

On enclitics in the Igbo Language

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Abstract

Clitics are generally known to resemble words but cannot stand on their own as words could. To function, they depend on a neighbouring word. The relation between them and the words they depend on is close to the relation between affixal elements and their bases or roots. Hence, the following major classification of the clitics has been made: proclitic and enclitic. While the proclitic depends on a following word, the enclitic depends on a preceding word. This study focuses on the enclitic in the Igbo language with a view to determining their distribution and function. This provides more material to support existing account of the elements in the language. The data for the study are from library sources and are verified by the authors who are native speakers of the language. The data are descriptively analyzed. The study confirms the finding in previous studies that the enclitic in Igbo could take any word from any of the word classes as its host. However, it discovers that enclitics could take prepositions as their hosts contrary to the claim that this is not possible. In other words, the Igbo enclitics take all word classes as their hosts. As determined, the primary function of enclitics is semantic. They modify the meaning of their hosts and in many cases modify the meaning of the entire structure in which their hosts occur.

Introduction

A good amount of studies has been done on enclitics in the Igbo language. For Ngoesi (1989), the enclitic is a word that adds meaning to a sentence. In talking about its position, he says that it can be placed anywhere in a sentence structure, but in most cases it is placed side by side with the verbs, nominal and nominal modifiers. If it is beside a verb, the two are written together as one word, but is written separately as independent word if it is following a member of another word class.

According to Emenanjo (1978), enclitics feature so consistently and so prominently in the Igbo language that each group qualifies to be called a part of speech in the context of this language. Enclitics are bound but optional elements. In addition, like most suffixes, enclitics have a CS structure. Partly because of these facts and partly, perhaps, because of insufficient data which results in incomplete analysis, suffixes and enclitics were until fairly recently lumped together and collectively called 'suffixes'. This supports Green and Igwe (1963) who state that most of the enclitics in the Igbo are described as suffixes, for instance, -kwa suffix, -sì suffix, -tù suffix, -dì suffix, etc. Okoye-Ogbalu, Ofoegbu and Nzidiegwu (1997) assert that enclitics make a sentence to be firm and emphatic.

Ugoji, Ume and Dike (1989) note that enclitic is one of the word classes that can follow a verb. It is like a suffix since it can be preceded by other word classes apart from preposition. In differentiating between enclitic and suffix, they remark that enclitic resembles suffix when it has a preceding verb. Suffix can only come after a verb but it is different from enclitic because the enclitic can take any position. It can be preceded by all word classes apart from preposition. Enclitic can even be preceded by

another enclitic. Emenanjo (1991) ascertains that enclitic is not a verb neither is it a suffix instead it is a small word that can be preceded by any word apart from preposition. Ofomata (1994) says that enclitic is another type of affix found in the Igbo language; it is an affix that gives full meaning to a word. Ofomata (2004) adds that enclitic is an affix which manifests very prominently in a word. It is prominent because unlike an affix, it can stand independently in a sentence without leaning on other words. It projects the meaning of the sentence in which it is positioned. Ikekeonwu, Ezikeojiaku and Ugoji (1999) state that enclitic is also a morpheme that can be affixed to a verb which brings about a little difference. Anytime it is following a verb immediately, it is written together with the verb. This is why it is expedient to discuss it under extensional suffix. It is true that it is written together with other word classes. Nze and Imo (2006) note that the, enclitic is one of the word classes that adds more meaning to a sentence. It can take any position in a construction but in most cases it is preceded by verbs, nominal and nominal modifiers.

Other Igbo grammarians who concur to the above assertions are: Oraka, Anizoba, Ezikeojiaku and Nwadike (1985), Ezikeojiaku, (1989), Onuora (1991), Ikedimma (1993), Obiora (2009), Nze (2010), among others.

From the foregoing, clitics are linguistic elements that are not words and are not affixes. Their form does not permit them to stand independently. Hence, they require a host. Obviously, clitics in Igbo are not contracted elements as it is the case with clitics in other languages especially English. For instance, Shell (1994) exemplifies enclitics in English with ‘n’t’ in ‘can’t’.

Test for enclitics

In this work, we regard enclitics in Igbo to be any items whose presence or absence in a construction does not contribute to well-formedness of the construction syntactically or semantically. In other words, our test for encliticness is deletion. The deletion of an enclitic preserves the well-formedness of the construction from which it is deleted. This is the dividing line between an enclitic in Igbo and a suffix. The deletion of a suffix from its base or root affects the grammatical orientation of the structure from which it is deleted.

Enclitics in Igbo

Studies on enclitics in Igbo have determined a good number of elements as enclitics in the language. Some of them are: *tụ*, *dụ*, *nù*, *nú*, *sị*, *cha*, *nwa*, *nnọọ*, *riị*, *ri*, *ga*, *kwa*, and *zi*. In the subsection below, we show the distribution of the enclitics.

Distribution of Igbo enclitics

Enclitics can take a verb as its host. When it does, it follows the verb directly before any affixal elements:

- 1.a. *nyetughị*
Vr-encl-suff
give-small-not
did not give a fraction of
- b. *nyeturụ*
vr-encl-suff
give-small-pst
gave a fraction of

- c. *ejekwaghì*
 pref-vr-encl-suff
 pref-go-again-not
 did not go again
- d. *jekwara*
 vr-encl-suff
 go-again-pst
 went again

Enclitics can take auxiliaries as their hosts:

- 2.a. *Anakwa m agu akwùkwọ*
 Pref-aux-encl me pref-read book
 I am certainly reading
- b. *Ebere ganọọ abịa echi*
 Ebere aux-encl pref-come tomorrow
 Ebere will certainly come tomorrow
- c. *Ha jizi ya eme ọnu*
 They aux-encl him pref-do mouth
 They are then proud of him
- d. *Anyị nacha egwu egwu*
 We aux-encl play play
 We are all playing
- e. *Ha kakwa unu mma*
 They aux-encl you fine
 They are certainly better than you (pl)
- f. *Isioma mazi esi nri*
 Isioma aux-encl pref-cook food
 Isioma can now cook

Enclitics have been found to occur following nouns:

- 3.a. Uẏọka *nnọọ* ka ị kpọrọ
Noun encl that you call-pst
Uzoka is just the person you called
- b. Ebere na Akaeze *cha* bįara akwụkwọ
Noun and Akaeze encl come-pst book
Ebere and Akaeze all came to school
- c. Azụ *rii* juru gi ọnu
Fish(noun) encl full-pst you mouth
So, fish filled your mouth

They can follow pronouns:

- 4.a. Ha *zi* riri nri ahụ
Pro(They) encl eat-pst food that
So, they ate that food
- b. Unu *nnọọ* chọrọ iti ya ihe
Pro(you)(pl) encl want-pst pref-beat him something
So, you people wanted to beat him
- c. Mụnwa kpọrọ gi
Pro-encl call-pst you
I myself called you

They have been found to follow numerals:

- 5.a. Atọ *cha* di n'ime ya
Num(three) encl be prep-inside it
As many as three are inside it

- b. Oroma asaa *zi* ka o nyere *gi*
 Orange num(seven) encl that he give-pst you
 He then gave you seven oranges
- c. Otu na *okara nno* zuuru Osita
 Num-one and half encl be.enough.for-pst Osita
 Only one and half was enough for Osita

Enclitics also follow Interrogatives in:

- 6.a. *Gin**zi* mere?
 Wh-encl do-pst
 What then happened?
- b. *Onyedu* *turu* *gi* okwute?
 Wh-encl throw-pst you stone
 Who was that that threw stone on you?
- c. *Olez**i* juru ite ah*u*?
 Wh-encl fill-pst pot that
 How many then filled that pot?

The enclitic is found to occur with the conjunction, *na* ‘and’ to form a complex conjunction:

- 7a. *Azuka nakwa* Iruka ka a *kporo*
 Azuka and-encl Iruka that someone call-pst
 Azuka and also Iruka were called
- b. Too*chi*, Ifeanyi nakwu Chioma bi*ra*
 Too*chi*, Ifeanyi and-encl Chioma come-pst
 Too*chi*, Ifeanyi and even Chioma came

Enclitics could follow adjectives:

- 8a. Nwoke ojii *zi* luru ya
 Man black-encl marry-pst her
 A black man later married her
- b. Aturu ocha *ri* na-aga
 Sheep white-encl PROG-pref-go
 So, a white sheep is passing
- c. Oshimiri ukwu *nwa* o na-eri mmadu?
 Sea big-encl it PROG-pref-eat person
 Does that great sea drown people?

Enclitics have been found to follow adverbs:

- 9.a. Nwayonwayo *nno* ka o ji ekwu okwu
 slow.slow encl that he use pref-talk talk
 He just talks slowly
- b. Ngwangwa *zi* ka m mere ya
 quick.quick encl that me do-pst it
 I then did it quickly
- c. O kwuru okwu ahụ *osiiso ri*
 He talk-pst talk that fast.fast encl
 So he said it quickly

Enclitics have been found to follow demonstratives in the language:

- 10.a. Onye a *kwa* bu enyi gi
 Person dem encl be friend you
 Just this person is your friend
- b. Ebe ahụ *zi* ka o no
 Place dem encl that he stay
 He later stayed in that place

- c. Ihe ahụ *nnọọ* mere ya abịala
 Thing dem encl do-pst him pref-come-neg
 Just that thing made him not to come

Quantifiers could be hosts to enclitics:

- 11.a. Ufọdukwa ga-abịa
 Quantifier-encl aux-pref-come
 Some will definitely come
- b. Mmadụ niile *zi* bịara
 Person quantifier encl come-pst
 Everybody eventually came
- c. Olemaole *ri* dị mma
 Quantifier encl be good
 Just few are good

We have found that there are cases in which the enclitics take prepositions as their hosts:

- 12.a. Ha bịara gbasarannọọ okwu ahụ
 They come-pst prep(about)-encl talk that
 They came because of the matter
- b. Nneka na-eche banyererị
 Nneka aux-pref-think prep(about)-encl
 ihe ahụ e mere ya
 thing that someone do-pst her
 Nneka is thinking just about the thing done to her

If the expressions in examples 12a and b are grammatical, it then shows that enclitics can occur with preposition as their hosts. This

Nù in the expressions indicates plurality.

15. *Nwa*
- a. $\text{\textcircled{O}}$ na-eme nke ndị *nwa* luru di
 She aux-pref-do of those encl(just) marry-pst husband
 She is posing just because she got married
- b. Ada na-eti iwu nke ndị isi *nwa*
 Ada aux-pref-beat command of those head encl(just)
 She is autocratic because she is just the head

The enclitic *nwa* in the examples is derogatory. However, in the example below, the same enclitic is an emphatic marker.

- c. *Ginwa* ka $\text{\textcircled{o}}$ na-akpo
 You-encl that he aux-pref-call
 You are the person he is calling
16. *cha*
- a. Ndị a *cha* bu nke ya
 These this encl(all) be of you
 All these are his
- b. $\text{\textcircled{O}}$ bu ya *nwecha* ya
 He be him have-encl(all) it
 He owns all of them
- c. $\text{\textcircled{O}}$ bu *cha* ha nwe ya
 It be-encl(all) they have it
 They all own it
- d. Ihe ndị a bu nke gi *cha*
 Thing these this be of you(sg) encl(all)
 All these things are yours(sg)

The enclitic *cha* as in 27a-d, indicates plurality but in 28, it is derogatory

17. *Ø ga-ekwucha*
 He aux-pref-speak-encl(derog)
18. *zi*
- a. *Nk̄ita zi* ka *Ø z̄utara*
 dog encl(later) that he buy-pst
 He later bought a dog.
- b. *Ḡin̄izi* mere?
 What-encl(then) do-pst
 What then happened?
- c. *Ø d̄izi* mma
 it be-encl(later) good
 It is now good
- d. *Onyezi* met̄ur̄u m aka?
 Who-encl(later) do-pst me hand
 Who later touched me?

Zi indicates that something happened later. However, in 18e&f below, we see the same enclitic express other nuances of meaning. For instance, in 18e, we see the item express surprise while in 18f, it indicates a tone of authority.

- e. *Onyezi* met̄ur̄u m aka?
 Who-encl(not expected) do-pst me hand
 Who (surprisingly) touched me?
- f. *Onyezi* met̄ur̄u m aka?
 Who-encl(autocratically) do.touch-pst me hand
 Who (autocratically) touched me?

19. *tu*
- a. *Nyetu* *ya oroma*
 give-encl(small) him orange
 Give him a fraction of the orange.
- b. *Gwatu* *m aha gi*
 tell-encl(politely) me name you
 Tell me (in a polite manner) your name

Tu expresses a fraction of a whole. However, we see that in 19b, it marks politeness.

20. *sì*
- a. *Ndì a sì gafere n'ule ahụ*
 These this encl(all) go-cross-pst in examination that
 All these people passed that examination.
- b. *Ha bụsì nke ya*
 They be-encl(all) of him
 They are all his.

Sì expresses plurality in the above sentences. In the contrary, it expresses completion and exhaustiveness in 20c.

- c. *Ireka nye.sìrì ya nri ahụ*
 Ireka give-encl(all)-pst him food that
 Ireka gave him all the food.

One thing is obvious about the enclitics: they provide the locus for expression of meanings that the language lacks words for even though we know and have seen that the exclusion of the

meanings would not affect the syntactic or semantic well-formedness of the constructions in which they appear.

Conclusion

In this study, we have noted that enclitics in Igbo are elements that do have the status of words and that of affixes, particularly suffixes. By their form, they require a host on which they depend to function. The distinguishing line between them and the suffixes is that they are not required for well-formedness of the structure in which they appear. Their presence or absence in the structure is equivalent to that of a grammatical adjunct. However, we have seen that they syntactically enlarge the constituent structure of phrases in which they appear. In doing this, they function semantically in modifying the meaning of the hosts on which they depend and in some cases complement the meaning of the entire structure in which the hosts are constituents of.

More importantly, we have confirmed previous findings on enclitics in Igbo, especially the fact that they can have as hosts any of the members of the Igbo word classes. However, we have shown that contrary to claims, by many an Igbo linguist that they do not occur with prepositions, that there are cases in which they do so. See again 12a&b.

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