Inflection in the Ezeagu Dialect of Igbo Language

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Abstract
This study investigates inflection in the Ezeagu dialect of Igbo with emphasis on the verb inflection. A descriptive approach based on surface structure analysis was adopted. Verbs were inflected for tense and aspect, mood and polarity in the dialect. The study observes that some inflectional affixes and strategies of achieving inflection in the dialect differ from those of standard Igbo. Vowel harmony was also found out to be stronger in the dialect when compared with that of standard Igbo and consequently influences the choice of affixes used to achieve inflection on verbs. Ezeagu dialect employs strategies such as the optional use of the open vowel prefix a/e, affix sequencing and more of suffixation to achieve inflection. Tone plays an important role in achieving inflection in the dialect just like in standard Igbo. The paper points to the profound insight available from the study of various Igbo dialects.

Introduction
In grammatical analysis, inflection is a term used to refer to a change in the morphosyntactic form of a word or lexem (see Crystal 2008:243, Spencer 1991:193). According to Oha (2004:244) it could be summarily defined as a " morphological process by which a word is adjoined with an affix to undergo a pattern of change to express a grammatical and syntactic relation in terms of case, number, gender, person, tense/aspect and polarity". This falls in line with Palmer (1974) in Agbedo (2000:89) that inflectional affixes mark gender, case, tense, number, aspect, mood, person and voice. The above mentioned, therefore, shows that the process of inflection corresponds to differences in the paradigm of single item as against derivation which leads to the formation of new word (Haspelmath and Sims 2010). For instance, the Igbo verb 'je' can be inflected to stand for a number of syntactic functions within the same verb class like in

1. je   Jè   (imperative)   'go'
        èje   (participle)   'going'
        jèrè   (past)   'went'
        jeghi   (negative)   'not go'
        jeela   (perfective)   'have gone'

Conversely, the process of derivation employing the same verb will yield words like

2 Je   ṅjèm   (noun)   'journey'
        ojije   (nominal gerund)   'going'
        ojee   (noun agent)   'goer'
        ejemeje   (noun)   'journeying'

It is pertinent to note that the basis for distinguishing derivation from inflection has been a major source of controversy among scholars. Nevertheless, one of the popular views held among them is that while inflection is relevant to syntax, derivation is to morphology (Nweya, 2013:81). That is to say that derivation is word based while inflection is sentence based. In relation to the aforementioned, Haspelmath and Sims (2010:82) assert that inflectional values do not have

clearly identifiable meanings but only syntactic function. They observe that although different languages vary quite dramatically in the amount of inflectional complexity than their words exhibit, the inflectional values usually fell into one of the classes hereunder:

3 Nouns and Pronouns	Verbs	Adjectives
Number	Number	Number
Sg, Pl	Sg, Pl	Sg, Pl
Case	Person	Case
Nom, Acc	1st, 2nd, 3rd	Nom, Acc
Gender	Tense	Gender
Masc, Fem	Pres, Fut, Past	Masc, Fem
Person	Aspect	Person
1st, 2nd, 3rd	Perf, Imp, Hab	1st, 2nd, 3rd

Inflectional values in the Igbo language, fall on the pronouns, but mostly on the verbs (Nweya 2013:82). The Igbo verb is the only grammatical category that accepts affixes both derivational and inflectional (see Okonkwo 1974, Emenanjo 1978, Nwachukwu 1984 and Mbah 1999, 2011 among others).

This study mainly examines inflection in Ezeagu dialect (abbreviated henceforth as ED) of Igbo to find out its commonalities with the standard Igbo (abbreviated henceforth as SI) and the various ways it differs from it. This is important because inflection is one aspect of language that exhibits parametric variation across language and dialects. In relation to this, Oha (2004:243) notes that derivational morphology is invariant across languages or dialects because it seems to form part of the universal constraints of a given language. For example , all nominalising prefixes documented for SI are true of ED. Nevertheless, the same cannot be said of the inflectional affixes. In his study of Mgbidi dialect inflection, Oha (2004) discovers that the stative present and the past are marked with a harmonizing -lụ/-lu suffix as against –rV obtainable in SI. In that case, 'r' is a variant of 'l' but the vowel must be a harmonizing ụ/u unlike in SI where the vowel of the suffix must be similar to as well as harmonise with the vowel of the verb root. Nwaozuzu (2008) in addition, equally used inflectional variations in her classification of Igbo dialect.

Ezeagu dialect is Igbo spoken in a number of communities in Ezeagu local government area of Enugu State. They include: Imezi Ọwa, Mgbagbu Owa, Aguobu Owa, Ụmana, Ụmụmba, Obinọfịa, Ọha, Oghe, and Olo. Ogwụdile (2015:153) notes that ED is a member of the Northern Group of Igbo dialects following Nwaozuzu (2008) classification of Igbo dialects. The tone marking convention adopted in this study is that of Green and Igwe (1963). This convention leaves high tones unmarked, it marks low tones with grave accent and down stepped tones with the macron.

Literature Review
This section of study explores some of the previous works on Igbo verbal inflection. Verbal inflection in Igbo have been studied extensively by earlier scholars Okonkwo (1974), Emenanjo (1978), Nwachukwu (1983, 1984), Mbah (2011) and they all establish that inflection in Igbo is verb based. In other words, only the verb can take inflectional affixes in the language. Emenanjo (1978:59) opines, "it is the auxiliaries together with the inflectional suffixes (on the verb) and the

tone pattern which mark the various verb forms". He notes that the verbal slot constitutes the auxiliary slot and verb slot. The auxiliary verbs may or may not be found with a vowel verbal prefix depending on the NP while the verb slot consists of the participles and the verb. The verb bears the inflectional suffixes and tone patterns when there is no auxiliary. This is true of all the dialects of Igbo language.

Mbah (2011), similarly asserts that the verb complex has many parts which include the auxiliary verb which helps the main verb to function properly or have specific meaning. He identifies six auxiliary verbs across the dialects. These include: na, ga, ka, ji, ma and dị. The main verb has many parts, the independent part which is the verb root and the dependent part which are the affixes. The verb can stand alone while the affixes depend on it for meaning. The above contention could be demonstrated in (4) below:

4. ṅụ 'drink'   no prefix, no auxiliary and no suffix
   aṅụ 'drinking' one prefix, no suffix
   ṅụọ 'drink' (imperative) no prefix, one suffix
   aṅụọla 'has drunk' one prefix, two suffixes

The above reveals that the auxiliaries, the verbs, the affixes and the tones participate in verbal inflection of the Igbo language. However, the strategies of achieving inflection seem to vary across languages and dialects. A typical example is Asa dialect of Igbo as observed by Obioma (2008) who reports that the dialect does not take preverbal prefix in negative constructions as in SI and most other dialects of the Igbo language. This is illustrated hereunder:

5.   Chike   bụ-gị   nwoke
     Chike   be Neg   man
     Chike   is not   a man
     Ada   ma-gị   mma
     Ada   be Neg   beautiful
     Ada   is not   beautiful

     (Obioma 2008:45)

Similar variations have been observed to occur across languages and dialects. It ranges from variation in tense/aspect markers, negative markers or in the strategies of achieving inflection (see also Oha 2004, Nwagbo 2003, Ajọngọlọ 2005, Taiwo 2011). In the following subsection, we shall explore how inflection is achieved in Ezeagu dialect of Igbo.

Verbal Inflection in Ezeagu
In the investigation of affixal processes in Ezeagu dialect inflection, the general tense/aspect framework developed in Igbo by Nwachukwu (1983) as cited in Oha (2004) is adopted. Nwachukwu (1983) in Oha (2004:246) submits that Igbo verbs are inflected for tense/aspect, mood and polarity. Haspelmath and Sims (2010:84) posit that tense indicate temporal location of verbs action (past, present, future) while aspect has to do with an event for instance, whether the action was viewed as completed (perfective), none complete (imperfective, habitual) etc. Mood denotes the certainty, desirability or conditionality of an event. It subsumes a wider range of inflectional values including imperative (command), subjunctive events and indicative. Polarity

denotes affirmative or negative. With regards to this study, mood shall refer to sentence subtypes. For case of analysis in this study, we shall assume no difference between tense and aspect, bearing in mind that the difference between tense and aspect is very subtle. The Igbo language exhibits more of aspects than tense because it reflects more of duration than time. Inflection in ED as in the Igbo language in general could be achieved on the verb through affixation in which case the grammatical function of the verb is changed. Inflectional affixes in Igbo show the different forms of the verb with tone patterns that mark the aspect of utterance. This can lead to the underlisted sentence subtypes in ED.

The Stative Present

The stative present is marked by the –lə suffix. This is the same as the –rV suffix in SI. The presence of the central vowel in the dialect as reported by Nweya (2010) explains their occurrence as the –V component of the –rV suffix. This finding corresponds to the view of scholars who have studied variants of the Northern Igbo Group of Dialect (henceforth NIGD) such as Ugwu (1987), Ikekeonwu (1986), Mbah and Mbah (2000), Nwaozuzu (2008). They discover that the dialect group is made up of nine (9) to eleven (11) vowels in contrast with the eight (8) vowels obtainable in SI. The NIGD include the central vowels {ə} and {a} and open mid front unounded /ɛ/. The central vowels can be pharyngealised depending on the vowel of the verb root in allegiance to the vowel harmony rule which is strictly obeyed in NIGD. The suffix –lə is used to mark the stative present in ED as in the example below:

6 a   Èmeka wèlə̀ ego
        Emeka be stat   money   Emeka   is rich

  b   Uchè tuelə enə
        Uche be stat tall   Uche is tall

  c   Ebo gbàlə̀ àgbà
        Ebo be stat huge   Ebo is huge

  d   Ọ tàlə̀ ashị
        3sg be stat body   He/she is thin

In 6(a) and (b) 'ə' harmonises with 'e' while in (c) and (d) 'ə' harmonises with 'a'.

The Past Tense

The past tense in ED is marked by the harmonizing lə suffix as in the stative present. For example

7(a)   O jèlə̀   agə
         3sg go-past farm   He/she went to the farm

(b)   O   shìlə̀   nli
         3sg cook –past   food   He/she cooked food

(c)   Ọ kọlə   ji
         3sg plant –past yam   He/she planted yam

(d)   Ụzọ bọlə   anə
         Ụzọ clear –past land   Ụzọ cleared the land

(7) above reveal that the verbs and its suffixes bear low tone. The reason being that in Igbo, the past is marked by a low tone borne by the –rV suffix. Consequently, all the verbs adopt the low

tone notwithstanding their inherent tone. The subject pronouns take high tone if they are elitic subjects (Obiamalu 2007) but if they are non elitic subjects, only the last syllable ends in high tone while the initial syllable bear low tone. However, noun subjects maintain their inherent tone. The tone pattern in this construction is similar to that of the stative verbs.

The Imperative
The imperative in ED could be derived by employing the open vowel suffix (OVS) –o/-e, the lə suffix or null suffix. This is also the case in standard Igbo. Nevertheless, the root vowel adopts a low tone while the suffix marker takes on a high tone where it occurs. This is exemplified below:

8(a)   Lì-e   nli   ọọhə
         Eat. Imp. food   the   'Eat the food'

(b)   Shì-e   nli   ọmhə
         Cook.Imp. food the   'Cook the food'

(c)   kwụlə kə ị kwụ
         Stand. Imp as PART stand   'Stand still'

(d)   Wèlə   naa
         Take. Imp one   'Take one'

(e)   Gbaa   nkətị
         Keep. Imp him/her silence   'Keep silent'

(f)   Jụ nli
         Reject. Imp food   'Reject the food'

The foregoing reveals the use of the open vowel suffix -a/-e in 8(a) and (b), the use of harmonizing lə in 8(c) and (d), and null suffix in 8(e) and (f).

The Present Progressive
In ED, this aspect could be expressed in two ways employing different suffixes and strategy as described below.

The Present Inceptive Progressive
This aspect is marked by a sequence of suffixes -we/wa, ke/ka joined sequentially in harmony with the vowel of the verb root. For instance, -we/wa marks inception, ke/ka marks progressive while də marks perfection respectively. The interaction of three of them results to the present inceptive progressive as exemplified hereunder:

9(a)   Hwa eliwekedə   nli
         3pl.   Pref –eat –Incept. Prog. Perf food   They have started eating

(b)   Hwa ejewekedə   ahwịa
         3sg   Pref. go. Incept. Prog.Perf. market   They have started going to the market

(c)   Ọ   chọwakadə   ọlə
         3sg search. Incept. Prog. Perf.   Job   He/she has started searching for job

(d)   Ọ zụwakadə   ashwa
         3sg trade. Incept. Prog. Perf. Market   He/she has started trading

The examples further reflect the use of the agreement prefix a/e in the presence of the 3rd person plural pronoun.

The Present Progressive
This construction is achieved by the suffixation of a harmonizing kọ/ko to the verb root contrary to the use of 'na' auxiliary as in SI. The progressive marker bears a low tone as well as the verb root, irrespective of its inherent tone. For example:

10.(a)   Ọzọ   jekò   ọlə
         Ọzọ   go. Prog. Work   Ọzọ is going to work

    (b)   O   shiko   nli
         3sg   cook Prog.   Food   He/she is cooking

    (c)   Ọ gbakọ   ọsọ
         3sg run Prog run   He/she is running

    (d)   Hwa chọkọ   maya
         3pl search –Prog. Drinks   They are searching for drinks

The Habitual Aspect
In ED, this aspect is achieved by prefixing a low toned 'na' Aux to the derived verbal complex formed by the prefixation of a harmonizing open vowel to the verb root as in the example below:

11.(a)   Ọ   nà-èje   agə
         3sg   Aux –Part. Go   farm
         He/she goes to farm'   He/she is a farmer

    (b)   Ọ   nà-àzə   ashwa
         3sg   Aux –Part. Trade market   He/she trades
         'He/she is a trader'

    (c)   Ogboo   nà-àgọ   ma
         Ogboo   Aux –Part.. worship idol
          Ogboo worships idol   Ogboo is a pagan

    (d)   Unu   nà-èzə   oshi
         2pl   Aux –Part. Steal
         You steal   You are thieves.

In (11), the auxiliary verb and the participle marker bear low low tones while the main verb bear high tones. It further reveals that while ED make a distinction between the present progressive and the habitual aspect, SI represent both the same way as in the habitual aspect.

Past Habitual Aspect
The past habitual aspect is achieved in ED by the prefixation of na- auxilliary and suffixation of a harmonising vu/və the habitual marker and –kwe the past marker sequentially to the verb. The interaction of the auxiliary, the verb and the suffixes marks the past habitual aspect as in the examples below:

12.(a)   Ọ   nà-è-zə – vu – kwe   oshi
         3sg   Aux Part. Steal. Hab. Past stealing   He/she used to steal

    (b)   Obì   nà-è- kwu –vu – kwe okwu ụgha
         Obi Aux. Part. Talk. Hab. Past talk lie   Obi used to lie

    (c)   Ị   nà-à – nata – vu – kwe ụnọ
         2sg Aux. Part. Come. Hab. Past house   You used to come home.

    (d)   Unu   nà-à – gba – vu – kwe   ọsọ
         2pl.   Aux. Part. Run. Hab. Past run   You used to run.

In (12), the auxiliary verb and the participle marker take low tone while the verb and its suffixes bear high tone

The Perfective
The perfective construction in the dialect is achieved by suffixing the harmonizing –chakwa or chekwe, the perfective marker to the imperative form of the verb. The imperative is marked by the open vowel suffix. This contention is exemplified below:

    13.(a) Ayị à – ghə – cha – kwa ashị

            Ipl Agr. bath OVS Perf. Body   'We have taken (our) bath'

    (b)   Unu à – lụ – cha – kwa   ụnọ

            2pl Agr. build OVS Perf. House   'You have built a house'

    (c)   Hwa è- je – che – kwe ahwịa

            3pl Agr. go. OVS Perf. Market   'They have gone to market'

    (d)   Egbe è – ri – che – kwe   nli

            Egbe Agr. eat. OVS Perf. Food   'Egbe has eaten food'

In (13), the agreement prefix where it occurs, adopts a low tone while the OVS and the perfective marker adopt step tone and high tone respectively. The subject pronouns usually end in high tone.

The Future Aspect
The future aspect in ED is achieved in a peculiar way. It involves two strategies. First, by prefixing the harmonizing auxiliary verbs –ke/ka to the participial verb as in

    14 (a) Oge kè – e – je   ahwịa

            Oge Fut. Part. Go. Market   'Oge will go to market'

    (b)   Ọfọ kà – a – kwụ ụgwọ

            Ọfọ Fut. Part. Pay debt   'Ọfọ will pay the debt'

    (c)   Eke kè – e – li   anạ

            Eke Fut. Part. Eat meat   'Eke will eat meat'

    (d)   Ọ kà – a – na   imezi

            3sg Fut. Part. Go. Home   He/she will go home

In the second strategy, a harmonizing –kọ is suffixed to the verb root. This usually occurs with the verbs 'bia' and 'na' as in

    15 (a) Ude bịa – kọ – echine

            Ude Come Fut. Tomorrow   Ude will come tomorrow

    (b)   Ọ nà – kọ – kəmma

            3sg return Fut. Now   He/she will return now

In (14), the auxiliary and the participle marker take on a low high tone while the main verb adopts a high tone. Contrarily, the future in (15) is marked by a suffix which also bears a low tone. We could therefore deduce that the future is marked by a floating low tone and the auxiliary verb as in (14) or the suffix as in (15).

The Past Negative
The past negative is realized with the past negative marker –he/kwe and the harmonizing negator –ha/kwa as shown in the underlisted examples:

    16.(a) Unu e – je – he – kwe   ọlə

            2pl Pref. go. Past. Neg. work   You did not go to work

    (b)   Hwa a – kwa – ha – kwa akwa
               3pl. Pref. cry Past. Neg. crying   They did not cry
    (c)   Ada a – gba – ha – kwa ọsọ
               Ada pref. run Past. Neg. run   Ada did no run
    (d)   Ije e – je – he – kwe egwu
               Ije Pref. go. Past. Neg. dance   Ije did not go to dance

The foregoing shows that the past marker is polarity sensitive in ED and therefore has affirmative and negative forms. The affirmative form is –he/-ha while negative form is –kwe/-kwa. They co-occur in a past negative construction unlike in SI where the negative marker replaces the past marker entirely.

The Imperative Negative

This involves two processes: the prefixation of a high toned harmonizing agreement prefix e/a and the suffixation of a harmonizing negative marker –ne/na as in

    17. (a) E – li – ne nli nhə
             Agr. eat. Neg. food the   Don't eat the food
    (b)   A – sa – na alịa omhə
               Agr. wash. Neg. plate that   Don't wash that plate
    (c)   E – we – ne – sọ naa
               Agr. take Neg. only one   Don't take only one
    (d)   A- gba – na – nkətị
               Agr. be. Neg. silent   Don't be silent
    (e)   Unu a – ghə – na ashị
               2pl. Agr. bath. Neg. body   Don't take your bath
    (f)   I je – ne odzi omhə
               2sg. Go. Neg. message that   Don't embark on that errand.

The above illustrations reveal that the Negative marker ne/na replaces the imperative marker totaling in the imperative negative construction. In other words, the imperative marker and the negator do not co-occur in a negative construction. Verbs with inherent high tone change to step tone together with the suffixes as in 17 a – c and e – f, while low tone verbs maintain their tone as in (17d).

The Progressive Negative

The progressive negative is achieved by suffixing the negator 'ghə' to the auxiliary verb 'na'. The low toned open vowel is also prefixed to the auxiliary verb when the subject is either a singular or plural noun, first person singular pronoun or the third person singular pronoun. For example:

    18.(a) Ibe a – nà – ghə̀ ejè   ụkà
             Ibe Pref. Aux. Neg. Part. go church   Ibe does not go to church
    (b)   Unu a – nà –ghə à-   gba   ọsọ
               2pl Pref. Aux. Neg. Part. run   run   You pl are not running
    (c)   Ọ nà – ghə e – shi nli
               3sg Aux.Neg. Part. cook food   He/she does not cook food
    (d)   Ị nà- ghə è- kwu okwu
               2pl. Aux. Neg. Part. talk speech   You don't talk/ you do not speak

A close look at the example above, shows that whenever the agreement occurs in a negative construction, it bears a high tone. In its absence, the high tone is borne by the subject pronoun. However, the auxiliary and the negator bear low tones.

The Future Negative
The future negative is achieved in the dialect by the suffixation of the harmonizing future aspect marker –ko/-kọ or –ha and the negative marker 'ghə' sequentially to the verb as in the examples below:

18. (a) O   zə – ko – ghə oshi   ọzọ
        3sg steal. Fut. Neg. steal again   He/she will not steal again
    (b)   Ị na – kọ – ghə   echine
        2sg leave Fut. Neg. tomorrow   You will not go tomorrow
    (c)   Ọ bịa – kọ – ghə   nta
        3sg come Fut. Neg. today   He/she will not come today
    (d)   O li – ko – ghə   nli
        3sg eat fut. Neg, food   He/she will not eat food

The open vowel or agreement prefix in harmonizing with the vowel of the verb root is employed when the subject is a non clitic pronoun or an R expression as in

19. (a) Ugwu e – zə – ko – ghə   oshi
        Ugwu Pref. steal. Fut. Neg. stealing   Ugwu will not steal
    (b)   Hwa a – na – kọ – ghə   nta
        3pl. Pref. return. Fut. Neg. today   They will not return today

One can as well observe that the tonal behaviour of the prefix is the same as 3,11 above.

The Perfective Negative
The perfective negative is achieved by the suffixation of the harmonizing 'də', the perfective negative marker and the negator 'ghə' sequentially to the verb root as in the example hereunder:

20. (a) O li – də - ghə   ji
         3sg eat. Perf. Neg. food   'He/she has not eaten yam'
    (b)   Ọ wụ – də – ghə
         3sg die. Perf. Neg.   'He/she is not dead'
    c)   I je – də – ghə ashwa
         2sg. Go. Perf. Neg. market   'You have not gone to market'
    (d)   Ọ sə – də – ghə akwa
         3sg. Wash. Perf. Neg. clothes   'He/she has not washed the clothes'

The open vowel prefix could be employed together with suffixes as in

21. (a) Hwa e – li – də – ghə anə
        3pl. Part. eat. Perf. Neg. meat   'They have not eaten meat'
    (b)   Unu a – sụ – də – ghə akwa
        2pl. Part. wash. Perf.. Neg. clothes   'You have not washed the clothes

This example reveals that the perfective marker inflects for negation in the dialect. It is realized as harmonizing 'də'.

Tone and Inflection

Generally, tense/ aspect is achieved in ED using tone as in the Igbo language in general. For instance, to achieve the past, a low tone which is constantly on the rV marker influences the main verb to change its high tone to low tone, forcing the verb complex to bear low tone. In other words, the mapping of the 'lə' in the case of ED unto the verb changes the high tone of the main verb to low tone. This implies that the tone of the verb that indicate part time meaning is consistently low (Mbah 1999, Ikegwuonu 2011). In achieving the imperative, the verb consistently bears a low tone. It was also observed from the study that the future is marked by floating low tone borne by the future marker which could be the auxiliary verb or the suffix as the case may be. In addition, it was observed that negative is marked by a floating high tone and the negator. The high tone could be borne by the open vowel or agreement prefix or the pronoun as the case may be. This corresponds to the observations of Obiamalu (2007) that the negative in Igbo is marked by a floating high tone by the open vowel or agreement prefix where it occurs and the negative marker. This view is upheld in this study. To achieve inflection in ED, an affix either prefixed or suffixed or both operations occur simultaneously on the verb or (and) its auxiliary. Inflection occurs in two ways at the surface level.

(i) With the harmonizing suffixes and vowel prefix e/a deleted.
(ii) With both harmonizing suffixes and the vowel prefix e/a.

The harmonizing vowel prefix e/a do not occur if the subject position is occupied by the second person singular pronoun i/ị , third person singular pronoun o/ọ or the impersonal pronoun e/a. Conversely, the open vowel prefix e/a and the suffixes co-occur on the verb or its auxiliary when the subject position is occupied by other forms of pronoun or an R-expression. However, it is worthy of note that the open vowel prefix usually surfaces in negative constructions.

Summary and Conclusion

This study reveals that ED is richer than SI in terms of affixes especially suffixes used to achieve inflection. The number and form of affixes used in the ED differs significantly from those of SI and some other dialects of Igbo such as Mgbidi and Asa as reported by Oha (2004) and Obioma (2008) respectively. The table below summarizes the affixes employed in achieving inflection for the tense/aspectual form reported in this paper.

Table 1

Aspect/Tense	Aux. verbs	Prefixes	ED Suffixes	Aux. verbs	SI Prefixes	Suffixes
The stative present			Lə̀			-rV
The past			Lə̀			-rV
The imperative			-a/-e or lə̀			-a/e
The present inceptive progressive			-we/wa, -ke/de			-we/-wa/-la
The present progressive normal			-ko/kọ			
The habitual aspect	na			Na		

The past habitual aspect			-kwe, -vu/-v ̀ə			
The perfective			-cha/che, -kwe/-kwa			-la
The future aspect	-ke/ka				-ga	
The past negative			-he/-kwe, -ha/kwa			-ghi/-ghị
The imperative negative		-a/-e	-ne/-na			
The progressive negative	-na		Ghə ̀		(-a/-e)	-la/-la
The future negative			-ko/kọ	Ga	-a/-e	-ghi/-ghị
The perfective negative			də/ ghə		(-a/-e)	-be,-ghi –be, ghị

The table further reveals some difference in the strategy of achieving inflection in ED and SI. For instance, to achieve the present progressive, ED employs a suffix marker ko/kọ while SI employs the 'na' auxiliary. Ezeagu dialect also employs sequence of suffixes in what Oha (2004) terms affix sequencing. A typical example is the present inceptive progressive markers –we/wa, ke/də as shown on the table where a sequence of three suffixes are employed to achieve infletion. Finally, the affixes attest to the strong operation of vowel harmony in ED. None of the affixes violated the principle of the vowel harmony. The affixes which are mostly suffixes appear in sets in harmony with the vowel of the verb root.

Our study of inflection in Ezeagu dialect of Igbo upholds the fact that the verb root is the basic of building tense/aspect in Igbo as Okonkwo (1974) and Emenanjo (1978) rightly point out. The study exposes the rich potentials of dialectal study in the quest for an adequate knowledge of Igbo and further development and enrichment of the standard variety.

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