disagrees with Nwachukwu's claim that Igbo has an '-rV present suffix' but inherits his other problems. She labels this suffix 'assertive suffix' and states that "perhaps the most significant fact about the -rV assertive suffix is that it does not occur with all groups of Igbo verbs. From the data available to us, it appears that only process verbs, verbs of quality and some small subsets of experiential verbs take the -rV assertive suffix" (1988:54). Her examples include those in (30) and (31).

- (30) àdha mà-rà mmā
 Adha be~beautiful-rV(ASSERTIVE) beauty
 Adha is beautiful.
- (31) oñja à rè-rè okhụ
 bush this burn-rV(ASSERTIVE) fire
 This bush is burnt.

Uwalaka (1988) also labels the =rV suffix that occurs with other verbs in similar constructions as -rV (PAST). Her examples in this case include those in (32) and (33).

- (32) ùghò gbù-rù agwọ
 Ugho kill-rV(PAST) snake
 Ugho killed a snake.
- (33) àdha wè-rè iwe
 Adha anger-rV(PAST) angry
 Adha was angry.

She thereby agrees with Nwachukwu that two different =rV suffixes occur in their two sets of examples.

It is our view that 1) the =rV suffixes in the sentences in (34) and similar constructions used by these analysts and elsewhere, are one and the same suffix, i.e., the =rV₁, and that 2) the =rV₁ (and other =rVs) do not mark 'tense' (or even aspect' in Igbo. The fact is that while playing its 'assertive' role, the =rV₁ is controlled by the various semantic nuances of the verbs, hence its output translates into English as 'past tense' in other semantic classes of the verb except in the OVS stative. Since English is the language of exposition and one in which 'tense' is a prominent verbal category, some analysts are lured into considering this suffix as a 'tense' marker.

- (34) \varnothing màrà (mà-rV) mmā
 o gbùrù (gbù-rV) ewu

5. THE =rV₃ SUFFIX

This is an extensional suffix. It indicates some association of either the subject or the indirect object with the object. Various semantic labels have been given to the =rV₃ (e.g., 'for', (BENEFACTIVE), etc. See the table in (11)), but since the suffix can also occur in pejorative contexts, the most appropriate label is 'applicative suffix' suggested by Welmers (1970).

The =rV₃ may occur alone or in combination with either the =rV₁ and/or other inflectional and extensional suffixes in all the semantic classes of the Igbo verb. The examples (52)–(54) are drawn from the 'OVS active' class.

- (52) ϕ zùrùrù (zù-rV₃-rV₁) m̄ ji
 he buy-rV(APPLICATIVE)-rV(ASSERTIVE) me yam
 He bought some yams for/from me.

- (53) zùrù (zù-rV₃) jī
 buy-rV(APPLICATIVE) yam
 Buy some yams (for yourself).

- (54) ϕ zùrùrù (zù-rV₃-rV₁) ji
 he buy-rV(APPLICATIVE)-rV(ASSERTIVE) yam
 He bought some yams (for himself).

It should be pointed out that the suffixation of the =rV₃ to verbs (especially to indicate an association of the direct object with the subject) depends on the inherent semantic contents of the verbs. For example, the OVS stative verbs are verbs of quality. "Since verbs of quality are involved with ascription of some particular characteristic, their subject NP therefore serves as the carrier of an attribute" (Uwalaka 1988:177). Given that the subject is also the 'affected', the verb no longer needs any suffix to associate the non-existing direct object with the subject. Hence, the sentences in (55) and (56) are not possible.

- (55) *mara (ma-rV₃) mma
 be~handsome-rV(APPLICATIVE)^rV(ASSERTIVE) handsomness
 Be handsome (for yourself).

- (56) *o maara (ma-rV₃-rV₁) mma
 he be~handsome-rV(APPLICATIVE)-rV(ASSERTIVE) handsomness
 He became handsome (for himself).

The fact that =rV₃ refers to both the subject and the indirect object has prompted some analysts to consider these as the functions of two different =rV suffixes. For instance, Winston (1973) has =rV₁ 'for oneself' and =rV₂ 'for (a specific person)'. Onwuemene (1983–84) has the =rV₁ "the adhesive (or accretive) suffix indicative of some figurative attachment of the subject in respect of the object". He also has the =rV₂ which he refers to as the "indirect object suffix". Again the fact that (52) can also be glossed 'he bought some yams from me' has prompted Williamson (1972:lviii) to consider the 'from' meaning as marked by a different =rV suffix which she labels -lù 'from away' as against lù (-lu) (BENEFACTIVE).

It is our view that the =rV₁ 'for oneself', =rV₂ 'for (a specific person)', and -lù 'from away' are one and the same suffix: the =rV₃. The =rV₃ refers primarily to the indirect object as in (57), but if there is no indirect object it refers back to the subject as in (58).

- (57) uchè sùri (sì-rV₃-rV₁) ezè nri
 Uche cook-rV(APPLICATIVE)-rV(ASSERTIVE) Eze food
 Uche cooked some food for Eze.

- (58) uchè sùri (sì-rV₃-rV₁) nri
 Uche cook-rV(APPLICATIVE)-rV(ASSERTIVE) food
 Uche cooked some food (for himself).

This phenomenon is not isolated; Igbo has reflexive verbs i.e., verbs which depict actions whereby either the object or the subject can be the patient. If a sentence containing such a verb has an object, the object is the patient as in (59), but if there is no object, the action goes back to the subject and it becomes the patient as in (60).

(59) **uchè sàrà ezè àhụ**
 Uche bathe[^]rV(ASSERTIVE) Eze body
 Uche bathed Eze.

(60) **uchè sàrà àhụ**
 Uche bathe[^]rV(ASSERTIVE) body
 Uche bathed himself.

Since Winston's (1973) -rV₁ 'for oneself' and -rV₂ 'for (a specific person)' can never co-occur, it seems to strongly suggest that they are instances of the same suffix.

The =rV₃ introduces only the meaning 'for' not 'from' or 'to'. The verb -zụ 'buy' has 'from' as part of its semantic content. Something is bought from someone but usually the person from whom an item is bought is not overtly stated unless it is required. To gloss the verb -zụ as 'buy from X' (where X is +human) may give further clarification as in (61) and (62).

(61) **ọ zù-rù jí**
 he buy[^]from[^]X-rV(ASSERTIVE) yam
 He bought some yams from X. / He bought some yams.

(62) **ọ zù-rù m jí**
 he buy[^]from[^]X-rV(APPLICATIVE)-rV(ASSERTIVE) me yam
 He bought some yams from X for me. / He bought some yams from/for me.

Sentence (62) shows that the 'from' and 'for' meanings introduced by -zụ and =rV₃, respectively, refer to two different indirect objects. Since the one to which 'from' refers is not overtly shown, both 'from' and 'for' now refer to the only surface indirect object. This results in ambiguity. The two different indirect objects can be overtly represented as in (63).

(63) **ọ zù-rù m uchè jí**
 he buy[^]rV(APPLICATIVE)-rV(ASSERTIVE) me Uche yam
 He bought some yams from Uche for me.
 He bought some yams from Uche in my interest.

It should be pointed out here that the 'for' meaning introduced by the =rV₃ does not necessarily point to the fact of physical possession or consumption of the direct object by the indirect object (or the subject) but to the fact of the satisfaction of whatever is the interest of the indirect object (or the subject). In (63) the indirect object pronoun **m** 'me' has both interest of 1) receiving the yam, and 2) Uche making some sales of this yam.

All that has been said so far about -zụ 'buy (from X)' applies also to other "three-place predicate verbs" (Nwachukwu 1983:103). These verbs connote some prepositions (from, to) and because of this they obligatorily take an indirect object underlyingly.⁶ Take as examples -zì ọzì 'send a message (to X)', -nà 'receive (from X)', -nye 'give (to X)', and -gbazì 'borrow (from X)'.

(64) **ọ nàrà (nà-rV₁) ego nà ọbọsụ**
 he receive[^]from[^]X-rV(ASSERTIVE) money in bus
 He received some money from X in the bus. /
 He received some money in the bus.

⁶ The =rV suffix in a sentence like **ọ nàrà m ego** 'he received some money from me' is the =rV₁ (not the =rV₃), the presence of the indirect object notwithstanding.

- (65) \varnothing **nààrà** (**nà-rV₃-rV₁**) **ì** **ego** **nà** **bòòsù**
 he receive^{from}X-**rV**(APPLICATIVE)-**rV**(ASSERTIVE) me money in bus
 He received some money from X for me in the bus. /
 He received some money from/for me in the bus.

5.1 =rV₂ AND =rV₃

The =rV₂ does not co-occur with the =rV₃. This is because the =rV₂ obligatorily combines with the =rV₁ (to mark a previous past time) and a combination of the three =rV suffixes (=rV₃, =rV₂, and =rV₁) results in a structure as in (66).

- (66) ***ò gbùùùrù** (**gbù-rV₃-rV₂-rV₁**) **ì** **òke**
 He used to kill a rat for me.

However, it is not possible to have a sequence of three identical vowels on the same tone in Igbo. Rather, there is 1) =rV₃, =rV₁, and **ìbù** as in (67), and 2) **-bù**, =rV₃, =rV₁ (Onjcha) as in (68).

- (67) **ò gbùùrù** (**gbù-rV₃-rV₁**) **ì** **òke** (**nà**) **ìbù**
 he kill-**rV**(APPLICATIVE)-**rV**(ASSERTIVE) me rat (at) first
 He killed a rat for me before (previously).

- (68) **ò gbùbùùlù** (**gbù-bù-rV₃-rV₁**) **ì** **òke**
 he kill-**bù**-**rV**(PREVIOUS PAST)-**rV**(ASSERTIVE) me rat
 He used to kill a rat for me.

6. CONCLUSION

From the discussion in this article on the Igbo =rV suffixes, the following points can be made:

1. Igbo has four =rV suffixes which are classified into two broad classes: derivational and non-derivational.
2. The derivational class has one suffix, the =rV₄ (discussed in Onukawa 1992-93).
3. Non-derivational =rV suffixes are subclassified into three and are distinguished with subscript numerals (1-3) based on the order of prominence in their occurrences.
4. The =rV₁ is an inflectional suffix. It indicates the fact expressed by the verb. It is not a tense marker and it is doubtful that it marks aspect.
5. The =rV₂ is an inflectional suffix. It indicates a past time previous to another.
6. The suffix **-bù** in Onjcha and some other dialects corresponds to the =rV₂; **-bù**, however, is not an =rV image but a reflex of **ìbù** 'previous'.
7. The =rV₃ is an extensional suffix. It indicates the association of the subject or the indirect object with the object.

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