

## **The expression of imperative mood in Igbo**

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*This paper examines the expression of imperative mood in Igbo syntax and the morphological structures of the verb forms used in expressing it, their tonal behaviours and how they occur in the syntactic structures. The data were obtained through observation of naturally occurring speech of Igbo native speakers. The paper adopts a descriptive method in the analysis of the data. The work reveals that the verbs used in expressing imperative mood in Igbo are morphologically marked. Not all the verbs are used to express it. The verbs involved are mainly action verbs and some stative verbs. Sometimes, the verbs with only the CV – root can be used to express it. The occurrence of the verb root with the suffixes is determined by the semantic content of the utterance. The syllabic nasal prefix “n-” is identified to occur as the prefix of the three verbs of movement such as “-je” (go), “ga” (go), “-la” (go) while “m:” occurs as the prefix of “fu” (go/leave). Tone plays vital role in expressing imperative mood in Igbo. The rule of vowel harmony is observed. The verb forms used in expressing imperative mood in Igbo take mainly suffixes and minimally prefixes.*

### **Introduction**

Many languages of the world are classified with respect to grammatical pattern characterizing them. According to Semmelmeier and Bolander (1981), “the word mood comes from a Latin word which means “manner”. When applied to the verb, it means the manner in which the verb expresses the action or state of being”. Mood as a grammatical term means the form which a verb assumes in order to reflect the manner in which the speaker conceives the action (Woodcock 1959:83). It also refers to a system of verb inflection, marking distinctions such as indicative, imperative and subjunctive. It describes inflectional properties of finite verb. According to Crystal (2007:299), mood refers to “a set of syntactic and semantic contrast signalled by alternative paradigms”. The mood determines aspects of the interpretation of the relative clause (Radford 2004:346). In his view, Uba-Mgbamene (2007:77) posits that “mood

indicates what the speaker has in mind, which is expressed through verbs”. Mood is concerned with verbs which express mood in different ways. Mood is clearly one of those semantic syntactic categories that as Jaspersen (1924:56) observes, Janus – like, faces both ways, towards forms and towards notions. Nnamdi – Eruchalu (2007:176) posits that mood refers “to the form the verb takes to portray the speakers or the writer’s attitude to the topic”. She further says that it is the mood of a verb that expresses a statement.

Moods are formally marked by different forms. In synthetic languages, these forms are indicated in inflectional paradigms. In other languages, it is realized in a variety of ways-intonationally, morphologically, syntactically or lexically. Mood is used to characterize sentence types such as: indicative which states facts, claims and assertions, the imperative which gives commands, request, the subjective which expresses wishes, intensions, doubts or uncertainties and the interrogative which asks questions. From the foregoing, mood is a grammatical category and it is realized by inflecting the verb or modifying it by means of auxiliaries. It relates the verb forms that signal various attitude of the speakers about the desirability of what is being said. In other words, it relates to the verbal action to the speaker’s attitude towards the truth value of a situation. We may talk about truth value in different possible words, words in which the assertion is true (certainty), might be true (possibility or probability) or could be true (ability), must be true (necessity), ought to be true (obligation). Mood in English is expressed mostly by modal auxiliary verbs.

This paper has seven sections. Section one is the introduction. Section two looks at what imperative is. Section three examines the expression of imperative mood in Igbo and the verb forms used to express it in the language. Section four discusses progressive imperative. Section five looks at the negative imperative. Section six discusses the characteristics of verbs used in expressing imperative mood in Igbo while section seven is the conclusion.

## **2. The imperative**

The imperative (IMP) is a grammatical mood which describes verbs that form commands or requests, including the giving of prohibition or permission or any other kind of exhortation. It also relates to or constitutes the grammatical mood that expresses the will to influence the behaviour of another person or the listener. The imperative is recognized as a mood in Igbo by

many scholars. The imperative mood is a construction formed with verb whose primary role is in giving orders. According to Blake (2008:78), “the imperative is used in commands.” According to Akmajian, Demars, Farmer and Harnish (2003:229), “an imperative sentence is normally used to request a hearer to do something (to comply with request.)”

Existing literature shows that many languages exhibit imperative mood either inflectionally or by the use of bare verb root. Many languages including English use the bare verb root to form imperative (such as “go”, “run” “do” and so on). Other languages such as Cambodian use imperative markers whereas languages such as Seri and Latin, however, use special imperative forms. Verbs in imperative mood express direct commands, requests or prohibition as in:

- a. Listen!
- b. Show me the money!
- c. Pass the book over to me!
- d. Leave the room!
- e. Don't cook the food!

Syntactically, imperatives are distinguished by the fact that the subject (you) need not to be maintained as shown in (1a – e). In English, one could form negative imperative by simply adding “not” or “n't” after “do” as indicated in (1e) above. The imperatives are verbs used to tell someone to do something without argument. Sometimes, the tone of the speaker may, however, indicate the exact meaning of the imperative mood, whether it is being used as a command or for emphasis on what is being said. The major parts of the imperative sentences are associated with the second person which is usually the hearer. Many languages delete the subject of the imperative. In languages, where deletion is optional, the subject is overt only in cases where some special emphasis is needed. We could say that certain pronominal subjects in imperative have the feature [+ emphasis] which cannot be realized on the verb. Thus, the presence of this feature on the subject of an imperative prevents the subject from being deleted as in:

2. a. You [+ Emph] go-IMP home →you go home!
- b. You [- Emph] go-IMP home →go home!

Semantically, an imperative indicates the speaker's desire to influence future action. This can be accomplished by making requests, giving orders or making suggestions. Another element

of semantics of imperative is that the speaker wishes to influence the actions of the addressee and not some third-party.

### **3. Expression of imperative mood in Igbo**

In Igbo, imperative mood is formed by affixing the imperative marker to the verb root. Note that not all the verbs in Igbo can be used in indicating imperative mood. Action verbs play significant role, including some few stative verbs. The verb play form can be simple or complex, affirmative or negative. The classes of verbs involve in this construction are mainly TCL1 and TCL2. The verb roots used in indicating imperative mood take the open vowel suffix (OVS) elements such as “-a,-e,-o,-o.” These OVS which occur with the verb roots are regarded as imperative markers in Igbo. They add imperative meanings to the verb roots to which they are attached. In Indo European languages such as Latin, French and English, imperative occurs only in the second person, whereas in Igbo, it extends to all persons, both in singular and plural.

#### **3.1. The verb forms used in marking imperative mood in Igbo**

There are categories of verb forms which are used to mark imperative mood in Igbo. They are:

##### **The CV form**

Morphologically, this verb form is simple and is formed with a consonant and a vowel. The verb roots are bare. They do not take any affix at all while indicating imperative mood. The CV roots that are involved are limited in number. Consider the following examples,

3. a. Kwe! (agree!)
- b. Kwè! (promise!)
- c. Nye! (give!)
- d. Bĩa! (come!)
- e. Gwa! (tell!)
- f. Za (answer!)
- g. Zi! (show!)
- h. So! (follow!)

The above verbs belong to Tone Class 1 (TCL1) and Tone Class 2 (TCL2). Note that the tone of some of these verbs may become low or high depending on the objects that follow them as shown in 4 below:

4. a. Kwe yā!  
Agree 3sg.  
Agree with him/her.
- b. Kwè n'atumàtù ahụ!  
Agree prep-suggestion Dem.  
Agree with that suggestion!
- c. Kwe nkwà!  
Promise promise.  
Make a promise!
- d. Nye yā nri!  
Give 3sg food.  
Give him/her food!
- e. Nyè usà!  
Give reply.  
Give reply!
- f. Zi m afele!  
Show 1sg plates!  
Show me the plates!
- g. Gwa ya aha gị!  
Tell 3sg name 2sg.  
Tell him/her his/her name!
- h. Za m!  
Answer 1sg.  
Answer me!

From the above data, note that the tone of verbs may be low or high depending on the objects that follow them as shown in the above sentences. These verbs can also be emphatic. The below stative verbs with CV roots can be used to express imperative mood as in:

5. a. Dì ogologo!

Be tall!

b. Hụ yā n'anya!

Love 3sg prep-eye.

Love him/her!

c. Ma mmā!

Be beautiful !

### 3.2 The verb root with open vowel suffix

The morpheme structure is thus:

[CV + E] verb

The suffix is attached in accordance with principle of the vowel harmony which operates in the language. They are formed with simple verb root, examples:

6. a. Si (cook)!

Sìe nri.

Cook-IMP food!

b. Je (go).

Jèe ukà!

Go-IMP church.

Go to church.

c. Ri (eat).

Rìe ji!

Eat-IMP yam.

Eat yam!

d. Sa (wash).

Sàa afele!

Wash-IMP plates.

Wash the plates!

e. Gbu (kill)

Gbùo ewu!

Kill-IMP goat.

Kill the goat.

f. Che (think).

Chèe uche Obi!

Think-IMP thought Obi.

Think Obi!

g. Ma (be).

Maa mma!

Be-IMP beautiful.

Be beautiful!

h. Ri climb.

Rjà osisi!

Climb-IMP tree.

Climb the tree!

i. Zà (sweep).

Zàa ɔlɔ!

Sweep-IMP house.

Sweep the house.

Pɔ (go out).

Pɔɔ ebe à.

Go-in here.

Go out here.

k. Dà (fall).

Dàa Okeke!

Fall-IMP Okeke

Okeke fall

From the above data, CV roots with inherent high tones in (6a - g) change to low tones when indicating imperative while those with inherently low tone retain their low tones as in (6i - k). With exception (6f and g) which are stative verbs, the rest are action verbs. Generally, the tone of the open vowel suffixes which bear the imperative markers are consistently on high tone. The imperative markers (vowels) are attached in accordance with the principle of vowel

harmony. In Igbo, imperative can extend to all persons, both singular and plural as in below paradigm with pronoun subjects:

7. a. M gbùò gị?  
Isg kill-IMP 2sg.  
Am I to kill you?
- b. Gbùò yā!  
Kill-IMP 3sg.  
Kill him/her/it!
- c. Ya gbùò yā!  
3sg kill-IMP 3sg.  
He/she should kill it!
- d. Anyị gbuo ya!  
Ipl kill-IMP 3sg.  
Are we to kill it?
- e. Unu gbuo ya!  
2sg kill-IMP 3sg.  
You kill it!
- f. Ha gbùò yā!  
3pl kill-IMP 3sg.  
They should kill it.
- g. Gị gbùò yā!  
2sg kill-IMP 3sg.  
You kill it!

When Igbo imperative marker occurs with the first person singular, it does so in questions as in (7a) above, otherwise, no one can give himself/herself a command. Note that this question form earns its two deep structures-one is interrogative and the other is imperative as in:

8.  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} M \\ M\mu \end{array} \right\}$  gbùò yā!
9. DS: a Q: (ọ bụ) m gbuo ya?  
b. IMP: M gbùò ya!



### 3.3 The verb root with imperative with rv suffix

In Igbo, imperative mood can be formed by attaching the –rv suffix to the verb root. That the –rv suffix is attached to verb root does not indicate time meaning rather, it indicates imperative, though the two are expressed with –rv suffix. The semantic interpretation is not the same. The morpheme structure is thus:

CV + rv

Consider the following examples:

<b>Imperative</b>	<b>Past Tense</b>
10. a. Wèrè (take). Wèrè ego ahụ! Take-IMP money Dem.	a. Wèrè (took). Obi wèrè ego ahụ Obi take-rv pst money Dem.
b. Bèrè (cut)!. Bèrè anụ! Cut-IMP meat. Cut the meat!	b. Bèrè (cut). O bèrè anụ. 3sg cut-rvpst meat. He/she cut the meat.
c. Sìrì (cook). Sìrì nri! Cook-IMP food. Cook the food!	c. Sìrì (cook). O sìrì nri. 3sg cook-rvpst food. He/she cooked the food.
d. Ma (know). Màrà ya! Know-IMP 3sg.	d. Ma (know). Ha màrà ya. 3pl know-rvpst it.
e. Ku (carry)!. Kùru nwa ahụ. Carry-IMP baby Dem. Carry that baby!	e. Ku (carry). O kùrù nwa ahụ. 3sg carry-rvpst baby Dem. He/she carried that baby.

From the above data, it is observed that morphologically the same verb forms which are used to indicate imperative mood in Igbo are also used to indicate past tense. It is important to note that their semantic interpretations are not the same. The verb forms used for imperative mood indicate non-time reading, the verb forms used for past tense indicate past time reading. Again, tonologically, the verb forms differ. The tone of the verb forms that indicate imperative is

consistently on low-high whereas those of the past tense are consistently on low-low. Syntactically, they share different positions. While the verb forms of the imperative occur in the subject position in the syntactic structures, the verb form for the past tense follow the subject immediately. The suffixes are attached in accordance with the principle of vowel harmony.

The imperative verbs “wèrè” (take), bèrè (cut), siri (cook) màrà (know), vùru (carry), and kùru (carry) can give connotational meaning respectively as “take unto yourself in (10a), “cut unto yourself as in (10b), cook unto yourself as in (10c) and so on. Furthermore, in the examples below, “siri” (cook) and “sìe” (cook) are semantically different in meaning:

11. a. Sìri        nke gi!  
      Cook-IMP Det 2sg.  
      Cook your own (for yourself).
- b. Sìe        nke gi!  
      Cook-IMP Det 2sg.  
      Cook your own (not necessarily for yourself).

In (11b), the emphasis in the command is only more in “cooking”, whereas in (11a), the emphasis is not only on “cooking” but on the notion of “cooking for yourself”. Other examples include:

12. a. Gbùò      osisi ahù!  
      Cut-IMP tree Dem.  
      Cut that tree!
- b. Gbùru     osisi ahù!  
      Cut-IMP tree Dem.  
      Cut that tree!
- 13.a. Gbàa        mmanụ n’itè!  
      Collect-IMP oil    prep-pot.  
      Collect oil from the pot!
- b. Gbàra       mmanụ n’itè!  
      Collect-IMP oil    prep-pot.  
      Collect oil from the pot!

- 14.a. Wàa edè!  
Cut-IMP cocoyam.  
Cut the cocoyam!
- b. Wàra edè!  
Cut-IMP cocoyam.  
Cut the cocoyam!

**3.4. The-rv suffix can also be attached to the stative verbs to form Imperative as in:**

15. a. Nòrọ ndụ Chike!  
Exist/live IMP Chike.  
Exist/live Chike/Be alive Chike!
- b. Bùrụ nwoke!  
Be-IMP man.  
Be a man!

The tone pattern of the verbs is low-high. From the foregoing, it is observed that the -rv suffix can occur with both the action verbs and the stative verbs in imperative.

**3.5. The verb root with –ta/te suffix**

The suffix –ta/te can be attached to the CV root to form imperative mood as in:

16. a. Zùta anụ!  
Buy-suff meat.  
Buy the meat!
- b. Ghòta ūbe!  
Pluck-suff pear.  
Pluck the pears!
- c. Bàta n'ụlọ!  
Come-suff prep-house.  
Come inside the house!
- d. Bàta!  
Come-suff.

- Come in!
- e. Wèta/te ji!  
Bring-suff yam.  
Bring the yam.
- f. Chùte mmirī!  
Fetch-suff water.  
Fetch the water!
- g. Lùte mmanya!  
Buy-suff wine.  
Buy some wine!

In the above data, the tone patterns of the imperative verbs is still low-high. The vowels of the verb roots in the above examples harmonized with the suffixes.

Furthermore, the –rv non-time “-ra” can be attached to the verbs to indicate imperative as in:

17. a. Zùtara m anụ!  
Buy-rv-non pst 1sg meat.  
Buy meat nfor me!
- b. Ghòtara ha ube!  
Pluck-rv non pst 3pl pear.  
Pluck the pears for them!
- c. Wètara anyị ego!  
Bring-rv-non pst 1pl money.  
Bring the money for us!
- d. Chùtere m mmirī!  
Fetch-rv-non pst 1sg water.  
Fetch water for in!

### **3.6 The combination of the two verb roots**

In Igbo, imperative mood can be expressed with the combination of the two different verb roots with different tones. This category of verbs does not take any suffix. In his view, Okonkwo (1974:48) claims that “the category of compound verbs command is exactly the

combination of the two verb roots”. The morpheme structure is formed thus: [CV + CV] verb as in:

18. a. Gbu (cut) + dà (down) →gbudà (cut down)  
Gbudà osisi ahụ!  
Cut down tree Dem.  
Cut down that tree!
- b. We (take) + pu (away) → wepụ (take away)  
Wepụ ya ichè!  
Take 2sg different  
Take it away differently/separately!
- c. We (take) + bà (in) → webà (take in).  
Webà ya!  
Take 3sg.  
Take it in!
- d. Gba (run) + bà (in)→ gbaba (run into)  
Gbabà n'ụlọ!  
Run prep-house.  
Run into the house!
- e. Ri (eat) + tų (a bit) →(eat a bit).  
Ritų jį ahụ!  
Eat a bit yam Dem.  
Eat that yam a bit!
- f. Ri (eat) + pịa (complete) → ripia (eat up completely)  
Ripịà nrị ahụ.  
Eat up food Dem.  
Eat up that food completely!

With the exception of (18e) which has the normal tone for Igbo imperatives, the rest have high – low tones.

### **3.7 The verb root with –ba/be suffix**

The suffix-ba/be suffix can be attached to the CV root to express imperative mood as in:

19. a. Rìbe nri ahù!  
Eat-suff food Dem.  
Continue eating that food!
- b. Nụba mmiri!  
Drink-suff water.  
Continue drinking water!
- c. Zàba ùlọ Òbi!  
Sweep-suff house Obi.  
Continue sweeping Obi's house!
- d. Bèbe akwa!  
Cry-suff cry.  
Continue crying!

### **3.8 The verb root with open vowel suffix and -rì suffix**

The open vowel suffix and -rì suffix can be attached to the verb root to express imperative mood as in:

20. a. Gàari ugbo!  
Go-ovs-suff –suff farm.  
Go to farm!
- b. Kwuorì okwu!  
Speak-ovs-suff-suff talk.  
Speak!
- c. Chìari ọchì!  
Laugh-ovs-suff-suff laugh.  
Laugh!
- d. Bìari ebe a!  
Come-ovs-suff-suff here this.  
Come here!

The tone of the verb root is low, that of open vowel is high while the “rì” suffix is low.

### 3.9. The suffix – *ka* can be attached to the verb

In some dialects such as Onitsha, the suffix – “ka” can be attached to the verbs to render them imperative: they are however meant to convey a fiercer command and incorporate the idea of “aside” as in:

21. a. Pùrùka                      n’uzò . Òkekē!  
Go-rv-non-pst-IMP perp-way Okeke.  
Go out of the way Okeke/Get out of the way Okeke!
- b. Chùruka                      ọkụkọ ahù! .  
Drive-rv-non-pst-IMP fowl Dem.  
Drive aside/away that fowl!
- c. Kwùrùka                      n’akụkù! .  
Stand-rv-non-pst-IMP prep aside.  
Stand aside!

### 3.10. The verb root with extensional suffixes

The extensional suffixes can be attached to the CV root in order to express imperative mood, examples:

22. a. Bubàgodu àkpà!  
Carry-suff bag.  
Carry the bag in first!
- b. Kpọtagodụ yā!  
Bring-suff 3sg.  
Bring him/her in first!
- c. Gòtagodu azịzà!  
Buy-suff broom.  
Buy the broom first.
- d. Mechaa ya!  
Finish-suff it.  
Finish it up!
- e. Chùtere                      m mmiṛī!  
Fetch-rv-nonpst 1sg water.

Fetch water for me!

- f. Mesie ihe ahụ!  
Finish-suff thing Dem.  
Finish up that thing!

### **3.11. The syllabic nasal prefix *n-* with cv root**

In Igbo, syllabic nasal prefix “n-” can be used to express imperative mood as in:

23.a. Nla!

IMP-go.

Start going/be going!

b. Nje !

IMP-go.

Continue going/be going!

c. Nga!

IMP-go/be going!

Continue going.

d. Mba!

Continue to entering/be entering!

The syllabic nasal prefix can only be found to occur before the verbs of movement such as “la” (go), “je” (go), “-ga” (go) and “-ba” (enter).

Note that in Igbo, when one’s intension is to make a polite command or request, “biko” (please) is often used as in:

24. a. Bikō bịa!

Please come-ovs.

Please come!

b. Bikō jèe!

Please go-ovs.

Please go!

When laying emphasis, an imperative may be preceded by the second person pronoun “gi” (you) as in:

25. a. Gị, rie nri!



2sg eat-ovs food.

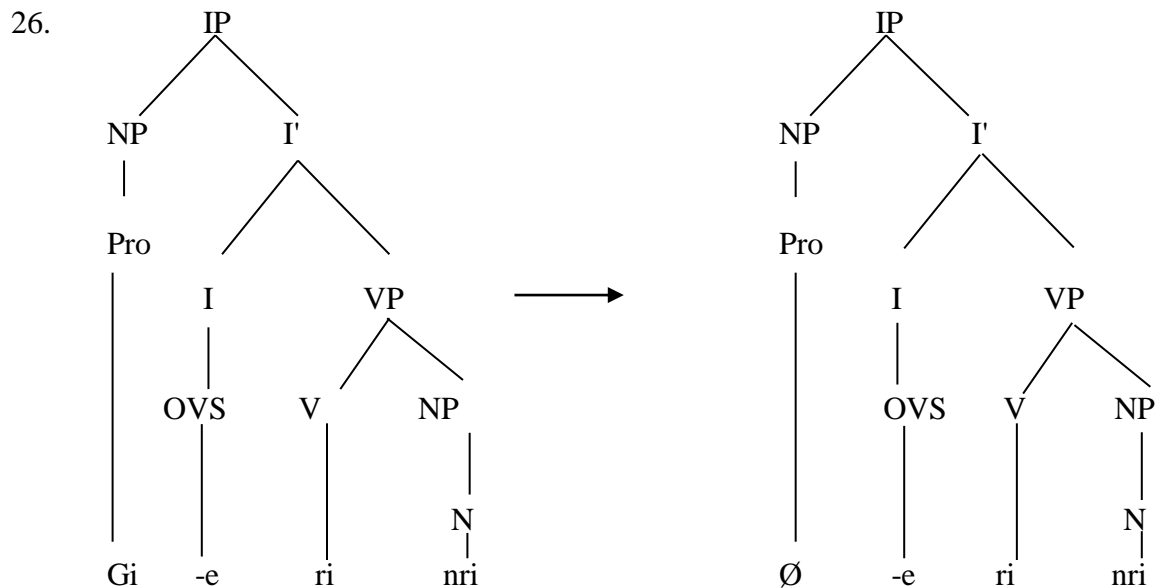
You eat food!

b. Gi, jèè ùkà!

2sg go-ovs church.

You, go to church!

Sometimes, the second person singular “gi” may be deleted in the underlying structure. When represented in the tree diagram, it looks thus:



Note that the second person plural, the subject deletion is sometimes blocked. It may be partial because “nu” which denotes plural is the suffix to the verb as in:

27. Rìenù - (You) pl eat!  
 Mèchaanù - (You) pl finish up!  
 Ñùḡnù - (You) pl drink!  
 Mesienù - (You) pl finish up!  
 Jèenù - (You) pl go!

#### 4. The progressive imperative

In Igbo, imperative mood does exist in progressive form. It has affirmative and negative counterparts. The verb form combines the features of the imperative and progressive MARKER “NA”. For the affirmation, the verb form is thus:

Na + participle

For the negative, the verb form is:

(A) + na + IMP + participle verb

Consider the following examples:

28.	<b>Affirmative</b>	<b>Negative</b>
a.	Na-azà ya! Prog – part 3sg. Be sweeping it!	Anala azà! Pref-prog-IMP part. Don’t be sweeping it!
b.	Na-ezù ike! Prog – part strength. Be resting!	Anala ezù ike! Pref-prog-IMP part strength. Don’t be resting!
c.	Na - àchọ ya! Prog – part 3sg. Be looking for him/her/it!	Anala àchọ ya! Pref-prog-IMP part 3sg. Don’t be looking for him/her/it!
d.	Na-èri nrī! Prog-part food. Be eating food!	Anala èri nri! Pref-prog-IMP part food. Don’t be eating food!

In the affirmative, there are no NP subjects. The same thing is obtained in the negative counterparts. The progressive marker “na” is always on the high tone. The participle verbs following the progressive marker retain their usual tones. In the negative, the progressive marker “na” is on the step tone whereas the vowel prefix is on the high tone. The participles retain their usual tone patterns.

Furthermore, the negative imperative can be realized by using the verb “adī (don’t) (a high tone prefix following by a step tone root) plus a high tone progressive marker “na” as in:

29. a. Adī na-èchu mmirī!  
Don't prog-part water.  
Don't be fetching water!
- b. Adī na-azà ụlò!  
Don't prog-part house.  
Don't be sweeping the house!
- c. Adī na-àchọ ha!  
Don't prog-part them.  
Don't be looking for them!
- d. Adī na-èri nri!  
Don't prog-part food.  
Don't be eating food!

Sometimes, the negative imperative will be unrealized. This is indicated by the use of the unfulfilled marker “-ka” which is on a low tone and a high tone “a-” prefix, followed by a participle verb to which the imperative negative marker “-la/-le/-na” which has a high tone is attached, examples:

30. a. Akā egbula ya!  
Don't pref-kill-IMP 3sg.  
Don't kill him/her/it!
- b. Akā esila nri!  
Don't pref-cook-IMP food.  
Don't cook the food!
- c. Akā egole anụ!  
Don't pref-buy-IMP meat.  
Don't buy the meat.
- d. Akā achọna ya!  
Don't pref-look-IMP it.  
Don't look for it yet!

## 5. Negative imperative

In Igbo, the negative imperative mood is formed by attaching the negative suffix marker “la” to the verb root. The verb form has the following morpheme constituents.

[Á + CV – stem – la – Na] verb

The vowel prefix is consistently on a high tone. It can be realized as “a-/e-” depending on the vowel of the verb. A-/e- requires the presence of the harmonizing imperative marker. The tone of the negative marker depends on the tone of the verb root. The suffix has phonologically conditioned variants. The suffix “la” can be realized as “-na/ne” depending on the root vowel to which it is attached. The imperative negative suffix marker has no fixed tone. In Igbo, the imperative negative suffix “la” is similar to the perfective suffix in having phonologically conditioned variants. They look alike, but they are different in character and distribution. The perfective suffix is consistently on a fixed high tone but that of the imperative does not have a fixed tone. The perfective marker occurs with the open vowel suffix whereas the imperative suffix occurs without the open vowel suffix. Consider the following negative imperatives:

31. a. Esīlē!  
Pref-cook IMP.  
Don't cook!
- b. Echūlā!  
Pre-fetch-IMP.  
Don't fetch!
- c. Ejēlā        ugbō!  
Pref-go-IMP farm.  
Don't go to farm!
- d. Atālā!  
Pref-chew-IMP.  
Don't chew!
- e. Añūnā        mmanya!  
Pref-drink-Im wine.  
Don't drine wine!
- f. Azàlà        ụlọ!  
Pref-sweep-IMP house.

Don't sweep the house!

g. Adàlà        ada!

Pref-fall-IMP fall.

Don't fall!

h. Apùlà        ama!

Pref-go-IMP outside.

Don't go outside!

From the above data, it is observed that the imperative suffixes are on the same tones with the vowels of the verb root. The vowels of the verb roots are on step tones with the high tone verbs as well as the imperative suffixes as in (31a – e) above. The vowels of the verb root of the low tone verbs retain their low tones as well as their suffixes in (31f – h).

The plural can be formed by attaching the suffix “-nu” to the verb or by writing the pronouns separately as in:

- 32. a. Emēlanù! or Unù emēlā! (You pl) don't do!
- b. Asālanù! or Unù asālā! (You pl) don't wash!
- c. Azàlanù! or Unù azàlā! (You pl) don't sweep!
- d. Azàlanù! or Unù azālā! (You pl) don't answer!

## **6. Characteristics of the verb forms used in expressing mood in Igbo**

1. The imperative verb forms occupy the subject position in the syntactic structures.
2. The first, second and third person singular and plural are sometimes silent.
3. The verb forms can take enclitics such as ‘nụ’ “ga” as suffix.
4. In emphatic expression, the second person singular “gị” can be used.
5. The subject is usually deleted. If the subject of the imperative is present, it is usually used to convey some emphatic meaning. This obtains in other natural languages.
6. Not all the verbs in Igbo can be used to express imperative mood. Action verbs are mainly used and some stative verbs.
7. Not all the simple verb with CV root takes the open vowel suffix.
8. The form of the open vowel suffix seems to vary between individuals or varieties such as chòò ya/chòà ya (look for it) and gòò ya/gòè ya (buy it).
9. Vowel harmony is operational in expression of imperative mood.

10. Tone is very vital in indicating the mood of the verb.
11. The verb roots can be expanded.
12. It uses only one negative marker “la” with a harmonizing vowel prefix.
13. In the negative, the vowel prefix a-/-e and a harmonizing suffix –la/-le is obligatory.

### **Summary and conclusion**

The paper examines the expression of imperative mood in Igbo syntax. The paper reveals that imperative mood is marked morphologically, syntactically and semantically in Igbo. Not all the verbs in the language are used in the expression of imperative mood. The verbs involved are mainly action verbs and some stative verbs. Sometimes, the verbs with only the CV-structure can be used to express imperative mood. This means that some verbs do not take open vowel suffix in order to express imperative mood.

The occurrence of the verb root with the suffixes is determined by the semantic-content of the utterance. In Igbo, deletion is blocked except in few cases:

- a. When the subject is the second person singular, it is obligatory.
- b. When it is the second person plural, the subject or its enclitic “nụ” is always present.

The syllabic nasal prefix “n” is identified to occur as the prefix of the three verbs of movement such as –je “go” as in “njē” (be going), -ga (“go”) as in “ngā” (be going) and “-la” (go) as in “nlā” (be going), while “m” is for “fụ” (go) as in mfụ, (be going), mbà (be entering).

Tone plays vital role in the expression of imperative mood in Igbo. The rule of vowel harmony is also observed. The verb forms expressing imperative mood in Igbo take mainly suffixes and minimally prefixes.

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