

Morpholexical and Semantic Features of Igbo 'cut' and 'break' verbs

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Abstract

The grammatical features of *cut* and *break* (C&B) verbs have been extensively studied in many languages. In spite of this collection of studies, C&B verbs are yet to be properly identified and classified in Igbo, even though a vast array of Igbo verb studies exists. Hence, this study focuses on identifying and describing the morpho-lexical and semantic properties of Igbo C&B verbs. The theory of lexical knowledge is adopted as the model for the analysis of data. The data consists of 68 lexical entries in Igbo dictionaries and elicitation from seventeen consultants that speak four different dialects. Data analysis shows that C&B verbs are indeed lexemes with truth conditional propositions. The verbs take up complements in the syntax which establish the cultural situations where the cutting and breaking activities occur. Eight different contexts are identified for *cut* verbs, within the semantic frame for description. The break verbs *gwé*, *kwó* and *wá* operate in three different contexts based on the semantic frame of reference. Nonetheless, the break verbs *gbá*, *kú*, *sú*, *tí* and *dó* are bound morphemes whose truth conditional propositions are determined when they are suffixed with *-bié*, *-jìé*, *-rié*, *-ká*, *-púó* and *-wá*. The break verb *ghúpūō* is specific to the Nnewi variety. The study concludes that contrary to findings in the literature, Igbo break verbs denote the instruments used in the activities. This raises the question of further research that would contrast the facts of Igbo C&B verbs with other languages.

Keywords: *Igbo, cut and break verbs, lexical knowledge, truth conditions, propositions*

Introduction

Cutting and breaking activities are fundamental to universal human culture. The centrality of cutting and breaking in human conduct has motivated several cross-linguistic studies on the class of verbs that represent and lexicalise them. The findings of these studies indicate universal features of the semantics and syntax of cutting and breaking. These basic features include what Hale and Keyser (1987:18) express as 'a separation in the material integrity of patient.' Nevertheless, the findings also point out that the class of cutting verbs show different syntactic and semantic structures from the class of breaking verbs (Bohnmeyer 2007; Pye, 1996; Levin and Rappaport 1995 Guerssel et al. 1985). Semantically, cutting verbs specify the type of instrument involved in the activity (Levin 1993) while breaking verbs do not encode this. Syntactically, breaking verbs participate in causative/inchoative alternation while cutting verbs do not have this syntactic property and, this property has been widely reported in the literature as the most syntactically distinguishing feature between cutting and breaking verbs (Levin 1993).

The various theoretical approaches to the study of these verbs have all been focused on the ultimate goal of finding the distinct features within their semantic classes. Fillmore (1970), Guerssal et al. (1985) and Rappaport and Levin (1998) have concentrated on the study of English in this regard. However, such studies as Pye (1996), Asifa et al. (2007), Ameka and Esegbey (2007) and Bohnmeyer (2007), among others, have explored languages other than English.

Igbo has the linguistic resources that can contribute to the literature on cutting and breaking events. The vast literature on the Igbo verb, which centres prominently on morpho-syntactic and morpho-semantic descriptions, is a veritable source of insights for the analysis of these classes of verbs. This is even crucial because of the seeming neglect of 'cut' and 'break' verbs by Igbo grammarians. The grammatical features of the Igbo verb include the fact that roots represent the semantic core, while affixes serve to modify or extend this core (Emenanjo 1978, 2015; Nwachukwu 1983, Uwalaka 1996, 1997;

Uchekwue 2011, 2012). The morphological processes involved are essential in identifying the various grammatical forms of lexical categories. More so, these processes would be relevant in identifying cutting and breaking events. The morphological processes also function to delineate cultural activities and these can be represented in forms of cutting and breaking performances. At this point, it is important to note that Igbo does not have generic verbs denoting cutting and breaking. And in comparison to the findings in some languages, the Igbo verb does not display the causative/inchoative transitivity alternations. These observations raise some questions which would shape the objectives of this study. The questions that arise include:

- a. The determination of the morphological features of the verb roots of cutting and breaking.
- b. The determination of the morpho-semantic features representing the physical effects of cutting and breaking?
- c. The morpho-semantic representation of the spatio-temporal features of cutting and breaking events.
- d. The morpho-semantic representation of the manner of cutting and breaking events.
- e. The morpho-semantic representation of the instruments used in cutting and breaking.

Drawing from these observations, this study has the objectives of describing the morphological processes entailed in the lexicalisation of:

- a. Cutting and breaking events.
- b. The physical effects of cutting and breaking on the objects.
- c. The spatio-temporal properties of cutting and breaking.
- d. The method of carrying out these cutting and breaking events and;
- e. The instruments used in the events.

Theoretical Perspective

The theory of lexical knowledge proposes that a speaker's understanding of any lexical item is multi-faceted. This type of knowledge is best demonstrated with verbs and the arguments they take. Levin (1985, 1993) demonstrate that verbs express subtle differences in meaning based on the type of arguments they take. There is, thus, a relationship between verb argument structure and verb meaning. This has been amply demonstrated in English with studies exploring the syntactic behaviour of English verbs (Guerssel et al 1985, Guerssel 1986, Hale and Keyser 1986, 1987, Levin and Rappaport 1988, Levin and Hovav 1991, 1992). This has also been established in Igbo (Anoka 1983, Uwalaka 1988, Agbo 2013). The research methodology of these studies considers the relationship between verb argument structure and lexical representation of verb meaning. The proposal from these studies is that verb meaning determines their morpho- syntactic behaviour. The insights garnered here help to organise verbs into classes, where the members of each class share some aspects of meaning. This shared meaning could be based on common argument-taking features, shared syntactic processes or shared morphological features. The shared features function to express the uniqueness of the members of each class of verbs.

This study adopts this theoretical perspective and the underlying research methodology because the data for the study belong to two verb classes that have to be distinguished by their argument-taking feature and morphological properties.

Method of Data Collection and analysis

Two sets of data were collected by two different means. The first set consists of sixty-eight lexical entries in Igbo dictionaries (Echeruo 2001 and Igwe 1999). The second set includes elicitation of cutting and breaking verbs with seventeen consultants made up of Linguistics

and Igbo students of the University of Benin. They were, by happenstance, speakers of five Igbo dialects *viz.* Onitsha, Owerri, Nsukka, Nnewi and Umuahia. For this method, the consultants were presented with the lexical entries from the dictionaries and were interviewed about the argument structure of the verb roots. Their elicitations were transcribed and subjected to analysis based on the theory of lexical knowledge.

The rest of the paper is organised thus. We discuss the morpho-syntactic properties and the argument structure of the verb. This is to give a background to the class of verbs focused in this study. Hopefully, this would lead to the understanding of the morpho-lexical and semantic properties of various subclasses of cutting and breaking verbs.

The morphological properties of the verb

Igbo verbs have been classified into simple, complex and compound verbs. Simple verbs are verbs without affixes. Indeed, these are lexemes that co-occur with nouns and take up the verb category in the syntax. The examples in (1a-c) below represent these lexemes.

Complex verbs comprise a lexeme with at least one affix. However, this could be reinterpreted as stems. The examples in (2a-e) represent these stems.

1.
 - a. tá ‘chew’
 - b. bé ‘cut’
 - c. dọ ‘pull’

2.
 - a. tà-bá ‘begin to chew’
 - b. bè-tá ‘cut out (some part of something)’
 - c. dọ-ká ‘tear out (by pulling)’

The lexemes in (2a-c) have their meanings extended by the suffixes attached to them. The lexeme in (2a) is *tá* ‘chew’ but with the attachment of the suffix *ba*, the resulting stem has the meaning of ‘begin to chew’. In (2b) the lexeme, *bé*, ‘cut’ is extended in meaning when the suffix *ta* is attached to it. The new meaning of the resulting stem is ‘cut out’. The lexeme *dọ*, has its meaning extended as observed in (2c).

Compound verbs in Igbo have been described as comprising of two simple verbs which are independent. As previously stated, these are instances of stem formation in the morphology. These stems co-occur with nouns in the syntax and function as compound verbs. This point is illustrated by combining some lexemes to derive these stems in (3) below.

3.

a.	tá-gbú	chew-kill	‘kill by biting’
b.	bè-nyé	cut-give	‘cut to give someone’
c.	dọ-wá	pull-break	‘tear apart’

All the lexemes in (3a-c) are derived stems because they are meaningful and independent lexical items that function as compound verbs in the syntax. In (3a) the compound verb *dunye* is made up of two lexemes with independent meanings in the syntax. *dù* means ‘lead’ while *nyé* means ‘give’ but a combination of both of them results in the

meaning of the verb in (3a) which is ‘present with’. The compound verb in (3b) is made up of the lexemes *wé* ‘bring’ and *dà* ‘fall down’. A combination of both of them gives the meaning ‘bring down’ as illustrated in (3b). *dè* ‘write’ and *jé* ‘go’ when combined give a new verb *dèjé* ‘write to’ in (3c). And *ti* ‘beat’ and *wa* ‘break’ when combined gives a new verb *tìwá* ‘shatter’. The compound verb *búfè* combines two lexemes *bu* ‘carry’ and *fè* ‘fly’ to give ‘carry over’ as in (3e). The expositions in examples (1) to (3) above are morphological features of the Igbo verb.

The Argument Structure of the Igbo Verb

At the core of cutting and breaking events in Igbo is the verb. A study of the argument structure of the verb in general is the prerequisite to an account of these events in the language. The affirmation by Emenanjo (1978; 1975b and 2005) is that the morphosyntactic structure of the Igbo verb ‘is made up of three mutually obligatory and complementary elements.’ These obligatory elements comprise the verb itself, the complement and the bound cognate noun (BCN). The construction in (4) below, with the cutting verb *bé*¹ ‘cut’ illustrates the argument structure of the Igbo verb.

4. Òbí bè-rè áká yá
 Obi cut-IND hand 3s (obj)²
 ‘Obi cut his hand (inadvertently)’

In (4) above, the verb *bé* ‘cut’ obligatorily co-occurs with the nominal element *áká yá* ‘his hand’. The claim here is that every Igbo verb must co-occur with a nominal element which serves as its complement. The idea of the bound cognate noun is illustrated in (5) below.

5. Òbí bè-rè áká yá èbè
 Obi cut-IND feast EMPH ‘Obi indeed cut his hand’

Èbè is a morphological derivation of the verb *bé* ‘cut’ and it serves as an emphasiser morpheme. In the literature this is known as the Bound Cognate Noun or BCN. All Igbo verbs have the BCN, which always occur bound to the verb and follows it in the construction as shown in (5) above and illustrated again in (6).

6. Ó bè-rè èbè
 3s cut-IND EMPH ‘It was indeed cut short’

In examples (5) and (6) above the nominal element *áká yá* and the BCN *èbè* are regarded as arguments and/or direct objects of the verb, respectively (Emenanjo 1978:129). However, Agbo (2013), relying on cross-linguistic evidence, claims that the subject

¹ The transcription follows standard Igbo orthography: à (low tone); á (high tone); and ā downstep. All tones are marked to avoid ambiguity due to lexical variance among the dialects. Igbo has phonological features of vowel harmony where the eight vowels in the language are neatly divided into two sets. One set comprises vowels produced with the Advanced Tongue Root (+ATR) while the other set comprises vowels with –ATR. In standard Igbo, -ATR vowels are represented with the sub-dot, e.g, [ɔ̣] while the +ATR vowels do not have the sub-dot.

² The abbreviations used here are: IND-indicative, DET-determiner, PRON-pronoun, EMPH-emphasiser, PL-plural, S-singular, 3s (subj)-third person singular for subjects, 3s (obj)-third person singular for objects, 3pl-third person plural, PROG-progressive, AGR-agreement marker,

(external argument) of the verb is the participant in the clause that initiates the action represented by the verb, while the object (internal argument) is the participant that is completely affected by the action of the subject as it is represented by the verb. Therefore, while the nominal element *áká yá* is an argument because it is a participant that is completely affected by the action of the verb, the BCN *èbè* is simply a morphological derivation of the verb *bé* and not its argument or direct object. Although the study adopts the term ‘complement’ to label the nominal element, the sense differs from Emenanjo’s perspective. It is used in the sense of Langacker (1987; 1991) and Croft (2001; 2003) where the verb and its complement is referred to as a construction that is fixed in the mind of the language user as a symbolic unit. In other words, the verb and its complement is a piece of the lexicon of the language and must be used in context matter-of-factly. This perspective will become clearer presently, during the discussion of Igbo verbs in cutting and breaking events. In the next section, the discussion will focus on the objectives of this study as stated in Section 1. Recall that the concept of breaking and cutting includes ‘a separation in the material integrity of patient.’ Again, there are no generic verbs representing cutting and breaking. Therefore, the classes of verbs discussed in Section 2.0 appropriate morphological processes for the lexical representation of cutting and breaking concepts.

Lexical and semantic representation of cut verbs

The lexemes in table (7) below represent *cut* verbs and each lexeme denotes the specific evaluation of the incision and the specific instrument used.

7.		
a.	Bé	‘cut deep with a sharp instrument like a knife’
b.	Bié	‘cut deep through multiple objects with a sharp knife’
c.	Bò	‘carve an animal’s carcass with a knife’
d.	Dù	‘nick with a sharp instrument resulting in a cut’
e.	Gbá	‘gouge or skin with a knife’
f.	Gbú	‘hack or chop with a knife or matchete’
g.	Kpé	‘scrape off a thin surface with a sharp instrument or with the hand’
h.	Má	‘stab with a knife or matchete’
i.	Sù	‘mowing grass with a matchete or cutlass’
j.	Tá	‘cut with the teeth’
k.	Tù	‘snip with the finger nail’
l.	Yié	‘slash with a sharp instrument especially a razor blade’

Propositions and Truth Conditions of cut verbs

The examples in (8-14) below represent Igbo truth conditional statements where the lexemes in (7) occur. The complements of these verbs determine the context of the cutting activity. The description of these sentence types are categorised into seven contexts. The truth conditional properties of each sentence embrace (i) the agent, (ii) the material properties of the object, (iii) the instrument, (iv) the space between the agent and object, and length of contact of the instrument on the object, (v) the method of motion of the agent or object and (vi) the result of the cutting activity on the object. These features constitute the frame for analysing cutting activities and represent the ontology of cutting in the Igbo cultural milieu.

Context of Normal Use

The category of sentences here represents cutting in daily activities. The verbs in this category and their complements only depict the activity of cutting without delimiting it to a specific cultural situation. This is why the objects of the clauses in (8a-e) can include any participant that can undergo the action of the normal human agent. For example, in (8a and b) the verbs *gbú mmà* and *mà mmà* ('cut with knife') have their objects as *nwánnē yā* 'his sibling' and *òyì yá* 'his friend' respectively but these objects can be replaced with any participant that is large and can undergo the cutting activity therein. While there may be no difference in the instruments used, the verbs denote a difference in the spatial location of the agents and the method of cutting. In (8a) the verb indicates that the agent is at a very close distance to the object and the resulting cut is a deep laceration. While (8b) denotes that the knife is thrown at the object to result in a piercing and deep wound on the patient. The cuts in both examples result in a partial and not full disintegration of the patient. The spatial feature of the agent in (8c) is similar to (8a) but the instruments are different. Here, the verb *yìé* 'slash' specifically takes *rézò* 'razor', the instrument, as its complement and the resulting slash is only skin deep indicating a difference in the dimension of cut from (8a and b). The resulting cut on the patient leads to only partial disintegration.

- 8.
- a. Ó gbù-rù nwánnē yā m̀m̀m̀à
3s hack-IND sibling 3s (obj) knife 'S/he wounded his/her sibling with a knife cut'
- b. Òbí mà-rà òyì yá m̀m̀m̀à
Obi throw-IND friend 3s (obj) knife 'Obi stabbed his friend'
- c. Ó yìé-rē m̀ rézò n'ákā
3s slash-IND 1s razor in hand 'S/he slashed my hand with a razor'
- d. Ò tà-rà m̀ árū
3s bite-IND 1s biting 'S/he bit me'
- e. Ò t̀t̀- r̀t̀ m̀ m̀v̀
3s snip-IND 1s finger nail 'S/he snipped me with her/his finger nail'

The examples in (8d and e) include the use of body parts as the instruments of cutting. In both cases the objects are soft and the agents are at a close distance to them. The verb *tá árū* 'bite' in (8d) signifies a sawing method of cutting, where the agent suddenly sinks his/her teeth into a part of the body of the patient. In (8e), however, the method is a clipping action with the fingernails that results in a cut on a part of the body of the object. The discussion below concentrates on cutting activities in specific cultural contexts.

Context of eating and cooking

The verbs *bè*, *bié*, *gbú* and *kpèchá*, all denoting 'cut' occur in the circumstances of eating and cooking. As example (9a) illustrates, *bè* can take *òrómá* 'orange' or *yàbás* 'onions' or *tòmátò* 'tomatoes' as its complement and object. In this context, the verb can take any object participant which is edible, thereby, soft and large enough for eating. The space between the human agent and the object is close and this runs through (9a-d). The denoted instrument for (9a-d) is a sharp knife which cuts across the whole axis of the object.

Therefore, the resulting action is a complete disintegration of the objects in question. There are differences in the physical properties of the theme object and the method of cutting for (9a-d). In (9a), the theme object is compact and pliable at once and the method of cutting is incremental along the length and breadth of the object. The verb *bè* also occurs in the context of trade and circumcision and will be discussed shortly

In (9b) the theme object is multiple stranded and this includes all leafy vegetables like *inènè*, *òkázì* and *úzìzā*. The cutting is also incremental but across the strands and not along it.

- 9.
- a. Ó nà-é-bè òrómá/yàbás/tòmátò
3s PROG-AGR-cut orange/onions/tomatoes
'He is cutting some orange/onions/tomatoes'
- b. Àdá bié-rē nnē yā ūgū/inènè/òkázì/úzìzā
Ada cut-IND mother 3s (obj) ūgū/òkázì/úzìzā leaves
'Ada cut ūgū/òkázì/úzìzā leaves for her mother'
- c. Gbù-nye jī/édè/ákpù n'itè
Cut-give yam/cocoyam/cassava in pot
'Chop the yam and put the pieces in the pot'
- d. Ó jì-rì m̀m̀à kpè-chá āzū jī/édè/ákpù āhù
3s use-IND knife scrape-off back yam/ DET
'S/he used a knife to scrape off the yam's covering'

For (9c and d) the theme object is hard and spherical and the method consists of chopping actions. However, in (9d) the chopping action is on the surface of the theme object, which is the covering, resulting in the peeling off of the covering of the theme object. While that of (9c) is deep and results in several chopped up pieces.

Context of Trade

As noted earlier, the cutting verb *bè* is used in the context of trade where it denotes buying. The agent here is usually human and the theme object in (10a) is three dimensional and soft while that in (10b) is two dimensional and also soft. The agents in both examples have close contact with the theme objects. The instruments involved are, nonetheless, different for both examples. While a sharp knife is used to measure out the dimension of *ánū* 'meat' bought in (10a), a scissors is the instrument for measuring out the size of *ákwà* 'cloth' bought in (10b). The method of cutting in (10a) is smooth and continuous but in (10b) the method is a repetitive searing movement of the instrument on the object. In both examples, the result is a complete disintegration of the objects.

- 10.
- a. Ọ bè-tà-rà ánū n'áhīā
3s cut-in favour of-IND meat in market 'S/he bought meat at the market'
- b. Àmákā bè-tà-rà ákwà ọ gà-è-jí gbá ēgwū
Amaka cut-in favour of-IND cloth 3s FUT-AGR-use dance music
'Amaka bought some cloth she hopes to use for the dance'

Context of Circumcision

The same verb *bè* is also used in the context of circumcision. The complement of the verb *úgwù* ‘circumcision’ in (11) gives context to the action. However, the theme object is the body part of the human male or female as the case may be. This object is soft and detachable. The instrument is a sharp knife and the cutting method entails movement along a defined axis across the theme object. This action results in the detaching of the theme object. Therefore, the action has a holistic effect on the theme object.

11.
 Òbí bè-rè nwá òkpārā yā úgwù
 Obi cut-IND child first son 3s circumcision ‘Obi circumcised his son’

Context of Vaccination and Sewing

The cutting verb *dù* ‘nick’ occurring with two different complements give two different cutting activities. In the first example, (12a) the complement *ntútū* ‘needle’ gives the context of sewing while in (12b) the complement *ákwà* ‘cloth’ gives the context of sewing. In (12a) the theme object is three dimensional and soft but in (12b) it is soft and two dimensional. There is close distance between the agent and objects. The instrument in both instances is a needle but the methods involved in the activities are different. In (12a) it is a sudden jab with a needle resulting in an invisible gash in the part of the body involved. While in (12b) it is a rhythmic movement of the needle along defined traces on the complement. The cut in (12a) is partial while that of (12b) is complete.

12.
 a. Ó dù-rù m̀ ntútū
 3s jab-IND 1s needle ‘He/she gave me vaccination’
 b. Ó dù-ù-rù m̀ ákwà
 3s nick-BEN-IND 1s cloth ‘He sewed a dress for me’

Context of carving slaughtered animals

Cutting is also involved in the cultural activity of preparing slaughtered animals for food. This occurs in the action of skinning and carving. The verb *gbà ákpūk̀p̀* ‘skin’ in (13a) denotes the activity of skinning where the theme object, which could be *éghū* ‘goat’ *éfi* ‘cow’ or *ézi* ‘pig’, is three dimensional, soft and large. The instrument is a sharp knife that is used to cut across the length and breadth of the theme object. The manner of cutting is deep, smooth and continuous along predetermined joints on the object. The agent is in close contact but the spatio-temporal is not stationary. The agent has to move around the slaughtered animal, while cutting, to achieve the goal. This results in the complete peeling off of the skin of the object.

13.
 a. Òbí nà-á-gbà ákpūk̀p̀ éghū áhù/éfi/ézi
 Obi PROG-AGR-cut skin goat/cow/pig DET
 ‘Obi is skinning the goat/cow/pig (carcass)’
 b. Òbí nà-á-b̀ ànū éghū/òkúk̀/éfi
 Obi PROG-AGR-carve meat goat/chicken/cow
 ‘Obi is carving the goat’s/chicken/cow carcass’

In (13b) the verb *bò* denotes ‘carving’ and is used in the specific context of cutting up the carcass of an animal. This is why the complement and theme object could be *ánū éghū* ‘goat carcass’ *ánū òkúkò* ‘chicken carcass’ and *ánū éfī* ‘cow carcass’. The instrument is a sharp knife and the manner of cutting is deep, smooth and continuous. If the animal is large, the agent has to move closely, around the carcass in space and time while cutting. It results in the complete dismembering of the carcass.

Context of Animal Husbandry

The verb *gbá* occurring with the complement *ámù* ‘penis’ denotes a context of cutting in animal husbandry, where an animal is castrated. The theme object which is three dimensional, soft and large, in (14a) is *ńkpī* ‘he-goat’ but it could also be any animal like *éfi* ‘cow’ or *ézi* ‘pig’ as the case may be. The instrument is, again, a sharp knife. The agent remains stationary while cutting. The activity results in the removal of a part of the animal’s genitalia.

- 14
 a. *Á gbà-rà ńkpī áhù ámù*
 FOC cut-IND goat DET genitals ‘That he-goat has been castrated’

Context of Farming

In farming, the cutting involves the clearing of shrubs, especially, before the planting of crops. The verb *sú* ‘mow’ in (14b) takes its complement *áhīhīā* ‘shrub’ in this context. The theme object is the complement and its physical properties include long, thin tresses and locks of plants. The cutting instrument is a matchete or cutlass and the method of cutting involves the energetic swiping of the instrument across the breadth of the shrub. The agent’s spatio-temporal position varies as long as the activity lasts. It results in the complete cutting down of the shrub to earth.

- b. *Ànyí nà-à-sú áhīhīā*
 2s PROG-AGR-cut down shrub ‘We are cutting down shrub’

For each of the categories of contexts, the discussion has focused on the parameters set out above. The same parameters will be applied in discussing break verbs

Lexical and semantic representation of break verbs

Recall that in the cross linguistic literature, one distinguishing feature of break verbs is that the type of instrument used for the activity is not denoted. However, for Igbo the instrument is indicated by the verb. The lexemes in (15a-d) depict break verbs in our data, with the representation of the instrument applied in the activity. Like cut verbs, breaking activities can be categorised into contexts. They take complements that denote the specificity of activity.

15.
 a. *Gwé* ‘pulverise with a grinding stone’
 b. *Kwó* ‘crush to a pulp with a grinding machine’
 c. *Wá* ‘split with the hand’

In examples (16a-c) the agents are human and maintain close spaces with the theme objects which have different material properties. In (16a) for example, the verb *gwé* ‘pulverise’ takes the complement *ósè* ‘pepper’ which consists of small hard particles. The verb *gwé* in

Break lexemes denoting the manner of action		Evaluation of the resulting breaking effect on the object					
		Bìé 'complete'	Jíé 'complete'	Rìé 'complete'	Ká 'part'	Pùó 'part'	Wá 'part'
a.	Gbá 'burst'	Gbà-bíé 'burst into two'	Gbà-jíé 'fracture'	Gbà-ríé 'crush'	Gbà-ká 'break a part of'	Gbà-púó 'burst a hole'	Gbà-wá 'break open'
b.	Kù 'hit with blunt object'	*	Kù-jíé 'crack'	Kù-ríé 'smash'	Kù-ká 'break'	Kù-púó 'split into a hole'	Kù-wá 'break open'
c.	Sù 'hit with the hand'	*	Sù-jíé 'break'	Sù-ríé 'shatter'	*	Sù-púó 'split a hole'	Sù-wá 'break open'
d.	Tí 'hit with any hard object'	Tì-bíé 'hit until it breaks into two'	Tì-jíé 'break'	Tì-ríé 'knock down'	Tì-ká 'break'	Tì-púó 'split open as a hole'	Tì-wá 'break open'
e.	Dò 'pull with hands'	Dò-bíé 'tear into two'	Dò-jíé 'snap'	Dò-ríé 'rip to pieces'	Dò-ká 'tear apart'	*	Dò-wá 'tear apart'
f.						Ghù-puō 'drill open'	

Morpho-lexical Representation the Truth Conditional Propositions of Break verbs

The *-bie* suffix when it attaches to the lexemes *gbá*, *tí* and *dó*, represents the breaking of the theme object into two equal parts. On the other hand, the lexemes *gbá*, *tí* and *dó* inherently represent that intense energy is applied in the breaking activity and this activity is prolonged. They also denote that the theme object is hard but breakable. While, *gbá* denotes a sudden split into two caused by hitting with the hand, the verb *tí* indicates a continuous hitting that leads to a breaking up into two. The verb *dó* indicates that the method involves stretching the material to breaking point. The suffix denotes that the result on the material is complete breakage into two.

The lexeme *kú* indicates the hitting of the theme object with a hard material while *sù* denotes the instrument as the hand. These lexemes inherently denote that the theme object is hard and resilient, and so, cannot take *bíé*. This is why they can take the *-jíé* suffix which inherently represents that the theme object can be broken in spite of its resilience. However, the resulting breakage is not necessarily into two parts. The other lexemes *gbá*, *tí* and *dó* can also take *-jíé* although the breakage may ultimately lead to two parts that are not evenly done as with the *-bíé* suffix. *-ríé* indicates that the resulting effect of breaking is complete and the theme object is basically pulverised. All the lexemes in the data can take this morpheme as indicated on Table 1.

The *-ká* suffix denotes the breaking of a part of the theme object although this does not result in a complete division into two as represented by the *-bíé* suffix. Therefore, the attachment of this suffix to each of the lexemes denotes the breaking off of the part of the theme object in the activity. Note that the lexeme *sù* does not occur with this morpheme.

This may be due to the instrument it denotes. The hand may not produce the necessary force that can break apart a hard object.

-pùó represents the breaking open of a hole on the theme object. Note that *-pùó* does not occur with the verb *dó* because of the manner of action inherent in this verb. The lexeme *ghúpúó* is specific to the Nnewi dialect. The morpheme *-wá* indicates that a part of the theme object is broken off with the hand. It occurs with all the verbs in the data.

Conclusion

Although, there are no generic terms for these activities in Igbo, there is a clear distinction between cutting and breaking verbs. Nonetheless, ‘cut’ and ‘break’ verbs have semantic features that divide the events into individually distinguishable activities. These activities neatly fall into different situations depicting cultural activities. The lexicalization of these activities in Igbo is similar to what is obtained in other languages in terms of the material properties of theme objects. However, there are culture-specific properties that are only relevant to Igbo. For example, *gwé nà ògwè* ‘grind on a grinding stone’ and *kwó n’ínjìn* ‘grind in a grinding machine’ indicate verbs which obligatorily co-occur with the instrument of breaking, representing the manner of the action. The argument structures of ‘cut’ and ‘break’ verbs are similar to the Igbo verb structure. Suffixation of special morphemes to ‘break’ verbs lexicalizes some of the truth conditional propositions therein. For both classes of verbs, the instrument is indicated in the semantics contrary to the literature where it is proposed that only ‘cut’ verbs indicate instruments. This raises the question of further research contrasting the semantics of cut and break verbs in Igbo with other languages.

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