

THE IGBO VERB ROOTS AS A COGNITIVE ACCESS NODE: THE EXAMPLE OF THE VERB ROOTS -kp̄ AND -kp̄̀

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ABSTRACT

The examination of some Igbo verb roots has led to a realization of their cognitive motivation in the form of phonosemantic antecedents and the specific gestalts or patterns that emerge from them and are fully realized in the image schemata of the verb roots (Uchechukwu 2004a; 2004b). This paper builds on these earlier works and extends the earlier findings to yet two other verb roots *-kp̄* and *-kp̄̀*. This is to take the following forms: (1) a clarification of the particular phonosemantic antecedents of the verb root, as well as the verb root's concrete meaning, and the image schema arising from this concrete meaning; (2) the examination of the verb root and its image schematic network in the light of Langacker's (1987) concept of *access node* to a systematic knowledge base. Finally, this paper forms part of my effort to systematize the Igbo verb roots in the light of the growing recognition of their cognitive motivation.

KEYWORDS

Verb Configuration, Lexical Network, Knowledge Conceptualization, Cognitive Access Node.

1. Introduction

My examination of the submorphemic patterning of the Igbo verb roots and the contribution of these submorphemic patterns to the formation of more complex structures in the language makes it unavoidable to clarify the role of the submorpheme as a linguistic unit. This shall be addressed in this section and be related to the two verb roots *-kp̄* and *-kp̄̀*.

Langacker explains the grammar of a language as a structured inventory of conventional symbolic units and also divides the symbolic resources of a language into two groups: (1) the specified symbolic units (like morphemes, polymorphemic lexical items, and larger expressions), and (2) the established patterns of assembling complex symbolic structures out of simpler ones. It is remarkable that he does not add the submorphemes as part of the symbolic resources, although he acknowledges the significance of phoneme combinations as conceptualized entities in the form of phonological schemas (Langacker 1987: 9.1.). Taylor is in agreement with this position, but also adds that "phonology is conceptual in the sense that phonological units can be regarded as concepts [...] phonological representations reside in the mind, and are invoked in acts of speaking and understanding" (Taylor 2002: 79-80). However, the author also explains in the same paragraph that "phonological units do not symbolize concepts". Such a statement stand in contrast to some of the studies in sound-symbolism. For example, through his investigation of phonaesthemes Bergen confirms that

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“phonaesthemes have a status in the mental language processing system that is similar to that of canonical morphemes” (Bergen 2004: 302). The consequence of this conclusion is to give the submorphemic phoneastheme the same cognitive status of a symbolic unit (with a semantic and a phonological pole) as is given to a morpheme in Cognitive Grammar.

Another consequence of this symbolic status of phonaesthemes is the recognition of a similar symbolic status for the structures identified as sound-symbolic *phonosemantic units* that make up *ideophones* in African languages. These phonosemantic structures form the submorphemic sound units characterized as “mental entities” and “*image schemata*” (Rhodes 1994: 277), which “tend to encode descriptive, referential, perceptual features (usually basic sensory properties)” (McCune 1985: 421) and “concrete imagery” (Childs 1994: 199). The insight from this is that the submorphemic phonaesthem of the European languages or the phonosemantic units of ideophones in African languages are explicitly coded patterns of conceptualization in human language (Heine 1997: 16) that also form part and parcel of a language’s lexicon and expressive potential (Newman 2001: 257).

Finally, this recognition of phoneasthemes and ideophones as symbolic units would mean for Cognitive Grammar an expansion of the group of “the specified symbolic units” for some languages to start with the submorphemic components, and not only the morphemes. With regard to the verb roots *-kpó* and *-kpò* it shall be seen that they not only form some patterns of conceptualization but also serve as nodes for metaphorical and metonymic extensions into different domains.

2. The Submorphemic Patterning of the Verb Roots *-kpó* and *-kpò*

The difference between the two verb roots is that the first is high toned, while the second is low toned. The submorphemic patterns of the two verb roots are expressed in their phonosemantic antecedents, which seem to reflect the nature of the two verbs. I shall examine the high toned verb root first, before going into the low toned counterpart.

2.1. The High Tone Form of the Ideophone *kpó*

This high tone verb root has its phonosemantic antecedent in the form “*kpó*”, which can be found in different ideophones where it expresses a consistent phonosemantic value.

Maduka-Durunze (1998) gives the consonant /*kp*/ in a *C*₁ position the meaning of “hard, dry, and light object”. In combination with the vowel /*o*/, which the author gives the meanings of “(a) 3-dimensional, (b) small, (c) full, (d) tight, and (e) in closed container” in *V*₁ position, the derived form is the verb *-kpó*, one of whose meanings in the language the author rightly gives as “dry up, harden”. The author also relates the form to its cognate ideophone *kpókòkpókò*, which he explains as “rattling by [of] hard, dry object in full container”. This is actually the sound made by any kind of dried fruit that has detached from its hard shell but is still enclosed within the shell, like a dried-up coconut fruit that no longer contains water, or like a rattlebox plant. Another cognate ideophone of this verb is the form *kpóm! Kpóm! Kpóm!* which is used in Igbo cultural

environment to iconically represent three knocks on a door. In both *kpókòkpòkò*, and *kpòm! Kpòm! Kpòm!* the ideophone *kpò* expresses the same phonosemantic value of a short and sharp hitting on something hard and dry. The /k/ in the first ideophone and the /m/ in the second only modulate the sounds of this hitting. Thus, the consonant /k/ in the ideophone *kpókòkpòkò* marks the end of the movement initiated through the form *kpò*, while the consonant /m/ in *kpòm! Kpòm! Kpòm!* marks a flattening out of the impact.

An extension of the ideophone *kpòm! Kpòm! Kpòm!* involves its use to express multiple drops of something. Within its original ideophonic sound domain, such a multiple expression is in the form of a reduplication. It is used for the iconic marking of many such short, sharp sounds, like the knocks on the door. But this reduplication is not restricted to the sound domain alone. It is also extended into the domain of drawing. For example, in a drawing game a child can tell another:

- (1) Tù - ò yá *Kpòm! Kpòm! Kpòm!*
 throw IMP it IDEO
 [Throw it (i.e. drop it) *Kpòm! Kpòm! Kpòm!*.]
 ‘Make a lot of spots (dots) on it.’

The reduplicated ideophone simply marks the multiple dots made by the child. One can already see here that the short, sharp sounds of the ideophone are extended into the domain of painting and drawing to express multiple dots. In addition to this use of the reduplicated form, the ideophone is also used as a single form, i.e. as a single instance *kpòm*. This is indeed the Igbo designation for the punctuation mark ‘full stop’. This meaning arose from the linguistic terminology development effort of the Society for the Promotion of Igbo Language and Culture (1985: 76).

Finally, the ideophonic cognates of the high tone form of the verb *kpò* involve an interaction with something hard, dry, and light. We shall see in the later sections to what extent this insight helps one to understand the nature of the high tone verb root *kpò*.

2.2. The Low Tone Ideophone *kpò*

The low tone form does not often stand alone, and is often used together with the high tone form to express a sense of balance.

An example of the co-occurrence with the high tone form is the ideophonic pair: *Kpòm! Kpòm!* Here the first form is the high tone, while the second form is the low tone. The two forms are used to iconically represent some sense of balance, elegance, or harmony in someone’s manner of walking as the shoes hit the ground one after the other. In such a walking scenario the high tone form codes the initial step, which is balanced by the low tone form of the second step. Someone can be described in this sense as walking *Kpòm! Kpòm!* This entails harmony, grace or elegance in the person’s gait. Another ideophonic variance of the low tone form is *Kpòò!* which is used to iconically mark the sound of a gun, especially in the sense of actually hitting and killing someone. The drawing out of the vowel /ò/ is a simple iconic marking of the descent of the shot person as he or she falls.

Finally, the low tone ideophone *Kpò* occurs less than the high tone form. In addition, the co-occurrence of the two forms indicates that the low tone form gains its significance from the high tone form through balancing out the action initiated by the high tone form. Generally, the high tone form is used to indicate short, sharp, swift, i.e. perfective occurrences, while the low tone form tends more towards an imperfective, drawing out of an occurrence. In the next section I shall examine the extent to which this is reflected in the two verb roots.

2.3. The Connection of the Ideophonic Pattern to the Two Verb Roots

A surprising connection between the two ideophones and the two verb roots is that just like the Igbo language has more occurrences of the high tone ideophone *kpò* than the low tone *kpò*, there are also more verbal complexes formed with the high tone verb root *-kpò* than with the low tone verb root *-kpò*. I shall illustrate this point with a summary of the semantics of the verbs formed with the two verb roots as these are presented in the two most comprehensive dictionaries of the language (Williamson 1972; Igwe 1999). The table below summarizes the meanings each of the authors gives the high and low tone verb roots:

Williamson (1972)	Igwe (1999)
<p>High Tone <i>-kpò</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A. call; invite; summon; name B. Lead; take along dry 2. A. strike; knock; drive knail or stake in B. take (snuff) (lit. strike in) 3. suffer blindness (as a result of the destruction of an eye or both) 4. buy, purchase (clothes, pottery) 5. expose; display 6. clear by setting fire to 7. break (of something fragile, e.g. egg, bladder, eye) 8. rub/pluck off 	<p>High Tone <i>-kpò</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A. call out, shout, howl, wail B. name, mention, cite, refer to C. invite; issue; invitation; summon D. regard as; evaluate; value as 2. take or bring persons accompanied; conduct; escort; lead to 3. stub (foot or toes) strike with the end of a thing (e.g. toes, nose, forehead, mouth, etc.) 4. dry completely; dry hard; desiccate 5. hate dislike intensively 6. buy, purchase (such articles as pot, cloth, mat) 7. set out in ordered groups for sale; display articles for sale 8. put or insert small things into holes; sew (small seeds e.g. beans, melon, pea etc) 9. detach from fixed position (e.g. corn seeds from cob; other seeds from pods – beans, peas etc) 10. burst, break (something containing liquid or gaseous substances, something swollen and tender or not solid) 11. prick, pierce
<p>Low Tone <i>-kpò</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. curse; abuse 	<p>Low Tone <i>-kpò</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. shut, pull to (gates on runners and doors on hinges)

Table 1. Different Senses of the Verb Roots in the two Dictionaries

From the table it can be seen that the high tone verb occurs more than the low tone, and is also more semantically loaded than the low tone verb. The actions expressed through the high tone verb involves different forms of concrete physical activity. In Willisamons entries, for example, out of the 9 entries six involve a manipulation of something hard. The same applies to Igwe’s entries, where 6 of the 11 entries also

involve a similar meaning. The other additional meanings involve extensions of the concrete meanings into different domains of experience. This is similar to the concrete meaning identified for the ideophones and the extension of the concrete meaning to the domain of writing to form the ‘full stop’. In the next section I shall present the different domains of experience covered by these verbs, starting with the concrete meaning arising from their ideophonic antecedents.

3. The Domains of the Verb Roots

In this section I first present the explanation of the concept of *domain* within cognitive linguistics, before going into the insight one can gain from it with regard to the two verb roots.

Langacker explained *domain* as “cognitive entities: mental experiences, representational spaces, concepts, or conceptual complexes” (Langacker 1987: 147), which form part of the conventional knowledge associated with linguistic symbolization within a speech community. The author also explains that most concepts presuppose other concepts and cannot be adequately defined without reference to them. He gives the example of the explanation of the concept of a [FINGER], which is understood only with reference to the concept [HAND]. Croft describes this in terms of a division into a profile and a base, and explains the relationship between a profile and a base as follows:

On the one hand, profiled concepts cannot be understood except against the background knowledge provided by the base. On the other hand, the base exists as a cognitively unified and delimited “chunk” of knowledge only by virtue of the concept or concepts defined with respect to it. (Croft 2002: 166)

Illustrative of this is Langacker’s explanation of a hand as forming the base for the conceptualization of a finger. Croft also makes the point that because a particular base is always the base for many concept profiles, this makes the base a domain. He then defines a domain as “the semantic structure that functions as the base for at least one concept profile (typically many profiles)” (Croft 2002: 166), which means “just the domain immediately presupposed by the profiled concept” (Croft 2002: 167). Finally, the conceptualization of a lexical item involves entering into and activating a network of a particular knowledge domain, with a particular word serving as the point of access to the network. But, as some pieces of knowledge are central enough to be activated almost every time the concept is activated, this gives the knowledge associated with such a symbolic unit a *center-periphery* organization. The part of the central information activated through a lexical item forms the base for conceptualizing the lexical item, “just the base immediately presupposed by the profiled concept” (Croft 2002: 167). Croft calls this the *base domain*, while Langacker calls it *the scope of predication*. Rudzka-Ostyn speaks in this regard of *primary domain* “which is necessarily activated by the meaning of a given lexical item (Rudzka-Ostyn 1988: 509). But with regard to the ideophone *kpɔ* its primary domain is the domain of *physical contact* in space. A similar dominance of physical contact can also be confirmed for the verb root. In other words, the high tone verb root has as the center of its primary domain “physical contact with a hard object”, while the periphery is made up of the systematic extensions into various domains.

I shall present in the next section the primary domain and the verbal complexes formed with them, after which I will present the metaphoric and metonymic extensions into other domains.

3.1. The Domain of Physical Contact

This is the primary domain, with physical contact with a hard object as the focus. Some of the verbal complexes formed here involve hitting or striking a hard object.

<i>Noun</i>	+	<i>Verb Root = Verbal Complex</i>	=	<i>Types of Meaning</i>
<i>Àkwu</i> 'foot'		<i>-kpó</i>	<i>-kpó ukwu</i>	Concrete: (accidentally) stub the foot on some obstacle while walking Metonymic: visit a place briefly = pay a short visit
<i>Itú</i> 'nail'			<i>-kpó òtú</i>	hit a nail into (something)
<i>imi</i>			<i>-kpó imi</i>	(accidentally) hit the nose on something

Table 2. Examples of Verbal Complexes with Concrete Meaning

The events expressed through these verbs involve the prototypical hitting of an object, as is also involved in the ideophonic antecedent of these verbs. It is obvious from the very first example that the concrete meaning of “(accidentally) hit one’s foot on some obstacle while walking” can be related to the short, sharp impact of the tapping sound in the verb’s ideophonic antecedent. The same can also be seen in the metonymic extension that means ‘to pay a short visit’. All the concrete examples involve the same physical impact on some hard object, regardless of the actual shape of the object. Another metonymic extension is the combination with the noun *ókà* ‘maize’ to form *-kpó okà* ‘to detach maize from the cob’. Common to this group is that the object that is hit is usually a hard object.

The next group of verbs is formed through the processes of more detailed metonymic and metaphoric extensions. This has already been illustrated with the first verbal complex in the table above. But before going any further here, let me just add some few words on the standard view of metaphor and metonymy within Cognitive Linguistics. Metaphor is seen in the standard view as a unidirectional process that involves experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another, whereby one forms the source domain and the other the target domain. The source domain is mapped onto the target domain, in the process of which there is the preservation of inference between the two domains (Lakoff/Johnson 1980:5). It is also seen as “a means whereby more abstract and intangible areas of experience can be conceptualized in terms of the familiar and concrete” (Taylor 2002: 335). It is this ‘simple’, metaphoric, domain-to-domain mapping that shall be taken into consideration here. With regard to metonymy, it is seen in the standard view as involving both the contiguity of the designated entities in a spatial sense, and also the entities being associated in experience or occurring within the same conceptual domain. In metonymy the cognitive process is a process “in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain or idealized cognitive model (ICM)” (Kövecses 2002: 145).

The first illustrative example from the table above is the verbal complex *-kpó òtú*, whose concrete meaning is simply ‘hit a nail into (something)’, entailing a pointed penetration of the affected object. Another example of this sense is formed by combining the verb root with the nominal *ógwú* ‘a thorn’, resulting in the verbal complex *-kpó ogwu*, which has the concrete meaning of ‘to be prickly, to prick’, but the metaphoric meaning of ‘thorny’. This sense of ‘penetrate an affected object’ can be used both constructively and negatively. For example, even in the meaning of ‘hit and penetrate something’, the verbal complex *-kpó òtú*, does not refer to the carpenter’s constructive use of a hammer to knock a nail into something. This constructive meaning is expressed in the language through the verb root *-kú* ‘knock, hit’; so to constructively knock a nail into something is *-kú òtú*. But the verbal complex *-kpó òtú* refers more to a general penetration of something that does not necessarily have to be positive. An illustration of the metaphoric non-constructive sense of *-kpó òtú* is, for example, in its use by a macho person to vulgarly describe his conquering a woman in bed. Another metaphoric, but positive extension of the verbal complex, is in its use within the domain of agriculture. This involves the physical act of inserting seedlings into holes. Igwe gives it the following explanation in his dictionary: “put or insert small things into holes; sew (small seed e.g. beans, melon, pea, etc.); plug (with plug, cotton-wool, etc.)”.

Other illustrative examples of the extensions can be seen in the table below:

<i>Noun</i>	+	<i>Verb Root</i>	=	<i>Verbal Complex</i>	=	<i>Metonymic Meaning</i>
<i>ánwùrù</i> ‘snuff’		<i>-kpó</i>		<i>-kpó anwùrù</i>		take snuff (Williamson captures the picture of the activity by adding “(lit: strike in)”)
<i>ńkù</i> ‘wood’				<i>-kpó nkù</i>		be dry and hard (like a piece of dry stick)
<i>ókù</i> ‘fire’				<i>-kpó okù</i>		set fire to something so as to burn/clear it up

Table 3. The first group of Extensions

The first example, *-kpó anwùrù* can be translated as ‘take snuff’, but it is actually the the activity involved in taking snuff in a traditional setting that plays a role here. Williamson highlights it by marking it as “lit. ‘strike in’”. The author highlights the swift act of putting the snuff into the nose, while Igwe sees it as related to ‘put or insert small things into holes’.

The next group is a further extension connected with dryness. This could be related to the second verb in the example in table 3 above: *-kpó nkù* ‘be dry and hard (like a piece of dry stick)’. ‘To dry’ is a natural process that involves removing the ‘wetness’ from a substance. In the next group of verbs it can be seen that they all involve such a process in the nouns that combine with the verb root. In his dictionary Igwe sees it as to ‘burst’ and explains that this bursting has to do with “something containing liquid or gaseous substance, something swollen and tender or not solid” (Igwe 1999: 327). What the author did not include, however, is the fact that the ‘burst’ here is not in the sense of an explosion like in the verb root *-gbá*, but simply the ‘letting out of the wet substance’ within an object, thus leading to the drying up of the object. For this group, I shall simply give three dictionary entries:

<i>Noun</i>	+	<i>Verb Root</i>	=	<i>Verbal Complex</i>	=	<i>Meaning</i>
<i>ánya</i> 'eye'		-kpó		-kpó anya		burst the eye; blind the eye
<i>àkpamámiri</i> 'bladder'				-kpó àkpamámiri		burst the bladder
<i>ónya</i> 'wound; sore'				ẏhya ikpó		(Literal meaning:) a wound to dry up

Table 4. The Second Group of Extensions

In the first and the second examples the two objects *ánya* 'eye' and *àkpamámiri* 'bladder' are naturally wet. The letting out of the wet substance as a result of an impact of one kind or the other simply leads to the eye or the bladder drying up. The same applies also to *ónya* 'wound; sore', which is seen as healed by drying up.

This sense of 'exhausting the content of something' also plays a role in the use of this verb root as a second component of a verb compound with the structure [Verb₁ + Verb₂]. In such constructions it expresses the sense of a 'total and complete' execution of the event coded through the first verb. For example, the verb **-rí** 'eat' can combine with the verb root to yield **-ríkpó** 'eat up (everything)', that is, without anything left over. Lord (1975) has interpreted the typical Igbo compound to exhibit what she calls an Action-Result effect. This simply means that the initial verb expresses the main action while the second verb expresses the result. Thus in the present example the first verb **-rí** expresses the initial action of 'eating', while the second verb expresses the 'effect'. This effect applies both to [Verb₁ + Verb₂] and [Verb + Suffix] combinations. Another illustrative example is Igwe's entry for another compound verb formed through a combination of the verb **-kú** 'hit', with **-kpó**: **-kúkpó**. The author gives it two meanings. The first involves the ideophonic aspect which he gives as "(a) to make a clanging noise (like a dog-bell ...). But the second meaning is the most illustrative of the point being made here. The author gives it as "(b) to knock in, dent; to deflate, reduced from a full state to partial or complete emptiness; to collapse". This meaning of a complete elimination of a previous state can also be seen in the following verbal complexes formed with this compound verb:

<i>Verb Root</i>	+	<i>Verb Root</i>	+	<i>Noun</i>	=	<i>Verbal Complex</i>	=	<i>Meaning</i>
-kú 'hit'		-kpó		<i>ánya</i> 'eye'		-kúkpó anya		hit and burst/blind the eye
				<i>Áh</i>		-kúkpó ulò		knock down a house completely

Table 5. The Third Group of Extensions

In the next section I shall present the next group of verbal complexes that involve both different aspects of the psychological domain as well as forms of speaking or calling.

3.2. The Forms of Speaking and the Psychological Domain

With regard to forms of speaking, the verb root expresses calling on, naming, and even inviting someone. For example, a combination with *áhà* 'name' yields **-kpó ahà** 'to name, mention, cite'. Other examples are:

<i>Noun</i>	+	<i>Verb Root</i>	=	<i>Verbal Complex</i>	=	<i>Meaning</i>
<i>òku</i> 'invitation, summons'		<i>-kpò</i>		<i>-kpò òku</i>		to invite, summon
<i>òrù</i> 'work'			<i>-kpò òrù</i>		invite/summon to work	
<i>érimeri</i> 'food'			<i>-kpò erimeri</i>		invite to eat/feast with someone	

Table 6. The Third Group of Extensions

In these examples of forms of speaking one could picture the call as issuing out and hitting the target audience. The same can also be seen in verbal complexes formed with this verb root to express particular psychological attitudes. For example, the verb root is combined with these nouns *àsĩ* 'strong dislike, hatred' and *Àghwọ* 'strong dislike, rejection' to form the following verbal complexes: *-kpò àsĩ* 'hate very strongly'; *-kpò ụgwọ* 'dislike, reject'. Also connected with this is a subtle combination of naming something and having an attitude towards that thing. For example, while the noun *ihe* simply means 'something', it is combined with the verb root to form *-kpò ihe* which literally means 'call something'. But the verbal complex is actually used in more definite contexts like in sentence 1 below:

- (1.) ọ kpò rọ ya ihe
 he call - rV-Non-Past it something
 [Lit: He calls it something)
 'He takes it as something of value.' = 'He values it'

This sentence does not just mean 'call a thing something'. It refers specifically to a particular attitude associated with the noun complement of the verb root. *ihe* literally means 'something', but it can only be something to someone that values it. For a person who does not value it, it is simply nothing. So to say that you call an entity 'something' is to make explicit the fact that you see and 'treat' the entity as something of value. Other verbal complexes that belong to this group are also used in this sense to express specific attitudes:

<i>Noun</i>	+	<i>Verb Root</i>	=	<i>Verbal Complex</i>	=	<i>Meaning</i>
<i>éghu</i> 'goat'		<i>-kpò</i>		<i>-kpò eghu</i>		value/treat as a goat
<i>nìmádù</i> 'human being'			<i>-kpò nìmádù</i>		value/treat as a human being	
<i>m̀kpà</i> 'a need'			<i>-kpò m̀kpà</i>		treat as a need/as important	
<i>nwátà</i> 'child'			<i>-kpò nwatà</i>		value/treat as a child	

Table 6. The Fourth Group of Extensions

Finally, the further extension of this *forms of speaking* is through a verb compound formation. For example, the suffix *_ta* is used in the language to express a DIRECTIONAL meaning. Emenanjo's explanation of the suffix is worthy of note here: "This suffix covers a very wide semantic field but the sense of 'motion toward' – in a literal and metaphorical sense – seems a convenient gloss" (Emenanjo 1978: 121). I will

add here that the ‘motion toward’ also includes ‘motion toward the speaker’. The suffix is combined in this sense with the verb root to form the compound verb *-kpòta*, which has the literal meaning of ‘call in the direction of the speaker’, but metaphorically means ‘to bring (a living entity) along’. This can be seen in the sentence below:

2. Bíkó kpò - tá Emeká. [Bíkó kpòtá Emeká.]
 please call DIR Emeká
 ‘Please, bring Emeká (with you).’

It is also remarkable that the opposite meaning of ‘bring with’ (which is ‘take with’), is formed through the addition of another suffix to this verb root. For example, the suffix *_rò* is one of those prepositional suffixes of the language known as the *-rV-Applicative*, and whose equivalent in English is a simple preposition. It is often translated as ‘for; to the benefit of’, and is given the meaning of ‘benefactive’ in Igwe’s dictionary. A combination of this suffix with the verb root forms the verbal compound *-kpòro*, which has the literal meaning of “call for, to the benefit of”, but the metaphorical meaning of ‘take along with’. I shall illustrate this with sentence 3 below:

3. Bíkó kpò - rò Emeká. [Bíkó kpòrò Emeká.]
 please call -rV-APPL
 (Lit.: Please, call Emeká to your benefit)
 ‘Please take Emeká along (with you).’

An additional point that arises here is the fact that this extension has also become so embedded that it can also be used to form a verbal complex of its own. For example, sentence 3 is simply a specification of the verbal complex *-kpòro òmádù* ‘take someone along’, whereby the ‘someone’ can be specified by giving the name of the person, just as in the example sentence.

In the next section I shall go into a further extension, but within the commercial domain.

3.3. The Commercial Domain

Here we shall notice the kind of reversal of perspectives that we have just noted above. The starting point is another compound verb. It is formed through the combination of this verb root with the prepositional suffix *_sa*, which has the meanings of ‘the state of being placed on; on; over; upon’ (Emenanjò 1978: 121). An additional point is that this suffix involves ‘a group of objects being’ so handled, and not just a single object. The compound verb *-kpòsa*, first of all involves the verb root’s concrete domain of “physical contact with a hard object”, and has the literal meaning of ‘forcefully placing some objects on/upon/over a hard object’. It is indeed this meaning that is extended into the commercial domain to mean ‘arrange and display wares for sell’. More specifically, the compound verb is combined with the noun *áhia* ‘market’ to form the verbal complex -

kpòsa ahĩa, which means ‘arrange, spread out and display wares’ on something like a table at the market place. The noun *áhĩa* can indeed be made more specific by replacing it with the name of the particular goods that are actually on display. For example, in the sentence

4. Óbì kpò - sa - ra ákì pù - ó. [Óbì kpòsara ubé pùó.]
 Obi place on -rV-APPL coconut leave oV-Past
 ‘Obi put the coconuts on display and left.’

The noun *áhĩa* has been replaced with a particular marketable object, ‘coconut’. The goods are seen as issuing from the agent outwards. Thus the agent is the source of the activity. However, this perspective within the commercial domain can also be changed through the use of the DIRECTIONAL suffix *_ta* pointed out above, where it was noticed how with regard to forms of speaking it is combined with this verb root to mean ‘bring along (with)’, such that sentence 3 above can be seen as ‘bring (along) in the direction of the speaker’. Within the commercial domain, however, it is used as one of the very old forms in the language to express the normal activity carried out by the buyer. For example, one could tell another person going to the market:

5. Bíkó kpò tá ra m akwà n’ ahĩa. [Bíkú, kpòtára m akwà n’ ahĩa.]
 please call DIR -rV-APPL me cloth PREP market
 ‘Please, buy cloth for me at the market.’

The literal meaning of the verb root in this sentence is ‘call (+directional + benefactive)’, which gives the sentence the literal meaning of ‘Call cloth for me at the market.’ But this is metaphorically understood within the commercial domain to mean ‘Buy cloth for me at the market’. The suffixes are also dropped, with the bare verb root alone expressing the meaning of ‘buy’. This meaning is very old and is not often used, except by very old people in the villages. In addition, it is restricted to buying only “cloth, mats, and different types of pots”. That is why the dictionary examples are restricted to such forms as *-kpò ùwé* ‘buy cloth’ or *-kpò ìte* ‘buy pot’. The reason for this restriction is no longer apparent to an average native speaker. Finally, the concept of ‘buy’, without any form of restriction with regard to the kind of objects to be bought, is expressed in Standard Igbo through the form *-zú* ‘buy’. This is also the form most native speakers are familiar with.

Finally, all the examples discussed so far involve the high tone verb root *-kpò*. The next section presents the little information that is available on the low tone verb root *-kpò*.

3.4. The Low Tone Verb Root and Its Domains

The only explicit low tone form in the dictionaries is the verbal complex *-kpò òyí* ‘curse’, which is restricted to the psychological domain. This is simply a form of speaking, similar to those in section 3.2. above. The other meaning arises through the

formation of verbal compounds. For example, the verb root *-chí* ‘end, close’ can be combined with the low tone verb root to form the compound verb *-kpòchi*, whose literal meaning is ‘hit and close’. Its meaning is indeed not far from this, for the compound verb is the lexical unit of the language to express ‘lock’. These are the two structures formed with the low tone form.

In the last section I shall now examine some of the issues arising from the presentation above.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Three main issues arise from the examination of these two verb roots. These are their ideophonic connections, their image schema, and their roles as access nodes to domains of knowledge.

With regard to their ideophonic source or cognates, it is obvious from sections 2.1. and 2.2. above that there are more high tone ideophones of this root than low tone ones. This corresponds with the presentation so far (and in the dictionaries), whereby the high tone verb root *-kpó* occurs more often than the low tone verb root *-kpò*. This simply means that the relationship between the two ideophonic cognates is as much entrenched in the language as the relationship between the two verb roots. It would indeed be strange to see the correspondence as a mere coincidence.

The second point is the image schema of the two verb roots. This has been shown to arise from the perception of a concrete physical contact with a hard object, traceable to the ideophonic cognates of the verb roots. It has also become obvious how the pattern of conceptualization associated with the ideophone is employed and extended into various domains in the different verbal complexes formed with the verb roots. Finally, this simply means that one and the same image schema is employed in the formation of verbal complexes with the two verb roots, i.e. the two verb roots are motivated by one image schema. The point of difference between them, however, is a tendency for the high tone verb root to code more concrete and perfective events; while the low tone verb root codes more abstract and imperfective events. This is a tendency that is emerging from the few verb roots examined so far. More verb roots need to be examined to ascertain the extent to which this tendency applies to all the different verb roots of the language.

Finally, the the verb roots have also shown how conceptualizing a lexical item involves entering into and activating a network of knowledge, with the particular lexical item serving as the point of access to the network. More specifically, Langacker explains this role of the lexical item as an “open-ended set of relations – simple, complex, direct and indirect ” (Langacker 1987: 163). For the verb roots examined here the network of relationships arising through the combination with specific nominals to form verbal complexes can be seen in the figure below:

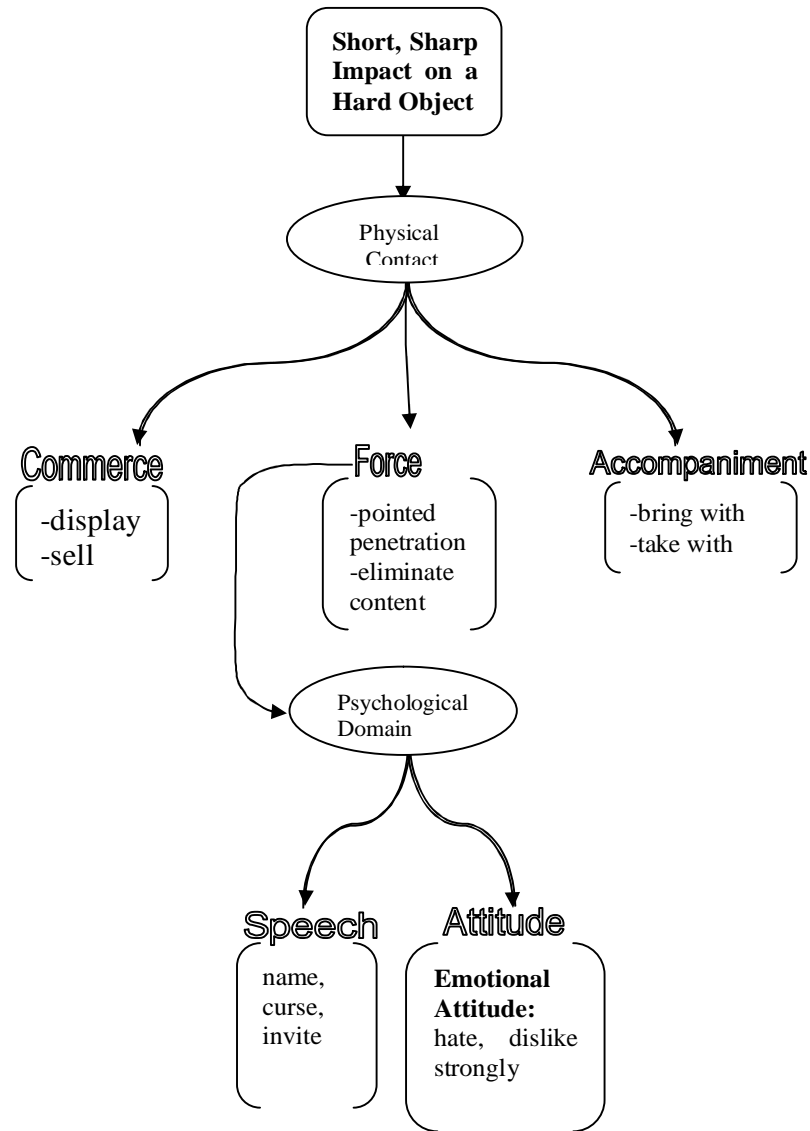


Figure 1. Network of the Verb Roots' Meaning.

One can see the concrete meanings of the verb root as the *central, primary* or *base domain*, while the abstract extensions spread out towards the *periphery*. It is therefore not surprising that the concrete meaning of physical contact is usually more easily activated. However, another picture also emerges when one takes the degree of entrenchment into consideration. Langacker explains the entrenchment of a unit as arising through the greater use of the unit, with "greater entrenchment implying greater centrality and linguistic significance" (Langacker 1987: 59-60). This also applies to the verb roots. As can be seen in Figure 1 above, contact with a hard object, including different forms of

physical contact, plays a very important role in forming the source for the extensions into different domains. However, in terms of actual usage, the groups of verbs under section 3.2. are used more often than any other group. They can therefore be described as the most entrenched. The effect is that this group is one of the first to be activated through the verb root. It is also remarkable that the authors of the two dictionaries simply followed this line in their entries. Thus, in Table 1 above they both start with the different forms of speaking. This simply means that the presentation of a lexical network does not necessarily follow the line of its systematic extension, but might also be influenced by the lexical units degree of entrenchment. Finally, the tendency for the low tone verb root to be used less and also within the more abstract domains not only agrees with its low level of entrenchment, but also places it more within the periphery. More verb roots need to be examined to further confirm the details of this conclusion.

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