

Lesson 4:

Verbals I

by

Ejike Eze, Ph.D.

The Participle

In his book *Elements of Modern Ìgbò Grammar*, Emenanjo (1975) discusses the participle. The participle form of a verb is formed by attaching a harmonizing "a/e" to the root of a verb as in the following sentence:

Àdaoma nà-àgụ akwụkwọ. (Àdaoma is reading.)
Okorie nà-àgba m̀gba. (Okorie is involved in wrestling)
Nkwụ elù nà-àtọ ụtọ. (Palmwine is delicious)

The participle must be preceded by an auxiliary. It usually has a nominal complement. "Nà" is the auxiliary in each of the sentences above. "Akwụkwọ", "m̀gba" and "ụtọ" are the nominal elements in the sentence above.

Note: I discuss the participle because most people who learned Ìgbò would have learned to use the participle. However, I harbor a mild opposition to the term "participle". In the strictest sense of the word, a participle is a verbal that has some features of an adjective but is capable of taking an object as well as being inflected for tense and aspect. What Emenanjo refers to as participle does not fit this billing.

The Verb

While the auxiliary and participle determine tense and aspect in Ìgbò, the main verb is the part of the verbal that determines the action. The following illustrates:

-ri (eat)
-hi (be much)
-wù (be famous)

As is evident, the verb stem by itself is devoid of any temporal reference. Such reference are achieved with verbal derivatives such as the auxiliary (for future), "-rv" suffix (past) and the "-(v)lv" suffix. The following sentences illustrate:

Chike gà-èri nri. (Chike will eat) - future
Obì rìrì nri. (Obi ate) - past
Nnàmdì èriela. (Nnàmdì has eaten) - past perfect