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Towards A Categorization Of Igbo Verbs By Aktionsart Types

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Abstract
This paper examines the lexical aspect (aktionsart) of a set of Igbo verbs, using the four-way classification of Zeno Vendler (1968): activities, accomplishments, achievements, and states with particular attention to an iterative reading in some achievement verbs. It investigates how semantic parameters such as telicity, durativity, and dynamicity, together with Igbo-specific morphological and temporal diagnostics (progressive marking; extensional suffixes such as –ri, –ru; time adverbials like kemgbe 'Since X time' kà 'still'*; and a completive suffix* –cha*), can reliably distinguish among these aktionsart classes. The study finds that while many traditional diagnostics (e.g., progressive, "since X time") are not definitive in Igbo, the combination of –ru 'Until X time,' 'for X time,' and the completive –cha suffix in addition to context and temporal adverbials successfully separate dynamic and durative classes from non-dynamic and durative ones. The results confirm that lexical aspect is an inherent semantic property in Igbo verbs, aligning with universal aspectual parameters [±dynamic], [±durative], [±telic], and underscore the need to tailor discrimination tests to each language's morphosyntactic and semantic particularities.*

Keywords: *Aktionsart, Igbo verbs, lexical aspect, discrimination tests, completive, acheivement, inceptive*

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I. Introduction

Igbo is an indigenous language spoken by approximately 20 million people in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. It is classified under the Benue Congo subfamily of the Niger Congo language family.

This paper focuses on the application of the theory of aktionsart/actionality to selected verbs (verb constructions) in Igbo. Aktionsart implies an inherent time schemata associated with verbs which is different from time external features of verbs. The category aktionsart is attested overtly in some languages like Russian, German etc but covert in some others. Over the years, linguists have attempted the classification of verbs along this line. Very notable is Vendler's (1968) work on verbs and times where he makes four basic distinctions; establishing classes which include activities, accomplishments, achievements and states. Though many linguists seem to agree on the relevance of the notion 'aktionsart' they disagree on the number of existing classes. While some linguists merge accomplishment and achievement into one class, others modify existing classes to incorporate semelfactives and iteratives. Other prevalent distinctions or semantic parameters of aktionsart hinge on contrasts between telic/atelic, durative/punctual, dynamic/states.

The study of aktionsart in Igbo both as an inherent property of the verb and as part of aspectual morphology has received very little attention. Agbo (2010) attempts a description of aktionsart in Igbo using the role and reference grammar approach. He develops six syntactic tests for establishing aktionsart classes in Igbo most of which are not applicable to this study. It is also not clear from his work, how the distinguishing features of aktionsart such as telicity, durativity and dynamicity play a role in the categorization of selected Igbo verbs into different aktionsart classes.

A number of discrimination tests are articulated for distinguishing aktionsart classes. The most common among these series of tests are the time adverbials and progressive tests. While the time adverbial test is for distinguishing between accomplishments and achievements, the progressive test is for distinction between activities and states (at least in English and some other European languages). The range of applicability of these tests and their specific functions seem to vary from one language to another as would be seen in Igbo. Of no doubt however is the fact that a verb does not belong strictly to one class. Verykul (1971) rightly observes that most verbs notwithstanding their original classes could have or gain an accomplishment sense when placed in the right context. The aktionsart of a verb is to a large extent determined alongside it argument. In other words, the notion of aktionsart is simply not a feature of the verb alone.

In lieu of the foregoing, an attempt would be made to apply such classification to some selected Igbo verbs. As would be seen later, a typical Igbo verb has a structure which at the surface level seems to obscure analysis along the lines of actionality and it seems that some discrimination tests attested in other languages seem inapplicable to Igbo. A good example is the in X time. We therefore find equivalents of the discrimination tests applicable to Igbo and examine their interaction in relation with established verb (aktionsart) classes and their aspectual features. For the purpose of this paper, the four Vendleran classes; activities, accomplishments, achievements and states are adopted with slight modification of the achievement class to accommodate the iteratives. These classifications are hinged on some semantic parameters like durativity, telicity and dynamicity (cf. Comrie 1978). In the following sections, we discuss the Igbo verb structure, aktionsart classes and their application to Igbo verbs.

II. An Overview Of Aktionsart

In cross linguistic literature, aktionsart is majorly viewed in two ways; first, as an inherent property of verbs, and second, as a modification of verb meaning through morphological means. This work focuses on the former. Aktionsart otherwise known as lexical aspect is a lexical category associated with the predicate class which may or may not be signalled morphologically. Pollak (1967) sees aktionsart as a manner in which an event (encoded by the predicate) is integrated into the imagined stream of time i.e. whether the situation borne by a verb goes on in time or not. Forsyth (1970) define aktionsart as the manner in which an action or situation develops or proceeds in particular circumstances. Perhaps one of the most influential distinction of the aktionsart classes is made by Vendler (1968) who suggests that a distinction could be made among verbs denoting processes, states and accomplishment on the basis of their inherent time feature. This implies a particular notion of time associated with the verbal category which is entirely different from the external time schemata. Of relevance is the fact that the classes proposed is alternatively modified to a greater or lesser extent by linguists. Comrie (1976) makes a contrast between what he calls durativity and punctuality which are semantic parameters that roughly corresponds with Vendler's activity, achievement and accomplishment classes. In earlier works on aktionsart as seen in Kenny (1948), Vendler's accomplishment and achievement are grouped together as 'perfomance'. Though these classifications are reflected on the verbal category, it is not the case that verbs in isolation determine their aktionsart class. Comrie (1978) states that situations/events are not described by verbs alone but rather by the verb with its arguments. By implication, a verb could belong to class A with its argument but to class B without its argument. In line with this view, Caudal (2012) emphasizes that aktionsart describes the intrinsic aspectual properties of the verbal complex, determined by the disambiguated, contextualised semantics of the verbal complex. Aktionsart and some TAM features seem interwoven in an intricate way such that the aktionsart class of a verb could be affected by its aspectual features. Below, we highlight the traditional four way distinction made for aktionsart.

Activities

Activities denote an action going on in time. They involve successive phases following one another in time. In other words, they have the feature of durativity. In running and walking for example, one lifts up one leg and then another successively. The idea of successive phases is however not applicable to all activity verbs. Activity verbs have no terminal point nor lead to a final or resulting state. They are therefore atelic. Typical examples of activity verbs are pushing a cart, driving a car, running etc. (Vendler 1967). Common tests for distinguishing activities are illustrated below;

Progressive test – John is running
John is pushing a cart
John is driving a car

It is generally assumed that activity verbs usually allow the progressive form which differentiates them from states and achievement.

Time adverbial test – *For* X time – John ran for an hour
John swam for 30 minutes

The assumption is that if it is true that someone has been running or swimming for an hour, it implies that the activity took place for every period within the specified time and thus was ongoing in time.

Imperative test – Activities also allow the imperative forms. This is especially in contrast with states. Eg. Run! Swim!

Accomplishment

This category denotes durativity just like activities. However, unlike activity verbs, it has a culminating point i.e the action tends towards a final state implying telicity. In the words of Vendler (1968), actions denoting accomplishment may go on for a time. They take a certain time to be fulfilled. Typical examples of accomplishments are make a chair, paint a picture, build a house etc. Note that both activities and

accomplishments allow the progressive form. One of the most common tests for determining the accomplishment class is the time adverbial test; *in X* time. Eg; He painted the picture in two hours. Thus, if a painter paints a picture in two hours, it does not in any way imply that he painted it in any period covered by the time given.

According to Dowty (1972), only accomplishment verbs can normally occur as the complement of 'finish' Egs; John finished painting a picture

John finished walking*

The authenticity of this test is however questionable. It does not seem to be a peculiar feature of this class. By extension, it is equally applicable to activity verbs. We noted before now that the progressive test is equally applicable to this class of verbs too.

Egs; Ben is building a house

John is making chair

Because of the inherent telicity of accomplishment verbs, Comrie (1978) explains that a situation described by an achievement verb cannot be broken off half way. Thus in distinguishing between activities and accomplishments, one should note that that if Ben stops building a house half way through, then it won't be that he built a house. However, if Ben stops sing a song half way through, then it would certainly be that he did sing. One can therefore say that he sang (except in certain contexts). Just like Vendler (1968) asserts, the building of a house or making a chair has to be finished or reach an end point if the action is what it is claimed to be.

Achievement

Achievement verbs denote actions that take place momentarily i.e. at a particular point in time. Just like accomplishments, they have an intrinsic goal to reach and therefore have a resulting state. They differ from accomplishments on the ground of durativity. According to Vendler, achievement terms can (strictly) speaking only be predicated for single moments of time such that one can ask the question; at what time did you reach the top? (at noon sharp). Typical examples of achievement verbs include; recognize, find, stop, reach, die etc. The achievement verbs often allow for a preparatory phase. If one finds something, the preparatory phase could be the period of searching. The same is applicable to the verb 'reach'. If someone reaches a mountain, it probably involves the preparatory phase of climbing. Note that unlike activities and accomplishments, achievement verbs are non durative. Achievements are equally telic and can therefore allow the time adverbial test *in X* time. For example, if one says 'He reached the summit in two hours', this does not imply that John reached the summit in any period within the two hours but that it took him two hours to reach the summit.

Another feature of achievement verbs is their inability to occur as complements of stop and finish in contrast with activities and accomplishments (Dowty 1972). For eg;

John stopped recognizing him*

John finished reaching the top*

A modification of that we find needful for our present study is the inclusion of the iterative sense of achievement verbs and noting their difference with pure achievements also termed semelfactives. According to Comrie (1978), the semelfactive refers to a situation which takes place once and only once while iteratives are situations that occur repeatedly. He gives an example with the verb 'cough' where a single cough is semelfactive (achievement for Vendler) and repeated cough iterative since it involves duration. This could also apply to the verb 'knock' which is purely achievement with also an iterative reading where knocking is seen as series of knocks and the single act of 'knocking' is viewed as being momentary. Observe that verbs with iterative reading align more with the progressive test devoid of ungrammaticality. Thus one can say; I am knocking, I am coughing but not I am recognizing*, I am reaching*

Comrie (1978) calls this group of verbs punctual verbs and analyzes the repetition of action as an iteration of a punctual act.

States

These are verbs that most typically express state, situation or condition. In other words, they do not predicate action nor denote an ongoing process. Vendler (1968) explains that they involve time instants in an indefinite and non unique sense. What states have in common with activities is atelicity. Thus, they do not have a culminating point. States could be active or inactive. An active state could be illustrated with frighten, amaze, surprise etc. while inactive statives include verbs like love, believe, know etc. In distinguishing between states and dynamic situations, Comrie (1978) points out that all phases of a situation expressed by statives remain the same unlike phases involved in dynamic situations. Another distinguishing feature of statives is that they do not allow the progressive form at least in English and some other related languages (there are some exceptional cases too). Examples;

John is knowing the answer*

John is loving me*
States are also not used in the imperative form e.g; know!*, love!*

Note that in many cases of aktionsart classification, there seems to be a form of hybridsm where a verb assumes a telic or atelic status depending on the construction or the argument feature of the verb. In the subsequent section, we highlight fully the already established tests that would be applied to Igbo with the inclusion of the completive suffix *–cha.*

III. Methodology

In examining aktionsart as an inherent property of the Igbo verbs, this work basically adopts the traditional distinction of Vendler (1968) but with slight modifications. This foundational typology categorizing verbs based on their inherent properties is summarized in table 1 below:

Table 1 Vendler's four verb classes

	Class	Distinguishing features	Examples
1.	States	No change, continuous	know, believe, love, resemble
2.	Activities	Ongoing, no end point	run, swim, walk, read
3.	Accomplishments	Process + end point	build a house, write a letter, draw a circle
4.	Achievements (Semelfactives/Iteratives)	Instantaneous + end point	recognize, win, reach, notice

These four classes are typically characterized by features such as telicity, durativity and dynamicity. Telicity describes an action that has a natural endpoint or culmination. Durativity describes an event that unfolds over a period of time while dynamicity tells whether an event involves active change or progress. These features are summarized in table 2 in alignment with the four aktionsart classes.

Table 2. Distinguishing features of aktionsart classes

Aktionsart/Aspectual Class	Dynamic	Durative	Telic	Examples
States	-	+	-	know, believe
Activities	+	+	-	run, swim
Accomplishments	+	+	+	build, write
Achievements	+	-	+	win, arrive

This work adopts a number of discrimination tests to validify different aktionsart classes. In aktionsart studies, discrimination tests are linguistic tests used to validify and distinguish among the different aktionsart classes (see Vendler 1968, Dowty 1979, Comrie 1978). The discrimination tests used in this study comprise mainly of the progressive test, extensional suffixes with prepositional meanings, time adverbials and the completive suffix. The working tests are given below:

-ru 'until X time' *e.g. She danced until midnight*
For X time e.g *Mary painted for two hours*
kémgbè 'since X time' *e.g. Mary was dancing since morning*
kà 'still' *e.g.'Mary is still dancing'*
-cha 'finish' *e.g. Mary finished painting the door*
Progressive test *e.g.'Mary is dancing'*

Some tests show limited distribution across aspectual categories; for instance, a particular test may work with the progressive aspect but not with the perfective aspect.

A group of twelve verbs are selected for this study. They include:
1) ịchōtā íhé 'to find something'
2) íkpà ǹkàtà 'to weave a basket'
3) ítī ìgbà 'to beat drum'
4) ígbā égwú 'to dance'
5) íchū ḿmírī 'to fetch water'
6) ịnū íhé 'to hear something'
7) ípē m̀pé 'to be small'
8) íkū áká 'to clap'
9) ịrū óché 'to make chair'
10) ígwù ḿmírī 'to swim'
11) íghōtā íhé 'to understand something'
12) ịchètà íhé 'to remember something'

IV. Aktionsart And The Igbo Verbs

In this section, we analyse, classify and describe the selected verbs in line with the established aktionsart classes anchored on some defining parameters such as telicity, dynamicity and durativity. We use the discrimination tests to validify our categorization and to differentiate between different classes.

Igbo verbs of activity and aktionsart features

Activities are prototypically durative and lack a definite culminating point. They represent ongoing processes achieved through continuous or repetitive actions.

From our sample verbs, the following verbs are classified as activities:
13) *ị́gbā égwú* – 'to dance'
14) *ígwù ḿmírī* – 'to swim'
15) *ítī ìgbà* – 'to play drum'

Table 3

	Verbs	Progressive Constructions
16)	ị́gbā égwú 'to dance'	Àdá nà-àgbá égwū Ada PROG-dance dance(N) She is dancing
17)	ígwù ḿmírī 'to swim'	Àdá nà-égwù ḿmīrī Ada PROG-swim water Ada is swimming
18)	ítī ìgbà 'to play drum'	Ọ́ nà-ètí ị̀gbà 3SG PROG-beat drum He is playing a drum

These verbs generally denote ongoing processes that are achieved by constant reinforcement of acts. For instance, the action of *igwu mmiri* 'to swim' requires continuous or repetitive strokes just like the action of walking requires taking repetitive steps. The same is applicable to the verb *igba egwu* 'to dance' which thrives by constant rhythmic movement to a song or rhythm. These activity verbs have no inherent culminating point and are therefore atelic in addition to being durative and dynamic. The actions encoded by these verbs could be interrupted at some point and it would still be that these actions were performed. They equally allow the progressive form, distinguishing them from pure achievements and states.

Igbo verbs of activity could derive an accomplishment sense by the affixation of the extensional suffix *cha* which expresses completion. Consider these examples:

Table 3.1

	Perfective	**Past**	**Progressive**
19)	Àdá ágbáchála égwū Ada dance-COMPL-PERF dance Ada has finished dancing	Àdá gbàchàrà égwú n'ógè Ada dance-COMPL-PST dance on time Ada finished dancing on time	Àdá nà-àgbáchá égwū n'ógè?? A AUX-dance-COMPL dance at time Ada finishes dancing on time
20)	Àdá ègwùchálá ḿmírī Ada swim-COMPL-PERF water 'Ada has finished swimming'	Àdá gwùchàrà ḿmírī láwá Ada swim-COMPL-PST water go-SUFF 'Ada finished swimming and headed home'	Àdá nà-égwùchá ḿmīrī n'éhìhìè?? A AUX-swim-COMPL water at noon Ada finishes swimming at noon
21)	Ó tīchālā ị̀gbà 3sg beat-COMPL-PERF drum 'He has finished playing the drum'	Ó tìchàrà ìgbà n'éhìhìè 3sg beat-COMPL-PST drum in noon He finished playing the drum at noon'	Ọ́ nà-ètíchá ị̀gbà n'ógè ?? 3sg AUX-beat-COMPL drum on time 'He finishes playing the drum on time'

The suffix *–cha* consistently denotes completion or termination of an action. When attached to activity verbs which are inherently atelic, they lose their atelic nature and become telic. The distribution of *–cha* is restricted across aspectual categories. It combines freely with the perfective and past forms but occurrence with the progressive morpheme *na* yields a habitual interpretation. The –cha suffix also serves to distinguish activities from states.

The ***for X time*** discrimination test telicizes activities, restricting their duration to a specific time span. Unlike English, *for X time* in Igbo is not overtly marked by a preposition but by the juxtaposition of the VP and the time adverbial. When used with the progressive morpheme *na*, it yields a habitual interpretation as in example (22) but occurs freely with the past and perfective aspects in (23)-(24).

22) Àdá nà-àgbá égwū áwà àbụ̀ọ́
Ada AUX-dance dance (N) hour two
'Ada dances for two hours'

23) Àdá gbàrà égwú áwà àbụ̀ọ́
Ada dance-pst dance(N) hour two
Ada danced for two hours

24) Àdá gwùrù ḿmírī áwà àbụ̀ọ́
Ada swim-pst water hour two
Ada swam for two hours

Other discrimination tests applicable to activity verbs are illustrated in the table below:

Table 3.2 Activities and the adverbial discrimination tests *ka* 'still' and *kemgbe* 'since'

ka 'still'	**kemgbe 'since'**
25a) Àdá kà nà-àgbá égwū Ada still PROG-dance dance Ada is still dancing	25b) Ọ nà-àgbá égwū kémgbé ụ́tụ́tụ́ ḿ bìarà 3sg PROG-dance dance since morning I come-pst 'She has been dancing since I came in the morning'
26a) Ada kà nà-égwù ḿmīrī Ada still PROG-swim water Ada is still swimming	26b) Ada nà-égwù ḿmīrī kémgbé èhihìe Ada PROG-swim water since afternoon 'Ada has been swimming since afternoon'

The adverbial *ka* co-occurs with activity verbs and appears compatible with the progressive aspect but not with the perfective aspect. Its occurrence with the past form could be ambiguous. In the absence of time instants like *n'ehihie*, it gives a semantic reading translatable as 'just' in English and optionally requires a cognate emphasis. One can therefore have '*Ọ ka gwuru mmiri egwu'* 'He just swam'. With the inclusion of the time instant however, any ambiguity is resolved. In examples 25b and 26b, the time adverbial *kemgbe* 'since' co-occurs with verbs of activity in both the past and progressive aspectual forms.

To summarize, the core features of activities with respect to aktionsart include their capacity to denote actions requiring sustained effort or repetition (e.g., swimming involves repeated strokes) their atelic, durative, and dynamic nature, the fact that the events they encode can be interrupted and still count as having occurred, the feature of allowing progressive forms, distinguishing them from achievements and states and the ability to derive accomplishment meaning through the suffix *–cha*, indicating completion.

Igbo verbs of accomplishment and aktionsart features

Verbs of accomplishment are known to have a resulting state. Igbo verbs of accomplishment denote actions that continue until a result or endpoint is achieved. They are telic, durative and dynamic. The following verbs are grouped as accomplishments in Igbo:

Table 4 Igbo verbs of accomplishment

	Verbs	**Progressive**	**Past**
27	íḳpà ǹkàtà 'to weave a basket'	Ada nà-ákpā ǹkàtà Ada PROG-weave basket Ada is weaving a basket	Ada kpàrà ǹkàtà Ada weave-PST basket Ada wove a basket
28	íṛụ̄ óché 'to make a chair'	Ada nà-àrụ́ óchē Ada PROG-make chair Ada is making a chair	Ada rụ̀rụ̀ óché Ada make-PST chair 'Ada made a chair'
29	íchū ḿmírī 'to fetch water'	Ọ́ nà-èchú ḿmīrī 3sg PROG-fetch water She is fetching water	Ó chùru ḿmírī 3sg fetch-PST water 'She fetched water'

These verbs describe processes that last over time (durative), but they also lead to a changed or finished state. In other words, they are inherently telic. For example, in *ịkpa nkata* ("weaving a basket"), the weaving continues until a basket is actually woven, and then it stops. Similarly, with *ịrụ oche* ("making a chair"), the action carries on until a chair is made, at which point it is complete. The same applies to the verb *ichu mmiri* 'to fetch water'. The event of fetching water cannot be seen as complete until the finished state is realised. Simply put, the actions expressed by these verbs cannot 'be' till their culminating point is reached. Verbs of accomplishments are in other words terminated when their end point is reached resulting in telicity.

Importantly, when these verbs are used in the progressive form, you *cannot* reinterpret them as a past event (as you could with activity verbs) unless you add extra context. This contrasts with pure "activity" verbs, where a progressive form can easily be shifted into a past interpretation without changing the inherent telic (goal-directed) structure.

Igbo accomplishment verbs combine with the ***–cha*** suffix to express absolute completion as illustrated in the table below:

Table 4.1 Igbo verbs of accomplishment and the *–cha* discrimination test

Progressive	Perfective	Past
30a) Ada nà-ákpàchá ǹkàtà??[1] Ada PROG-weave-COMPL basket 'Ada finishes weaving the basket'	30b) Ada àkpàchálá ǹkàtà Ada weave-COMPL-PERF basket 'Ada has finished weaving the basket	30c) Ada kpàchàrà ǹkàtà n'éhìhiè A weave-COMPL-PST basket at noon 'Ada finished weaving at noon'
31a) Ọ nà-àrụ́chá óchē ?? 3sg PROG-make-COMPL chair 'She finishes making the chair'	31b) Ọ rụ̄chālā óchē 3sg make-COMPL-PERF chair 'She has finished making the chair'	31c) Ọ rụ̀chàrà óché kítāà 3sg make-COMPL-PST chair now 'She finished making a chair now'
32a) Ọ nà-èchúchá ḿmīrī?? 3sg PROG-fetch-COMPL water 'He finishes fetching water'	32b) Ó chūchālā ḿmīrī 3sg fetch-COMPL-PERF water 'He has finished fetching water'	32c) Ó chùchàrà ḿmírī kítāà 3sg fetch-COMPL-PST water now 'She finished fetching water now'

Though accomplishment verbs are inherently telic, they still co-occur with extensional suffix *–cha*. For these verbs, the suffix *–cha* can signal either that the action is fully completed, or that the action stops temporarily, especially when there is a modifying clause that clarifies that nuance. The use of the completive suffix *–cha* with the progressive form is rarely acceptable unless there's further modification. However, when you add an adverbial like *n'ehihie* ("at noon"), the meaning shifts, and the sentence is interpreted as expressing a habitual action.

The compatibility of accomplishment verbs with other discrimination tests are further illustrated in the following subsections

Accomplishment verbs and the *ru X time* 'until X time'

The ru X time test expresses duration and is therefore compatible with Igbo accomplishment verbs. It co occurs with the perfective and past but with the progressive, it gives a habitual reading.

33) Ada kpàrùrù ǹkàtà n'ábàlì
Ada weave-reach-PST basket night
Ada wove the basket until night

34) Ọ rụ̀rùrù óché n'ábàlì
3sg make-reach-PST chair night
He made the chair until night

Accomplishment verbs and the *for X time* test

For X time has the capacity to detelicize accomplishment verbs especially in combination with the perfective aspect. This implies that events such as *ịkpa nkata* 'to weave a basket' and *ịrụ oche* 'to make a chair' which originally have natural end points are viewed as incomplete. Example (35) shows that the event of weaving a basket has be ongoing for two hours without reaching a definitive endpoint. Similarly, the telicity of the verb *rụ oche* 'make a chair' is suspended given the contextual framing of the event in example (36)

35) Ada àkpàálá ǹkàtà ḿ áwà àbṵ́ọ́
Ada weave-PERF basket my hour two
Ada has woven my basket for two hours'

36) Ọ rụ̄ọ̄lā óché à ótù ízù ụ́kà
3sg make-PERF chair this one week
He has made this chair for 1 week

[1] Note that the double question mark is used in this work to indicate ambiguity or marginal grammaticality in the semantic interpretation of a construction while asterisk is used to mark ungrammaticality.

Accomplishment verbs and the *ka 'still' discrimination test*

The ka discrimination test in combination with the progressive reinforces accomplishments as atelic as opposed to their inherent telic feature. It shifts the interpretation so that the action is regarded as a process without necessary completion or fixed endpoint. The resultant effect of applying the ka discrimination test to accomplishment verbs is that the events as shown in (37)-(39) no longer includes the assumption of achieving a final result or goal. Instead, emphasis is on the ongoing process.

37) Ada kà nà-ákpā ǹkàtà
Ada still PROG-weave basket
Ada is still weaving a basket

38) Ọ́ kà nà-àrụ́ óchē
3sg still PROG-make chair
He is still making a chair

39) Ọ kà nà-èchú ḿmīrī
3sg still PROG-fetch water
'He is still fetching water'

Igbo verbs of achievement and aktionsart features

Achievement verbs basically express momentary acts. They are therefore non durative or punctual acts which are inherently telic. Some could however derive a pluractional or iterative sense, indicating repeated instances of the same brief action. The following verbs are grouped as achievements:

Table 5

	Achievement verbs	Progressive (test)	Past
40	ị́chọ̄tā íhé 'to find something	40a) Ada nà-àchọ́tá íhē?? Ada AUX-find thing 'Ada is finding something'*	40b) Ada chọ̀tàrà íhé Ada find-PST thing 'Ada found something'
41	ị́kū ákā 'to clap'	41a) Ọ̀ nà-àkụ́ ákā 3sg AUX-clap hand 'He is clapping (hand)'	41b) Ọ́ kụ̀rụ̀ ákā 3sg clap-PST hand 'He clapped'
42	ị́chètà íhé 'to remember something'	42a) Ada nà-échètá íhē (HAB) Ada AUX-remember thing 'Ada remembers things'	42b) Ada chètàrà íhé Ada remember-PST thing Ada remembered something

From the table, we see that the verbs in examples 40 and 42 have strictly punctual readings, which rules out any pluractional interpretation. In other words, the actions they refer to begin and end instantaneously; they are telic and punctual, like classical achievements. Because of that, they cannot be interpreted as repeated or pluralized events. By contrast, the verb in examples 41 while also punctual, allow an iterative reading when their actions are considered as occurring multiple times: a single clap can be understood as equivalent to a series of claps. In that sense, one can treat a "series of claps" the same way one treats a "series of steps," but this doesn't extend to verbs like *chọ́tá* 'find' *chètá* 'remember', which in (at least Igbo) can't meaningfully denote a repeated series of "findings" or "rememberings."

Thus the table suggests that pure achievements, that is, those that refer to one-off, non-durative events (as in examples 40 and 42) fail the progressive test because they lack inherent duration. However, when those kinds of verbs are coerced into repeated or iterative use (as in examples 41), then a progressive (or iterative) interpretation becomes possible. Simply put, individual achievements are punctual, telic and non-durative (hence incompatible with the progressive), while repeated use of similar verbs may acquire a plural/iterative reading that allows a progressive or repeated-action sense.

Achievement verbs and the –*cha* discrimination test

The suffix –cha seems to lack a clear completive meaning when it attaches to "pure achievement" verbs, especially in their perfective or past forms. This may be motivated by the non-durative nature of achievement verbs: since they denote instantaneous, punctual events, they do not involve the temporal extension often associated with "completion" in the sense of a process that unfolds over time. For an event to be construed as "completed," one generally assumes it occupied time. Consider the following examples:

Table 5.1

	***-cha* + perfective**	***-cha*+past**
43a)	Àdá àchọ́táchálá íhē?? Ada find-COMPL-PERF thing Ada has finished finding something*	43b) Ada chọ̀tàchàrà íhé ?? Ada find-COMPL-PST thing 'Ada finished finding something'

44a)	Ọ chètáchálá íhē ?? 3sg remember-COMPL-PERF thing 'She has finished remembering something'	44b) Ọ chètàchàrà íhé ?? 3sg remember-COMPL-PERF thing 'He finished remembering something'
45a)	Àdá àkụ́chálá ákā Ada clap-COMPL-PERF hand 'Ada has finished clapping'	45b) Ọ kụ̀chàrà áká láwá 3sg clap-COMPL-PST hand go 'He finished clapping and started going (home)'

In the case of "achievement" verbs, the suffix *-cha* does not seem to fully signal completion by virtue of duration or temporal extension, but rather marks completion in terms of perfection, that is, that the action has been properly done. Put differently, when *-cha* attaches to pure-achievement verbs as in examples 43-44, it does not endow them with ongoing or durative structure; instead it simply affirms that the instantaneous event was brought to a proper end. By contrast, when -cha combines with verbs whose semantics (or coerced reading) allow durativity, for instance, iterative or repeated actions (activities or accomplishments viewed as extended) as in (45), its effect is more akin to the standard completive: indicating that a temporally extended action has reached its terminus. In this way, the function of -cha seems sensitive to the verb's underlying Aktionsart: with punctual, non-durative (achievement) verbs, it marks "done properly," whereas with durative or iterative verbs, it can mark "finished (after a stretch of time)."

Thus the data support a model where morphological aspect (via *-cha*) interacts with lexical aspect: -cha does not uniformly impose a durative/completive meaning on every verb. Rather, its interpretation depends on whether the verb's lexical semantics already supply temporal extension or not.

Achievement verbs and other discrimination tests

Additionally, pure achievement verbs fail the durative based discrimination tests like *-ru 'until X time', For X time, and eri/kemgbe 'since X time*'. Consider the following examples:

46a) Ada chọ̀tàrùrù yà éhìhìè*
Ada find-reach-PST it noon
'Ada found it until noon*'

46b) Ada chọ̀tàrà yà áwà àbụ̀ọ́
Ada find-PST it hour two
'Ada found it for two hours'

46c) Ada nà-àchọ́tá íhē kémgbé èhìhìe*
Ada AUX-find thing since noon
'Ada has been finding something since noon'*

47a) Ọ kụ̀rùrù áká ábàlì
3sg clap-reach-PST hand night
'He clapped until night'

47b) Ọ kụ̀rụ̀ áká áwà àbụ̀ọ́
3sg clap-PST hand hour two
'He clapped for two hours'

47c) Ọ nà-akụ ákā kémgbé ụ́tụ́tụ̀
3sg AUX-clap hand since morning
' Ada has been clapping since morning'

In the above examples, it is shown that the discrimination tests involving *–ru*, 'until X time' and 'for X time' fail when applied to pure achievement verbs. The adverbial *–ru* 'until X-time' is generally understood to indicate a temporal span during which an action persists, and in particular to mark the point at which an ongoing action terminates. Because verbs such as *ịchọta ihe* 'to find something' and *ịcheta ihe* 'to remember something' denote punctual, instantaneous events, they lack the internal temporal extension (duration) required by such time adverbials, accordingly, they reject the "–ru X-time" test (see example 46a). Similarly, the *for X time* adverbial is typically used to indicate a time-span over which an ongoing, durative action persists. Given the punctual and instantaneous nature of pure achievement verbs, they systematically reject for X time" regardless of aspectual marking (past, perfective, or other forms). For instance, example 46b with *ịchọta ihe* is ungrammatical under the "for X time" test. By contrast, when the "For X time" and until X time tests are applied to verbs whose meanings have been coerced into an iterative or repeated interpretation as in example 47a and 47b the result is either relatively grammatical or marginally acceptable depending on the aspectual form. Even though such verbs derive

a kind of durative reading owing to the repetition of discrete punctual events, their status remains delicate in the "for X time" configuration. This suggests that their "durativity" is not inherent but derived through plurality of instances (i.e. multiple claps rather than one).

Also, the "since X time" test which tracks how long a resultant state has held, also behaves differently depending on the verb type and aspect. Pure achievement verbs are incompatible with the "since X time" test in perfective or past forms (see 46c). However, when the verb is interpreted iteratively (as in 47c), the "since X time" construction can appear permissibly with all aspectual forms.

This behaviour aligns with the standard distinction between durative vs. punctual/non durative predicates in lexical-aspect theory. Durative predicates such as activities or accomplishments describe events that unfold over a temporal interval and therefore can combine felicitously with duration adverbials like "for X time. In contrast, punctual predicates typically "pure achievements" describe events conceived as instantaneous, with no internal duration, and so they reject such adverbials. Thus, the data support the conclusion that the –ru 'until X time' and for X time adverbial tests serve as an effective diagnostic for distinguishing between durative predicates (activities or accomplishments) and punctual predicates (pure achievements).

Igbo verbs of state and aktionsart features

Statives in Igbo express situations or states that are atelic (have no natural end point), non-punctual (not tied to a specific moment in time) and non-durative (do not unfold through measurable stages or phases). A situation denoted by a stative cannot be split into phases. Comrie (1978) explains that all phases of a stative are identical such that at whichever point in time one chooses to cut in, one finds exactly the same situation. This is often used in contrast with activities and accomplishments where the different phases of a situation expressed by the verb may vary. The following verbs are grouped as statives:

48) ị́nū íhé 'to hear'
49) ípē m̀pé 'to be small'
50) ị́ghọ̄tā íhé 'to understand'

The Igbo verbs of state and the progressive test

The general assumption in the lexical aspect literature is that states do not denote a durative action and therefore do not allow the progressive form. This is one of the reasons why the progressive test is most relevant in distinguishing between non statives (activities and accomplishments) and statives.

Contrary to the widely held assumption of the incompatibility of statives with the progressive, there are many instances where the progressive form appears compatible with Igbo statives as shown in examples (..) and (...). There are also other instances where the semantics of the progressive form is more aligned with habitual aspect/reading that expresses a general truth when it occurs with the stative as in example (…). The progressive test is therefore not a fool proof diagnostic for distinguishing between durative (activities and accomplishments) and non-durative (statives). Consider the following examples:

Table 6 Statives and the progressive test

	States	Constructions
51)	ị́ghọ̄tā íhé 'to understand something'	Ọ́ nà-àghọ́tá mm̄ 3sg PROG-understand me *He is understanding me* 'He understands me'
52)	ị́nụ̄ íhé 'to hear'	Ọ́ nà-ànụ́ íhéḿ nà-èkwú 3sg PROG-hear thing me aux prf-say *He is hearing what I am saying* 'He hears what I am saying'
53)	ípē m̀pé 'to be small'	Ḿkpụ́rụ́ òròmá nà-èpé mm̄pē Seed orange PROG-be small smallness Orange seeds are small

Verbs of state and the –cha suffix

The extensional suffix *–cha*, which typically denotes completion with activities yields an alternative reading of 'entirety' with many statives rather than 'completion of an act or event'. It could be loosely equated with 'all/properly done. This alternative meaning may have been derived from the semantics of –cha as an independent word. For instance, *Ha ncha ga abia* literally translates as 'They all will come; just as *Ada riri ha ncha* would translate as 'Ada ate them all'. The completive meaning/reading of the extensional suffix cha is in other words, incompatible with statives. The following examples are illustrative:

54) Àdá nụ̀chàrà íhé ḿ kwùrù
Ada hear-SUFF-PST thing I say-PST
Ada heard all(properly) that I said

55) Há ghọ̀tàchàrà ákwụ́kwọ́ há gụ̀rụ̀
3PL understand-SUFF-PST book 3PL read-PST
They understood properly the book they read

56) Òkóró nà ụ́mụ̀ńnē yā pèchàrà m̀pé
Okoro and siblings his be small-SUFF-PRES smallness
Okoro and his siblings are all small

The stative and the *–ru* X time 'until X time' test

The –ru X time marks the endpoint of an ongoing action/situation. Since statives are non-dynamic and non-durative, they are incompatible with this test. In examples (57) and (58), the –ru morpheme yields questionable constructions with *ịghọta* 'understand' and *nụ* 'hear' and an ungrammatical one with *pe mpe*. As noted earlier, the –ru X time marks the terminating point of an ongoing act/situation that has been on for some time. The non-dynamic and non-durative properties of statives accounts for the reduced applicability or even the inapplicability of this test on statives. It is evident from available data that the serves as a valid discrimination for distinguishing between durative and dynamic (activities and accomplishments) from the non-durative and non-dynamic (states and pure achievements) lexical aspectual class

57) Àdá ghọ̀tàrùrù ḿ n' ábàlì??
Ada understand-reach-PST me at night
Ada understood me until night??

58) Ọ nụ̀ruru íhé ḿ kwùrù n'abali
3SG hear-reach-PST thing I say-PST at night
'She heard what I said until night'??

59) Ada peruru mpe n'abali*
Ada be short-reach-PST shortness at night
Ada was short until night*

The statives and the "For X time" discrimination test

The *for X time* discrimination test is generally incompatible with verbs of state. Its co-occurrence with statives results may result in ungrammaticality (see 61) or marginal grammaticality (see 60). This is partly because states are inherently atelic, in contrast with the *for X time* test which serves to telicize events such as activities. Though states are inherently atelic, the situations they express could be temporarily quantified in some way. Thus one could understand someone within a specified time after which the understanding ceases. The following examples are illustrative:

60) Adá gh̀ọ́tára ńkúzí m̄ áfọ̀ àbụ́ọ́??
Ada understand teaching my year two
'Ada understood my teachings for 2 years

61) Ada pere mpe afo abuo*
Ada be short shortness year two
'Ada was short for two years'

The statives and *kemgbe* 'since X time' discrimination test

In aktionsart studies, the discrimination test Since X time is often treated as a diagnostic for stative predicates. It is assumed to be incompatible with dynamic events such as activities. In contrast, it is observed that in Igbo, this test appears fully compatible with activities (see table 3.2) and partially with statives as shown in the examples below:

62) Ada pere mpe kemgbe ehihie*
Ada be short shortness since afternoon
'Ada was short since afternoon'*

63) Àdá ghọ̀tàra ihe ḿ kwuru kemgbe ábàlì??
Ada understand-PST thing I said since night
Ada understood what I said since night??

64) Ọ nụ̀rụ̀ olu ḿ kemgbe ụtụtụ
3SG hear-PST voice my since morning

'She heard my voice since morning'

V. Conclusion

This work has attempted an application of the traditional aktionsart classification to selected Igbo verbs. It has been established that lexical aspect is evident in Igbo as an inherent semantic property of verb meaning. The verbs are grouped into activities, accomplishments, achievements (with the iterative subtype), and states. It appears evident that Igbo verb semantics align with universal aspectual distinctions such as [±dynamic], [±durative], and [±telic]. The discrimination tests reveal a clear contrast between durative/dynamic classes (activities and accomplishments) and non-durative (achievements)/ non-dynamic (states) classes. In contrast to widely cited cross-linguistic patterns, the progressive and since x time diagnostics do not reliably differentiate activities and states in Igbo. This is due to the fact that many many stative predicates occur naturally in the progressive form, while numerous activity predicates accept since X time expression without coercion. This study utilized additional tests to differentiate aktionsart classes. Activities and Accomplishments are identified by compatibility with *–ru X time*, *completive suffix –cha*, *progressive test*, and *for X time* construction while achievements and states show limited compatibility with the aforementioned tests. Findings on the compatibility of lexical aspect with discrimination tests are further summarized in the table below:

Table 5.0 A summary of Igbo aktionsart classes and discrimination tests

Aktionsart classes	**-ru X time 'until X time'**	**Progressive test**	**For X time**	**ka 'stil l'**	**kemgbe 'since X time'**	**-cha 'finish'**
Activities	Yes	Yes	Ok	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accomplishments	Ok	Yes	Ok	Yes	Yes	Yes
Achievements Iteratives	No Ill formed/marginal	No Yes	No Ill-formed/marginal	Yes Yes	Ok Ok	Ill formed/marginal
States	No	Yes/marginal	Ill formed	Yes	Yes/marginal/ill-formed	Marginal

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