A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE VERBAL PIECE
IN EBIRA
(A Language of Kwara State, Nigeria)

by

JOHN RAJI ADIVE

A thesis submitted for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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Department of Phonetics and Linguistics,
School of Oriental and African Studies,
Malet Street, London WC1E 7HP
This study aims at presenting an adequate description of the verbal piece which forms the core of the grammar of Ebira language. Ebira is one of the lesser known languages of Nigeria in which little scholarly work has yet been done. Ebira is my mother tongue.

Chapter One gives the general introduction and describes the location (with sketch maps), the linguistic and cultural background of the language, and summarises the linguistic framework of the study.

Chapter Two gives a description of the phonology, including the vowel harmony system, essential to an understanding of the grammar of the language.

Chapter Three describes syntactic juncture features which include the vowel elision patterns and morphophonemic tone changes which affect the verbal piece.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six form the major part of the thesis and describe the verbal piece in its various structures, functions and its distribution in the phrase, the clause, and sentence including the serial verb constructions.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis with an analysed narrative text demonstrating, in typical connected speech, the various units described.

Appendix 1 is a chart of monosyllabic verbs in the language, Appendix 2 shows the list of monosyllabic verbs, and Appendix 3 presents some sample spectrograms showing words of contrastive vowel harmony sets.

There is a Bibliography at the end.
To

The Nigeria Bible Translation Trust
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Thanks to Miss Jo Kent who typed the work so well.
SYMBOLISATION

Except where indicated all examples are written phonemically in Ebira practical orthography. The phonetic manifestations of phoneme units are described in 2.2.1 and 2.5.1.

Symbols are used as in International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) with the following exceptions adapted for practical purposes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adapted Symbols</th>
<th>IPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>tʃ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>ɗʒ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tone symbols are discussed in 2.6.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter One</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>The Ebira People and the Ebira Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>The Language Name: EBIRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Neighbouring Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Language Family Affiliations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Literature Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>The Present Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>The Theoretical Basis of the Study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Two</th>
<th>Phonology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The Syllable Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>Syllable Type 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2</td>
<td>Syllable Type 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3</td>
<td>Syllable Type 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.4 Summary of One to Four Syllable Structures 38
2.1.5 Labialisation as a Feature in the Syllable 39
2.1.6 Palatalisation as a Feature in the Syllable 42
2.2 The Vowel Phonemes 45
2.2.1 Description 45
2.2.2 Geminate Vowel Sequences (Phonetically Long Vowels) 47
2.2.2.1 Initial Geminate Vowel Sequences, Vœ- 48
2.2.2.2 Medial Geminate Vowel Sequences, -Vœ- 50
2.2.2.3 Final Geminate Vowel Sequences, Vœ- 50
2.2.3 Consonant Deletion in VV Words 51
2.2.4 Loan Words in Ebira and VV 52
2.2.5 The Word 'Tao' 53
2.2.6 The Status of [u] and [v] as Variants of [i] and [j] in Word Initial and Word Medial Positions 54
2.2.7 Charts of the Vowel Phonemes 56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Vowel Harmony</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>The Nominal Class</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1.1</td>
<td>Set A: i, e, o, u, a in Nominal</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1.2</td>
<td>Set B: i, e, o, u, a in Nominal</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1.3</td>
<td>Nominal Words of More than Two</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1.4</td>
<td>Compound and Complex Nominal</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1.5</td>
<td>Other words in the Nominal Class</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2</td>
<td>The Verbal Class</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2.1</td>
<td>Harmony Span in the Verbal Phrase</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2.2</td>
<td>Harmony in the Verb Word</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2.3</td>
<td>Comment on /a/</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2.4</td>
<td>The Adverbs and Ideophones</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Syllabic Nasals</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1</td>
<td>Bilabial Syllabic Nasal</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2</td>
<td>Alveolar Syllabic Nasal</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3</td>
<td>Palatal Syllabic Nasal</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4</td>
<td>Velar Syllabic Nasal</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5</td>
<td>Summary of Syllabic Nasals</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>The Consonant Phonemes</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2</td>
<td>Consonant Allophones and Conditioning</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3</td>
<td>Chart of the Consonant Phonemes</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.1</td>
<td>Tone Symbolisation</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.2</td>
<td>Tone Distribution</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.3</td>
<td>Lexical Tone on Monosyllabic Verbs</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.4</td>
<td>Lexical Tone Patterns on Disyllabic Verbs</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.5</td>
<td>Lexical Tone on Disyllabic Nouns</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.6</td>
<td>Lexical Tone Patterns on Disyllabic Nouns</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chapter Three

**Syntactic Junctures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1</th>
<th>Vowel Elision</th>
<th>93</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1</td>
<td>Close Vowels as $V_1$ and as $V_2$</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1.1</td>
<td>I as $V_1$ and as $V_2$</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1.2</td>
<td>I as $V_1$; U as $V_2$</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1.3</td>
<td>U as $V_1$; I as $V_2$</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1.4</td>
<td>U as $V_1$, and as $V_2$</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2</td>
<td>Close Vowels as $V_1$, non-close Vowels as $V_2$</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2.1</td>
<td>I as $V_1$; and the Non-Close Vowels E, O, A, as $V_2$</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2.2</td>
<td>U as $V_1$; and the Non-Close Vowels E, O, A, as $V_2$</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3</td>
<td>Non-Close Vowels E, O, A as $V_1$</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3.1</td>
<td>E as $V_1$</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3.2</td>
<td>O as $V_1$</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3.3</td>
<td>A as $V_1$</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4</td>
<td>A Summary Chart of Vowel Elision Patterns</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.5</td>
<td>Harmony of Subject (Preverb) Noun</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.2</th>
<th>Labial Syllable Prosody</th>
<th>111</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>U as $V_1$ in VP + NP Structure</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>U as $V_1$ in (N + N)NP Structure</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.3 Palatal Syllable Prosody

#### 3.3.1 hi or hi + Non-Close Vowels, E, O, A

#### 3.3.2 si or si + Non-Close Vowels E, O, A

#### 3.3.3 zi or zi + Non-Close Vowels, E, O, A

#### 3.3.4 hi, si, and zi in (N + N)NP structure

#### 3.3.5 hi, si, and zi + Close Vowels, I and U

### 3.4 Tone Changes

#### 3.4.1 High Tone /~/ as $T_1$

#### 3.4.2 Mid Tone /~/ as $T_1$

#### 3.4.3 Low Tone /~/ as $T_1$

#### 3.4.4 A Summary Chart of the Three Level Tones at Junctions

#### 3.4.5 Automatic Downstep

#### 3.4.6 High-Falling Tone /~/ at Junctions

#### 3.4.7 Low-Rising Tone /\~/ at Junctions

### 3.5 High Tone as a Syntactic Juncture

#### 3.5.1 The Genitive High Tone

#### 3.5.2 The Locative High Tone
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Four</th>
<th>The Verbal Piece: Phrase Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The Verbal Piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The Grammatical Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Sentence Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Clause Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>Phrase Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The Verbal Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>The Structure of the Verbal Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>Summary of Grammatical Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signalled in the Verbal Phrase in Independent Clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>CHART 1: TENSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>Tense: Present Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>Tense: Past Simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3</td>
<td>Tense: Past Perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.4</td>
<td>Tense: Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.4.1</td>
<td>Future General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.4.2</td>
<td>Future Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.5</td>
<td>Tense: Habitual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5  CHART 2: MOOD  - - - - - - - - - - - -  162
  4.5.1 The Interrogative Mood - - - - - - - - 165
  4.5.1.1 The Interrogative Present Continuous 165
  4.5.1.2 The Interrogative Past Simple - - 167
  4.5.1.3 The Interrogative Past Perfective - 168
  4.5.1.4 The Interrogative Future - - - - - - 169
  4.5.1.5 The Interrogative Habitual - - - - - 170
  4.5.2 The Imperative Mood - - - - - - - - - - 171
  4.5.3 The Subjunctive Mood - - - - - - - - - - 172

4.6  CHART 3: NEGATIVE POLARITY - - - - - -  173
  4.6.1 Negative Indicative Tense - - - - - - - 173
  4.6.1.1 Negative Indicative: Past Simple - - 176
  4.6.1.2 Negative Indicative: Past Perfective 177
  4.6.1.3 Negative Indicative: Future - - - - - 178
  4.6.1.4 Negative Indicative: Habitual - - - - 179
  4.6.2 Negative Tense in the Interrogative
       Mood - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 181
  4.6.3 Negative Tense in the Imperative
       Mood - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 182
  4.6.4 Negative Tense in the Subjunctive
       Mood - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 182

4.7  CHART 4: DEPENDENT CLAUSES - - - - - - - 184
  4.7.1 Dependent Clauses, 'if', and 'when' 187
  4.7.1.1 Dependent Clause, 'if' - - - - - - - 187
  4.7.1.2 Dependent Clause, 'when' - - - - - - 189
4.8  Pluralisation  --  --  --  --  --  --  --  --  192
4.8.1 Pluralisation in the NP  --  --  --  --  192
4.8.1.1 Pluralisation by Multiple NP  --  --  --  193
4.8.1.2 Pluralisation by Numerals  --  --  --  194
4.8.1.3 Pluralisation by Plural Particle
Marker, nini  --  --  --  --  --  --  --  --  195
4.8.2 The use of nini to Qualify Elements
in the VP  --  --  --  --  --  --  --  --  197
4.8.2.1 Indicative Positive Past Singular  --  197
4.8.2.2 The Interrogative Mood:
Past Perfective  --  --  --  --  --  --  --  --  198
4.8.2.3 The Imperative Mood  --  --  --  --  --  --  198
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Five</th>
<th>The Verbal Piece: Clause Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>The Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Transitive Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Ditransitive Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Semi-transitive Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Intransitive Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Stative Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Equative Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Copula Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>The Pronoun System in the Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>Interrogation and Interrogative \ Words in the Clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10.1</td>
<td>Interrogation by Prosodic Element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10.2</td>
<td>Interrogative Words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Six</th>
<th>The Verbal Piece: Serial Verb Constructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>The Serial Verb Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Syntactic Characteristics of Serial Verb Constructions in Kwa Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>The Verbal Status of Serial Verbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6.4 Types of Serial Verb Constructions in Ebira

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1</td>
<td>Concomitant Serial Verb Constructions</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1.1</td>
<td>The Verb <em>si</em> 'to take'</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1.2</td>
<td>The Verb <em>yi</em> 'to give'</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1.3</td>
<td>Motion Verbs <em>ná</em> 'to go' and <em>vë</em> 'to come' in Serial Verb Constructions</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1.4</td>
<td>Locative Verbs, <em>tú</em> and <em>gë</em> in Serial Verb Construction</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.2</td>
<td>Co-ordinate Serial Verb Constructions</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.3</td>
<td>Comparative Serial Verb Constructions</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.4</td>
<td>Complex Serial Verb Construction</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Auxiliary Verbs</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter Seven** Analysed Text 261
Appendices

1. A Chart of Monosyllabic Verbs - - - - - - 274
2. A List of Monosyllabic Verbs - - - - - - 277
3. Sample Spectrograms - - - - - - - - - - 284

Bibliography - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 290
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Ebira People and the Ebira Language

The Ebira language is spoken by approximately 1,000,000 people.* The entire Ebira territory lies south west of the confluence of the Niger and the Benue, the two main rivers of Nigeria (see map on page 21), and comprises what used to be called the Igbirra Division of Kabba Province. The main dialect of Ebira is spoken in the same land area but it is now referred to as the six local government areas (LGAs)** of Adavi, Okehi, Ageva, Ihima, Okene, and Ajaokuta out of the fourteen LGAs of Kwara State. The six LGAs are shaded in the map on page 22. Other dialects of Ebira are spoken locally in the

* The 1963 census lists a population of 500,000 for the then Igbirra Division of Kabba Province. There has not been any accurate national census since then. But the population has since been doubled. The estimate normally quoted in current publications for Ebira people is between 800,500 and 1,000,000.

** The number of local government areas (LGAs) within Ebira territory at the time of research for this thesis was six. But after a military coup took over the government in January 1984, it was announced that the number of local government areas in the country was to be reduced. The Ebira LGAs were reduced to two - Okene and Okehi, the two created by an earlier military government before the civilian rule of 1979-1983.
following towns, whose names are written in the map on page 22.

a) Koton-Karfe, a town in Kogi LGA of Kwara State

b) Toto and Umaisha, two towns in Lafia LGA of Plateau State

c) Igara, a town in Auchi LGA of Bendel State.

It is interesting to note that these towns are, in fact, linguistic islands where Ebira is spoken, surrounded by other languages in their immediate neighbourhoods.

This study is of the main dialect which is my mother tongue. I come from the town of Ovehira in Ageva LGA. The major towns of Ebira are shown in the map on page 23.

The degree of mutual intelligibility among the various dialects of Ebira has not been established, but I have difficulty in understanding speakers of other dialects.

In recent years a number of political changes have taken place and are still taking place in the country as a whole. In 1967 the country, which formerly consisted of four regions and a number of provinces was reconstituted into a twelve-state structure by the then Federal
Military Government headed by General Yakubu Gowon. In 1976 the total number of states of the Federation was brought up to nineteen, and in the same year another important political reform created Local Government Areas within each of those nineteen states. Thus the old Divisions within Provinces came to be replaced by local government areas and it was in the same way that the old Igbirra Division in Kabba Province, which was the home of the Ebira people, came to be divided into its six LGAs between 1976 and 1981. It is not yet clear what further structural changes may occur in the country with the new military government headed by General Muhammadu Buhari.
A map of Nigeria showing Ebira land and Nigeria's major languages.

Source: Studies in Nigerian Languages No. 5
S.I.L., Ghana, 1976
A Map of KWARA State showing the six LGAs (shaded) of Ebira Land, the Neighbouring States (underlined), and other local dialect towns of Ebira language.

A Map of Ebira Land showing the six LGA's, the Main Towns and the Major Neighbouring Languages.


Ovehira: My home town.
1.2 The Language Name: EBIRA

The name 'Igbirra' was used in the past to refer to the language and the people. This name was used in literature for a long time. This spelling for the language and the people came about largely due to historical developments and contact with Yoruba, a major dominant language neighbour to Ebira. However, the people themselves call their language EBIRA [ëbîrâ], and refer to themselves as ANEBIRA [anëbîrâ], 'people of Ebira'. In 1974, a strong ethnic organisation known as Ebira People's Association (EPA) formally changed the language name from Igbirra to Ebira and published this change in the Nigerian daily newspapers. Writers in the language and about the language have gradually changed to the correct name, Ebira, for the language. Therefore, I am using the name Ebira for the language in this study for the simple reason that any proper synchronic linguistic study has to give an objective account of what the speakers of the language say about their language.

1.3 Neighbouring Languages

The main neighbouring languages of Ebira are Yoruba to the west, Igala to the east, Edo to the south, and Nupe to the north (see map on page 23). Among these, Yoruba seems to have had more influence than others on
Ebira in various ways. For example, western education and missionary activities spread from Yoruba land to Ebira land. The first schools in Ebira land were established by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Roman Catholic Mission. Most teachers in these schools in the early days were Yorubas and Yoruba was the medium of instruction in the schools for the first three years. This is one reason why a number of educated Ebira people are bilingual. It was only in the third or fourth year of primary instruction that English was introduced as a medium of instruction. I myself went through this system in my early days of formal education.

Another example of Yoruba influence on Ebira is in the area of agriculture. Ebira land has a very small area compared to the population of the tribe. The land itself is very hilly and mountainous. In fact, it is among the hills of the area that large quantities of iron were discovered in the late sixties, leading to the establishment of the Ajaokuta Steel Industry by the Federal Government in the seventies. But the Ebira people as a whole are farmers by occupation. Since their native land is too small to meet their requirements, especially as the whole area is so rocky, a large number of the population are forced to look for arable land elsewhere. Most of them spread to Yoruba land to acquire land for farming. Through this contact they naturally
acquire the Yoruba language. Therefore there are some bilingual Ebiras among the uneducated folk as well.

One interesting cultural factor among the Ebiras is that they keep constant touch with their homeland wherever they may be. The farmer maintains two homes, so to speak. One is his home in Ebira native land where he keeps his family. His other home is a temporary one (usually huts) in an alien land where he does his farming. The educated folk who may have employment outside the home land come to their homes and families as frequently as possible. Much of their property is usually kept in their Ebira homes, not where they are employed. The people have much attachment to their homeland. And this is a major factor in keeping the language alive and dynamic for its speakers.

1.4 Language Family Affiliation

Ebira belongs to the KWA group of the Niger-Congo family according to the classification of African languages by Greenberg (1963, 1970). He lists Nupe, Gbari, Igbirra, and Gade as subgoup (d) under Kwa. (Note that these are not necessarily the immediate geographical neighbours of Ebira. See map on page 23 and the preceding section, 1.3). In a later regrouping of Nigerian languages, Hoffmann (1976) and Bendor-Samuel et al.
(1976) separate Ebira from Nupe, Gbari, and Gade and set up Ebira as a sub-sub group on its own. This group would comprise the main dialect of Ebira spoken in the six LGAs mentioned in 1.1 and only one of the local dialects, the Igara, out of the three mentioned in 1.1. But both Hoffmann and Bendor-Samuel still classify Ebira as belonging to the Kwa sub group of the Niger-Congo family.

Many languages of the West African coast belong to the Kwa group which in fact spreads well beyond the borders of Nigeria. Some of the important members of this family, like the Akan languages of Ghana; Ewe, spoken in parts of Ghana, Togo, and Benin; Yoruba in South-West Nigeria; and Igbo in the Eastern part of Nigeria, have received much attention in linguistic studies.

1.5 Literature Survey

It is only in recent years that a little attention has been given to lesser known Nigerian languages like Ebira. The earlier records and mention of these 'minority' languages were made by missionaries and British administrative officers. Some of those who mentioned Ebira in their records and works include the following:

Clarke (1848) was a Baptist missionary who published a collection of vocabularies of African languages. He
includes two varieties of Igbirra vocabulary in his collection. This is the earliest record of Igbirra dialects.

Koelle (1854) mentions three varieties of Igbirra, Opana, Igu, and Ebira-Hima, in his book. He lists about 200 vocabulary items and about 40 phrases for each.

Cust (1883) records two dialects of Igbirra, Panda and Hima, in his work.

Johnson and Christaller (1886) published a collection of vocabularies of the Niger and the Gold Coast languages. It is said that Johnson translated the Psalms and the Catechism into Igbirra language.

Thomas (1914) mentions Igara as a dialect of Igbirra in his book. He includes a word-list of 31 items of Igbirra.

Westermann and Bryan (1952) include Igbirra as one of the three dialect clusters of the Nupe group in their book. They list four dialects for Igbirra which are: Igbirra-Panda, Igbirra-Ihima, Igbirra-Egu, and Igara.

Brown (1958) in his record repeats the four Igbirra dialects listed by Westermann and Bryan. He only adds a
note that all the dialects of Igbirra are mutually intelligible.

It can be observed from the above that references to Igbirra in the works listed are very general and extremely limited linguistic remarks.

The literature about Ebira language from the sixties onwards differs markedly from the earlier contributions. It was from the sixties that specific linguistic articles on the language began to surface, starting from Greenberg (1963), who surveyed languages of Africa and classified them from massive word lists. His classification of Ebira under Kwa is generally accepted as standard.

The first technical linguistic paper on the phonology of Ebira, by Ladefoged (1964), was 'Igbirra Notes and Word List'. Professor Ladefoged introduces the vowel harmonic system of the language in this paper. (See comment in 2.3 footnote.)

The next main linguistic investigation into the language is by Scholz (1976) of Summer Institute of Linguistics. Mr Scholz stayed in Ebira land from 1973 to 1976. He developed a practical Orthography for the language and published some literacy and religious pamphlets. He also supervised the translation of the
Ebira New Testament. His main linguistic publication is 'Igbirra Phonology' published in the microfiche series of SIL. There are a number of inaccuracies and semantic misrepresentations in the microfiche publication. My critique of the phonology is forthcoming.

All the above works are listed in the Bibliography at the end. The contributions of these people to the development of Ebira language is much appreciated. I draw much from their works, especially the later ones.

1.6 The Present Study

As can be observed, so far an accurate linguistic description and analysis of the Ebira language does not exist. There has been a growing desire and interest among Ebira people to develop their language to preserve their culture and identity. The Federal Government of Nigeria formulated language policies in 1977 which encouraged the development of indigenous languages for education and social purposes. Linguists and scholars in language-related disciplines are searching for sound descriptions of less known languages on which further researches and works could be based. These are some of the challenges and demands on the so called minority languages.
My aim is to present an adequate description of the verbal piece in Ebira. The verbal piece is selected for this study because it is the most phonologically, morphologically, and grammatically complex unit in Ebira, and therefore offers the widest scope for the descriptive analysis of the language. The term, verbal piece, is used to refer to the verb word, the verbal phrase, the verbal clause, and the verbal group of various types. These pieces are units for which the grammatical categories of mood, tense, polarity, person and number can be stated. Other pieces, like nominal forms for which these categories do not apply, are only described to the extent that may be necessary for explanation of a particular verbal piece. The greatest part of this thesis, chapters 4 to 6, describes various units of the verbal piece.

Ebira is a 'verb centred' language. An accurate description of the verbal system covers the core of the grammar of the language. As Professor Palmer remarks,

The most difficult part of any language is usually the part that deals with the verb. Learning a language is to a very large degree learning how to operate the verbal forms of that language, and, except in the cases of those that are related historically, the patterns and structure of the verb in each language seem to differ very considerably from those in every other language.

My description of the Ebira verbal piece is based on my personal knowledge of the language, tape recordings of plays, folk narratives, and conversations of other native speakers of Ebira. The form of Ebira described is the spoken form. In fact, there are very few written texts in the language as yet.

1.7 The Theoretical Basis of the Study

I have not based my description on a particular rigid theoretical framework. In a general survey and description of a language for the first time, it would be dangerous to impose a particular theory on it.

However, I find the prosodic framework developed by Professor J. R. Firth (1948) and others most convenient to describe the phonology of Ebira, Ebira being a language having a vowel harmony system where phonetic details of the speech stream operate beyond individual elements of a word or a phrase. Further still, some important syntagmatic relations and functions which are operative in Ebira speech are economically and simply described in terms of prosodies and prosodic elements of structure. See 2.3.2.1 and 5.10.

I also find the syntagmatic approach, used by Dr Bendor-Samuil (1961) in describing the Jebero verbal piece, useful in establishing the grammatical hierarchy
for levels of units in the Ebira verbal piece. See 4.1.

In describing in detail elements of the grammatical categories of the hierarchy I find Professor Carnochan's (1970) structure in 'Categories of the Verbal Piece in Bachama' extremely useful.

I believe that one needs to be eclectic in approach to a new language in general description. Otherwise we run the risk of subjecting the language to certain set theories which may not explain some basic phenomena that make the language what it is. I like to stress that the aim is neither to vindicate nor to invalidate the above theoretical models. I only employ them as fully as possible to explain a vital grammatical aspect of Ebira phenomena, the Verbal Piece.
CHAPTER TWO

PHONOLOGY

2.1 The Syllable Structure

The smallest units of structure in the phonology of Ebira are Consonants (C), Vowels (V) and Tones (T). The structure of the Syllable (S) can be described in terms of these three elements.

Every syllable has a vowel or a syllabic nasal as its nucleus. In CV syllables the C is a marginal element.

Tone is a distinctive identificational feature of the syllable. Every syllable bears tone which is evinced by the pitch of the voiced parts, regularly carried by the vowel or the syllabic nasal.

Thus the nucleus of the syllable always carries one of the three level tones or one of the two kinetic tones of the language.

Tones on the syllables are marked as follows:

High tone /~/
Mid tone unmarked
Low tone /~/
High-Falling tone /~/
Low-Rising tone /~/

Tone is described in detail in 2.6.
Ebira has three syllable types. The three syllable types consist of V plus tone, N plus tone, and CV plus tone. These are described as follows:

2.1.1 Syllable Type 1

Syllable Type 1 has this general formula:

\[ S_1 \rightarrow T(V) \]

Tone is looked on here as being a prosodic element of the syllable as a whole, and the structure is therefore rewritten as \( T(V) \). Syllable Type 1 consists of a Vowel as nucleus plus tone. In the following examples, the V syllables are underlined:

\[ \hat{\theta} / \hat{\theta}^* \quad ^\hat{V} \]

a vowel syllable preverb denoting person and number, as in the first two examples below, meaning 'he, she or it'.

\[ \hat{\theta} \text{ ré} \quad ^\hat{V} \text{ CV} \]

'he saw'

\[ \hat{\theta} \text{ me} \quad ^\hat{V} \text{ CV} \]

'he did'

\[ \hat{\thetaz\check{e}} \quad \text{VCV} \]

'a road'

\[ \hat{\thetay\check{i}} \quad \text{VCV} \]

'sun'

\[ \text{eeh\check{f}} \quad \text{VVCV} \]

'home'

* Ebira is a diatonic language where a noun and a pronoun preverb both refer to the same subject.
As illustrated above, the V syllables may occur initially or medially or finally in the phonological word. In grammatically complex words, up to 3 V syllables may occur in succession word initially, and up to 2 may occur in succession word medially or finally. For example:

**Amavẹ, o hị ịkịkẹ**  
'if he is coming, he should buy a bicycle'

**Apáapá**  
'maize, corn'

**Usụụ**  
'anklet (very special ornament)'

More examples of geminate vowel sequences are described in 2.2.2.
2.1.2 Syllable Type 2

General formula:

\[ S_2 \rightarrow T (N) \]

Syllable Type 2 is similar to Syllable Type 1 in that it has a single segmental element, but it is a syllabic nasal, and not a vowel, that carries the tone and is the nucleus. All Type 2 syllables are followed in the same word by a CV syllable. They do not occur word finally and therefore none of the syllabic nasals ever carry either of the two kinetic tones of the language since kinetic tones only occur on word-final syllables. The articulation of the syllabic nasal is homorganic with the consonant that immediately follows it.

\[
\begin{array}{lll}
\text{ hàdá} & \text{ NCv} & \text{ 'father'} \\
\text{ \text{štjä} } & \text{ NCv} & \text{ 'mother'} \\
\text{ \text{štjľ} } & \text{ VNCv} & \text{ 'a bag'} \\
\text{ íhľnň } & \text{ VCvNCv} & \text{ 'nine'} \\
\text{ ëjľjľ } & \text{ VCvNCv} & \text{ 'a digger'} \\
\text{ caľľľľ } & \text{ CVNCVCVV} & \text{ 'very wide and flat'}
\end{array}
\]

(alveolar) (palatal) (bilabial) (alveolar) (velar)
2.1.3 Syllable Type 3

General formula:

\[ S_3 \rightarrow T(CV) \]

Syllable Type 3 consists of margin C plus nucleus V plus Tone. For example:

- hị CV 'to call'
- st CV 'to look for'
- ne CV 'to throw'
- hērē CVCV 'to vomit'
- kūrū CVCV 'to tie a knot'
- sāsā CVCVCV 'to follow'
- pōrō CVCVCV 'always, for a long time'

Monosyllabic verbs and the first syllable of polysyllabic verbs are all of structure CV.

Ebira is an open syllable language having no syllables with final -C. Syllables Types 1, 2 and 3 are combined in organised structures to form words and other grammatical constructions. Most words in the language consist of one to four syllables, only a few consist of more than four.

2.1.4 Summary of one to four Syllable Structures

The syllable structures listed overleaf give a summary of the structure of words of one to four syllables in the language.
2.1.5 Labialisation as a Feature in the Syllable

Labialisation as a phonemic feature of the consonant within the syllable occurs with the fricative consonants and two velar consonants in just the words cited as examples in this section. Labialisation as a phonemic feature signals meaning contrasts with pure consonant phonemes in content words such as nouns and verbs. Contrasting pairs are given in cases where they are found to illustrate the contrast between syllables with a labial feature and syllables without one. Labialisation is symbolised with w following a consonant.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/v/</td>
<td>vvɛ</td>
<td>C^W^V</td>
<td>'to cook flour meal'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vɔ</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>'to cut animal meat into big pieces'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>swɛ</td>
<td>C^W^V</td>
<td>'to take iron blade from hoe handle'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sɛ</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>'to chop off grass'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ɔswɛ</td>
<td>VC^W^V</td>
<td>'water spring near a hill'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ósɛ</td>
<td>VC^V</td>
<td>'wife'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>swe</td>
<td>C^W^V</td>
<td>'to start weaving a basket or mat; to initiate an idea/proposal'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>swɛ</td>
<td>C^W^V</td>
<td>'to cough'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ɔswɛ</td>
<td>VC^W^V</td>
<td>'ankle ornament'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ósɛ</td>
<td>VC^V</td>
<td>'alligator pepper'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>swá</td>
<td>C^W^V</td>
<td>'to be smooth, to be slippery'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>zwɛ</td>
<td>C^W^V</td>
<td>'to run'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>zɛ</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>'to be enough'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>zwɔɛ</td>
<td>C^W^V</td>
<td>'to be scarce'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/</td>
<td>ɛhwe</td>
<td>VC^W^V</td>
<td>'pieces of dried yam'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>èhe</td>
<td>VCV</td>
<td>'world, life'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ɯhwe</td>
<td>VC^W^V</td>
<td>'spirit, breath, life'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ɯhwɔ</td>
<td>VC^W^V</td>
<td>'barn'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ɯhwɔ</td>
<td>VC^W^V</td>
<td>'knife'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ɯhwa</td>
<td>VC^W^V</td>
<td>'hen'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ɯhwɔ</td>
<td>VC^W^V</td>
<td>'tomorrow'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>contrast:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwọ́</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>'to grind'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kọ́</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>'to learn' (possibly a loan word from Yoruba or vice versa)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ọkwọ́</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>'soap'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ọkwọ́</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>'big, hollow stone place where raw palm oil is extracted from boiled palm fruit'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwọ̀rọ́</td>
<td>CV CV</td>
<td>'to be thin, to iron clothes'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwákwaak</td>
<td>CV CV VV</td>
<td>'exclamation for happiness or surprise'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwọ́kwee</td>
<td>CV CV VV</td>
<td>'exclamation for sympathy'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/ŋ/</th>
<th>contrast:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ñwe</td>
<td>CV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñe</td>
<td>CV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñwà</td>
<td>CV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ọ</td>
<td>CV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñwé</td>
<td>CV CV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñwà (hi)</td>
<td>CV CV (CV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñwe</td>
<td>CV CV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñwẹnụ</td>
<td>CV CV CV VV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that in all these examples the labialisation feature is always followed by a non-close vowel (a, e or ŋ) except the last word which is a very rare vocabulary item.
Labialisation is phonetically manifested by lip rounding with a little protruding of both lips.

An alternative analysis would be to set up six consonant phonemes, vw, sw, zw, hw, kw and jw, in addition to v, s, z, h, k and ŋ. For descriptive economy, however, labialisation is treated as a feature of the syllable.

Yet another suggestion would be to analyse the labialisation as a vowel. This analysis is rejected because:

a) the phonetic pronunciation is different from any other vowel element in the language.

For kǭ and vǭ there is lip rounding, which can be related to the rounded back vowel, while in kwǭ and vwǭ there is additional closer lip rounding which cannot easily be related to the -ǭ, nor can the rounding for the consonant articulation in the other examples be related at all to the following vowels, which are e, e, and a, all unrounded non-close vowels.

b) The labialised syllables have only one tone each, and therefore cannot be considered to involve any vowel sequences.

2.1.6 Palatalisation as a Feature in the Syllable

Palatalisation as a feature within the syllable occurs only with the glottal fricative phoneme /h/ and is found in just a few nominal words of VCV or VCVCV syllable structure. That palatalised glottal fricative
may contrast with pure glottal fricative is exemplified below. Palatalisation is symbolised with \textit{y} following the glottal fricative and \textit{y} following the \textit{C} in the syllable structure.

\begin{verbatim}
/h/ -- iyɛ  VCYV  'teeth ridge, alveolar'
contrast: |   
   -- ɛhɛ  VCV  'world, life'

-- ihyɛrɛ  VCYC\textit{y}V  'faeces'
contrast: |   
   -- ɔhɛrɛ  VCVCV  'male name'

-- ihyɛmɛ  VCYVC\textit{y}  'louse, lice'
contrast: |   
   -- ɔhɛmɛ  VCVCV  'an imitator'

ihyɛnɛ  VCYV  'then, a few days ago'
iɾihyɛ  VC\textit{y}VC\textit{y}  'hernia of the testicles'

ihyɛnhyɛ  VCVC\textit{y}VC\textit{y}VC\textit{y}  'hedgehog'
ihyɛnhyɛmɛ  VCVC\textit{y}VC\textit{y}VC\textit{y}VC\textit{y}  'sweet potato'
\end{verbatim}

The seven words listed above are the only words found within the corpus of this study which manifest this very rare syllable feature.

The arguments for not setting up additional phonemes for labialisation advanced in the preceding section hold for palatalisation. Therefore hy is not set up as a separate phoneme.
Labialisation and palatalisation occur across morpheme or word boundaries under specific phonological conditions. These are discussed in 3.2 and 3.3, with regard to these features being prosodic elements of the syllable.
2.2 The Vowel Phonemes

Ebira has nine vowel phonemes. They are described below.

2.2.1 Description

It is possible to cite many words for lexical evidence for each phoneme established. Such lists would make this section unnecessarily long. The intention is just to provide sufficient data necessary for background understanding of further grammatical analysis of the verbal piece in the chapters that follow.

/i/ [i] Close front vowel with lips spread. It has almost Cardinal 1 quality.

- hî 'to weave'
- iyâ 'pounded yam'

/î/ [i] A front vowel between close and half-close and with lips spread; it is slightly retracted.

- hî 'to call'
- ìtâ 'cloth'

/e/ [ε] Half-close front vowel with lips spread and rather more open than Cardinal 2.

- ré 'to see'
- ezî 'children'
/ɛ/ [ɛ]  Half-open front vowel with lips neutral to spread, and rather more open than Cardinal 3.

bɛ 'to carve'
ɛvũ 'goat'

/a/ [a]  Open central vowel with lips spread

pā 'to train'
ʔaŋ 'salt'

/ɔ/ [o]  Half-open to open back vowel with lips open rounded

tõ 'to chew'
ɔcũ 'stick'

/ø/ [ø]  Half-close back vowel with close rounded lips, and rather more open than Cardinal 7.

po 'to mix with liquid'
ʔohi 'broom'

/ʊ/ [ʊ]  A back rounded vowel between close and half-close with lips close rounded. It is slightly advanced.

hũ 'to boil'
ʔʊpã 'skin, hide'

/u/ [u]  Close back vowel with lips close rounded. It has almost Cardinal 8 quality.

hũ 'to drink'
ʔunẽ 'gazelle'

All these nine vowel phonemes occur word initially, word medially, and word finally in the language. Each one of the vowels can also occur in sequences of two vowels in a word or a sentence.
2.2.2 Geminate Vowel Sequences (Phonetically Long Vowels)

Phonetically long vowels occur in Ebira but they are treated as sequences of the same vowel, VV and VVV, phonologically and morphologically. I interpret double length vowels as sequences of two vowels for the reasons given in this section.

Two identical vowels can occur intially, medially or finally in a word in the language. They are not manifestation of a length feature as each of the identical vowels may bear a different tone; and since as mentioned in 2.1, tone is a distinctive feature of the syllable, a geminate vowel sequence spreads over two syllables. All possible two syllable tone combinations allowed by the language can occur on geminate vowels in all positions. For tone analysis, see 2.6.

There are no sequences of non-identical vowels within a word. The syllable of the second identical vowel in a word can be regarded as a schwa, a-, syllable as the two vowels do not constitute separate alternances. Professor Carnochan, discussing a similar occurrence in Igbo, states:

The vowel sound in the second syllable of each example is the same as in the final syllable; together they constitute one alternance .... In this syllable I recognize a syllabic: a. This V-a
phonological notation indicates the interdependence of the syllables and correlates with hearing the same vowel sound in both syllables.

Professor Carnochan's Igbo examples have a CVCV syllable structure. In the Ebira examples the vowels are contiguous. However, the two languages manifest a structural a-syllable prosody. See chapter 3 for full discussion of syntactic prosodies in Ebira.

2.2.2.1 Initial Geminate Vowel Sequences, V-ə

In the following examples double vowels are written for two vowel sequences in phonetic representation while a-syllable is written for the second vowel in the syllable structure representation. A contrasting pair with a single vowel in the same position is given below each word except where one cannot be found:

- ə̃علومات VəCV [__ —] 'hen'
- ə̃علومات VCV [—_] 'moon'
- ə̃علومات VəCV [__ __] 'play, drama'
- ə̃علومات VCV [—_] 'song'

'free of charge'
'a pillar of a house'
'one'
'mother'
'two'
'oracle'
'five'
'sweat'

All Ebira basic numbers when counting have initial double vowels. These are:

'one'
'three'
'five'
'ten'
'two'
'four'
'five'
'twenty'
2.2.2.2 Medial Geminate Vowel Sequences, -Və-

-  "apāapā  VCyCV  [__  — — — —]  'maize' 
-  "apāpa  VCyCV  [—  — — —]  'bean bread' 
-  "atāāhū  VCyCV  [__  — — — —]  'ankle' 
-  "atāhū  VCyCV'  [__  — — —]  'kernel of palm fruit' 
-  "etēēsū  VCyCV  [—  — — —]  'floor' 
-  "īkīīzā  VCyCV  [—  — — —]  'cow peas' 

Words having geminate vowel sequences medially are rare in the language.

2.2.2.3 Final Geminate Vowel Sequences, -Və-

-  "ɔnɔɔ  VCy  [—  — — —]  'that' (demonstrative) 
-  "ɔnɔ  VCy  [__ — — —]  'warning' 
-  "e nɛ̃  VCy  [__  — — —]  'those' (subj. demonstrative) 
-  "e nɛ̃  VCy  [__  — — —]  'who' (question word, relative pronoun) 
-  "ɔmumund  VCVCy  [__ — — — —]  'fontanel' 
-  "ɔsisilil  VCVCy  [__  — — — —]  'a hole in the lower part of the compound wall for water outlet'
Only two words of more than three syllables have been found in the language having a geminate vowel sequence word finally. These are the two words ending the list above and they seem to be onomatopoeic words.

2.2.3 Consonant Deletion in VV Words

Some words develop VV elements from the deletion of an intervocalic consonant from a word. These words still maintain the same number of syllables and the same tone pattern even when the medial consonant is deleted. The two versions of the same word may be in current use without any change or with very slight change in semantic connotation. Words of this pattern are extremely limited in the language.

It is the consideration of such different pronunciations for the same item, with and without the consonant, that further confirms the treatment elsewhere of long phonetic vowels as sequences of two V elements phonologically:

irehī (house) or eehī вели [— —] 'home'
āwūrū or āārū вели [__ __] 'gown'
āvābā or āābā вели [__ __] 'all'

A few constructions of reduplicated forms in which the medial consonant is /r/ and the first and second vowels are identical, manifest consonant deletion and the development of medial VV sequence in the first part of the reduplicated form:
kerekere CVCVCVCV [— — — —] 'most', the superlative attribute
keekere CVaCVCV [— — — —] butive
dêrêdêrê CVCVCVCV [___ ___ ___] 'to be thin'
dêtêdêrê CVaVCVCV [___ ___ ___]

Both forms of the words are in current use also.

2.2.4 Loan Words in Ebira

Loan words assimilated into Ebira conform to the syllabic structure of the language. Ebira has no stressed syllables like English. VV sequences with high tone followed by low tone occur where there is a stressed syllable in the English words that enter the language. Furthermore, an epenthetic vowel is added initially to any English nominal having an initial consonant because all nominals except bound pronoun objects in Ebira start with a vowel. Another epenthetic vowel is added finally to any English word having a closed syllable because Ebira is an open syllable language. This means that some one syllable English words may have three or four syllables when assimilated into Ebira, as shown in the examples below:

Eng. John ['jon] CVC
Eb. Ijoonu [ijoonu] VCVCVCV [— ___ ___]

Eng. Police [pə'lis] CVCVC
Eb. iporiisi [ɨpɔɾiisi] VCVCVCVCV [___ — ___]

```
Generally phonetically 'long vowels' are fairly rare in the language. The above data illustrate all the environments where geminate vowel sequences occur.

2.2.5 The Word "Tao"

There is only one word with a sequence of non-identical vowels found in Ebira. It is a word which expresses general greetings.

\[ \text{tāō} \quad \text{CVV} \quad [\_\_\_] \quad \text{'hello'} \]

The word has an alternative form:

\[ \text{tāŋwāō} \quad \text{CVV.CV} \quad [\_\_\_] \quad \text{'hello'} \]

The alternative form is normally used by the older people, but tāō is the commonest form and the one in frequent use. It is such a common and frequent greeting among the people to the extent that other neighbouring tribes refer to us as Ebira-Tao. There are no other examples in Ebira of this final "o" in greeting whereas
in the neighbouring Yoruba language many greetings end in final o.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yoruba</th>
<th>Ebira</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ë pẹle o</td>
<td>tao niní e</td>
<td>'hello to you' (pl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ë ku isé o</td>
<td>akọrọ niní e</td>
<td>'greeting at work'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ë kuabo o</td>
<td>pásẹ niní e</td>
<td>'welcome'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: Niní is a plural particle in Ebira.)

Ebira has a final "e" in greetings rather than "o" except in the one favourite word, 'tāo', which has become almost synonymous with the people themselves.

2.2.6 The Status of /u/ and /u/ as Variants of
-----------------------------
/i/ and /i/ in Word Initial and Word Medial
-----------------------------

/ŋ/ and /ŋ/ fluctuate with /i/ and /i/ initially in lexical items where the second vowel is /u/ or /ŋ/ respectively. The same speaker may use either form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ìtù</th>
<th>ìtù</th>
<th>'ceiling'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ìkù</td>
<td>ìkù</td>
<td>'scorpion'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ìsù</td>
<td>ìsù</td>
<td>'house rat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inù</td>
<td>unù</td>
<td>'bush rat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ihù</td>
<td>uhù</td>
<td>'seed'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ìkù</td>
<td>ìkù</td>
<td>'disease, sickness'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ìtùtù</td>
<td>ìtùtù</td>
<td>'rubbish heap'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ìhùhù</td>
<td>ìhùhù</td>
<td>'murmur'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Igugu and ūgugu 'stump of a tree'
Irūvū " urūvū 'toad'
irukū " urukū 'forest'
irũkū " ĕruku 'farming'

It is only in initial position that ū and ū fluctuate with i and i. They contrast in all other positions. The above words are the only ones found in the data surveyed.
2.2.7 Charts of the Vowel Phonemes

I have listened to the recording of the Cardinal Vowels by Professor D. Jones and have plotted Ebira vowels according to my perception of them in relation to the cardinal vowels.

a) Traditional Cardinal Vowel Equivalent Chart

b) Descriptive Vowel Chart
2.3 **Vowel Harmony**

The vowels of a language in which harmony operates are usually in two groups. Various terms have been applied by linguists working on West African languages where vowel harmony operates to refer to the two groups. Some used the terms Fortis and Lenis to refer to them. Recently Dr J. M. Stewart** applied the terms Advanced Tongue Root (+ATR) and unadvanced Tongue Root (-ATR) to refer to the two vowel harmonic sets in the Akan language. Akan is a language of Ghana. It belongs to the Kwa language family, the same family that Ebira belongs to.

In Ebira, however, I am using the simple terms **Harmonic Vowel Set A** and **Harmonic Vowel Set B** in my discussion of this topic.

The nine vowels of the language operate in two harmonic sets. These are:

**SET A**

i e a o u

-----------------------------
The harmonic sets can be arranged as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SET A</th>
<th>SET B</th>
<th>COMBINED SETS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i u</td>
<td>ì ù</td>
<td>i u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e o</td>
<td>ì ù</td>
<td>e o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vowel /a/ is common to both sets, as shown above and in the following examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a-i</td>
<td>ìyì</td>
<td>'chicken pox'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-ì</td>
<td>ayì</td>
<td>'flour'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-e</td>
<td>ìgè</td>
<td>'a jug'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-è</td>
<td>ahè</td>
<td>'song'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-ò</td>
<td>anò</td>
<td>'salt'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-o</td>
<td>akò</td>
<td>'a cup'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-ù</td>
<td>ìkò</td>
<td>'guinea corn'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-u</td>
<td>ìmù</td>
<td>'a cap'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ìyà</td>
<td>'pounded yam'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ìpà</td>
<td>'calabash, cup'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ìebàà</td>
<td>'yes, indeed'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ëhà</td>
<td>'kind of plant'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ìajà</td>
<td>'a special feather'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>òhà</td>
<td>'spear'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>akò</td>
<td>'a cup'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ìkà</td>
<td>'food of yam flour'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vowel harmony system of Ebira manifests itself in the two major lexical word classes of the language, the Nominal class and the Verbal class.
2.3.1 *The Nominal Class*

The nominal class is congruent with the grammatical noun, pronoun, adjective, demonstrative, numeral and temporal.

Words of the nominal class always have an initial V syllable as distinct from those of the verbal class which always have an initial C. The initial vowel appears to be a remnant of a noun class prefix, but in the present day language very little of the noun class system remains. There are just a few examples of nouns with contrastive singular and plural prefixes. These comprise:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ōzā 'a person'</td>
<td>āzā 'people'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ōnegē 'a woman'</td>
<td>anegē 'women'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ōnorō 'a man'</td>
<td>anorō 'men'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ōzoga 'a visitor'</td>
<td>āzoga 'visitors'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ōhinī 'a co-wife'</td>
<td>ēhinī 'co-wives'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ozī 'child'</td>
<td>ezī 'children'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ēsē 'wife'</td>
<td>ēsē 'wives'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that all of these nouns refer to persons. These few nouns with a relation of o/o as a prefix to the singular and a/e to the plural are reminiscent of the o/a
personal class of nouns in some Bantu languages.* This is not a typical system of pluralisation in present Ebira. See 4.8 for pluralisation in Ebira.

Nominal words can be formed from harmony vowels of either Set A or Set B. But vowels from the two sets are not normally found in the same word apart from /a/ which belongs to both sets.

2.3.1.1 Set A: i, e, o, u, a, in nominal words

- i-i  ìzì 'bambara nuts'
- i-e  ìze 'grass cutter (big bush rodent)'
- i-o  ìsò 'nail'
- i-u  ìsu 'house rat'
- i-a  ìya 'pounded yam'
- e-i  eyì 'eye'
- e-e  ècè 'wine'
- e-o  ètò 'arrangement'
- e-u  èkù 'masquerade'
- e-a  eebãà 'yes, indeed'

* For noun classes of Bantu languages, see:
o-i oyi 'thief'
o-e òzè 'road'
o-o òbò 'rope'
o-u òwù 'cotton'
o-a
u-i ùjì 'basket'
u-e uye 'meat'
u-o ùtò 'cowrie shell'
u-u ùrù 'mushroom'
u-a
a-i ayi 'chicken pox'
a-e āgè 'a jug'
a-o ako 'a calabash cup'
a-u ákù 'inner room'
a-a âbà 'yam heaps'
The table below gives the summary of Set A co-occurrence of vowels in words of VCV pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd Vowel</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are no lexical words like *oka and *uga in the language.

2.3.1.2 Set B: i, e, o, u, a in Nominal Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i-i</th>
<th>ihi</th>
<th>'justification'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i-e</td>
<td>inə</td>
<td>'stomach'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-o</td>
<td>iŋə</td>
<td>'weighing machine, scale'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-u</td>
<td>iŋkə</td>
<td>'sickness, disease'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-a</td>
<td>irə</td>
<td>'fire'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-i</td>
<td>eyi</td>
<td>'hair'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-e</td>
<td>ehe</td>
<td>'world, life'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-o</td>
<td>edo</td>
<td>'antelope'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-u</td>
<td>ewu</td>
<td>'snake'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-a</td>
<td>epə</td>
<td>'root'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table below summarises Set B co-occurrence of vowels in words of VCV pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Vowel</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All Set B vowels can co-occur in VCV word combina-
tions. This shows that Set B has a wider occurrence and distribution in the language, and if it was advantageous to apply the concept markedness to vowel harmony in Ebira then Set B could be considered as unmarked and Set A marked.

2.3.1.3 Nominal Words of more than Two Syllables

The vowel harmony system operates also in nouns of 3, 4, or more syllables. I will just give a few examples.

Set A: i, e, o, u, a

i - - - ihihinê 'ants'
e - - - chepo 'a kind of yam'
o - - - òkùkù 'an imaginary being'
u - - - ukere 'wooden door'
a - - - akùkù 'some kind of vegetable'

Set B: i, e, ọ, ụ, a

i - - - ìṣòvọ 'sacrifice'
e - - - èçìkù 'bone'
ọ - - - ìgèdè 'banana'
ụ - - - ükóró 'work'
a - - - ọrụsà 'walnut'
2.3.1.4 Compound and Complex Nominal Words

There are a few instances where vowels from Set A and vowels from Set B occur in the same nominal word. Words in this class are usually names of people or of places. As in other Kwa languages (especially Yoruba), most Ebira names for people or places are a combination of two or more words. Sometimes a name could be a whole sentence. In such cases it is possible to have sequences of Set A and Set B vowels in one name. A few examples of such names are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Underlying words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Ohíɛkó]</td>
<td>ìhì + írɛkù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leader + war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'captain of war'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Ezùρɛ]</td>
<td>ezì + ũrɛ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>children + algae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'the Algae clan'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Omɛcɛ]</td>
<td>ðmɛ + ðcɛ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maker + wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'wine brewer'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Oʃɛyɪzá]</td>
<td>ðsì + eyì + zá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one who takes + eye + hold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'one who remembers'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.1.5 Other Words in the Nominal Class

All the words cited so far are nouns. As the nominal word class includes Pronouns, Adjectives, Demonstratives, Numerals, and Temporals, a few examples of each are given to illustrate the vowel initial feature and vowel harmony common to all of them.

### Pronoun

| 1st person sing. | 'emi | 'I' |
| 2nd person sing. | 'ewu | 'you' |
| 3rd person sing. | 'oni | 'he, she, it' |
| 1st person plural | 'eyi | 'we' |
| 2nd person plural | 'ewu nini | 'you' |
| 3rd person plural | 'oni/nini | 'they' |

### Adjective

| ọgodọ | 'long' |
| ówẹyi | 'small, short' |
| ọbànjì | 'big' |
| ọrù | 'many' |

### Demonstrative

| ọnọ | 'that' |
| ọnọnjì | 'this' |
| ẹnjẹ | 'those' |
| ẹnjì | 'these' |

### Numeral

| ọdụ | 'one' |
| ẹdọva | 'two' |
| ẹdụwụ | 'ten' |
| ọdụhu | 'twenty' |

### Temporal

| ọjịnjì | 'today' |
| ẹjị | 'yesterday' |
| ụhwọdọ | 'tomorrow' |
| ịrayị | 'year' |
2.3.2 The Verbal Class

The verbal class is congruent with the grammatical Verb, Adverb, and Ideophone. All verbal words begin with a consonant.

2.3.2.1 Harmony Span in the Verb Phrase

In the examples of nouns it is not possible to say that the first syllable controls the second or vice versa, but when verbal phrases are examined it is clear that it is the vowel (or vowels) in the verb stem that governs the other vowels in the phrase, making for a vowel harmony unity over the verbal phrase. Thus, for example, the 3rd person singular pronoun has two pronunciations /o/ and /ø/ according to the vowel harmony set of the verb in the phrase.

ø sì 'he wants'  ð sì 'he takes'
ø ré 'he sees'  ð mè 'he does'
ø rød 'he thinks'  ð dø 'he gets'
ø hú 'he drinks'  ð hú 'he boils'
ø dà 'he cuts'

In the above verbal phrases the vowel of the verb word determines whether it is the pronoun preverb /o/ or /ø/ that precedes the word. In addition, the vowel of the verb also dominates the pronominal piece progressively within the VP. Examine the following:
Vowel Set A

\( \ddot{o} \text{ rè è} \)  'he saw it''

\( \ddot{o} \text{ tô ô} \)  'he arranged it''

\( \ddot{o} \text{ pêhé è} \)  'he winnowed it''

\( \ddot{o} \text{ gono ô} \)  'he praised him''

Vowel Set B

\( \ddot{o} \text{ gê ê} \)  'he sewed it''

\( \ddot{o} \text{ hô ô} \)  'he asked him''

\( \ddot{o} \text{ hâ å} \)  'he peeled it''

\( \ddot{o} \text{ hôkô ô} \)  'he rinsed it''

\( \ddot{o} \text{ c'àkà å} \)  'he broke it''

The harmony prosody operates from the verb word to contiguous syllables regressively and progressively. Harmony prosody is a syntagmatic feature that spreads over a unit of structure within the sentence. Professor Carnochan in dealing with a similar phenomenon in Igbo states:

The initial syllable, the pronoun, in all these eight examples is pronounced with a high vowel; the particular degree of closeness correlating with the vowel harmony of the example as a whole.

The only exceptions with regard to progressive harmony dominance concern the close vowels, i, i, u, u.

---

These close vowels operate slightly differently at morpheme or word junctions. When the final vowel of the verb is one of the four close vowels, the object pronominal piece is always the lowered close back vowel /ɔ/.

**Vowel Set A**
- ə hɪ ə 'he wove it (cloth)'
- ə hʊ ə 'he drank it'

**Vowel Set B**
- ə hɪ ə 'he called him'
- ə hʊ ə 'he boiled it'

(See 3./W for juncture prosodies with regard to close vowels.)

High tone is a marker of the object pronominal piece common to all the examples of harmony span in the VP given above.

The preverbs, represented by o/ơ in the above examples, may be up to three sequences of vowels carrying complex tones which denote various grammatical features. Even in such cases, the harmony span of the VP is never broken. (See chapter 4 for full description of the preverbs.)

2.3.2.2 Harmony in the Verb Word

The vowel sequences in verbal lexical words of CVCV pattern are limited to vowels within each set.
Set A: i, e, o, u, a in CVCV verb words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Word Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i-i</td>
<td>zĩzĩ</td>
<td>'to shake'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-e</td>
<td>cfrē</td>
<td>'to wear clothes'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-o</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-u</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-a</td>
<td>zĩnā</td>
<td>'to roll'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-i</td>
<td>těŋĩ</td>
<td>'to repair'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-e</td>
<td>pěhē</td>
<td>'to winnow'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-o</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-u</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-a</td>
<td>cěmā</td>
<td>'to lift up'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-i</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-e</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-o</td>
<td>vōvō</td>
<td>'to put a child on the back'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-u</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-a</td>
<td>zōzā</td>
<td>'to be beautiful'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-i</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-e</td>
<td>rũrũ</td>
<td>'to be tough'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-o</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-u</td>
<td>kũrũ</td>
<td>'to tie a knot'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-a</td>
<td>tũrā</td>
<td>'to pull'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-i</td>
<td>dāhĩ</td>
<td>'to be well'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-e</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-o</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-u</td>
<td>vāgũ</td>
<td>'to forgive'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-a</td>
<td>hārā</td>
<td>'to gather'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Set B: i, e, o, u, a in CVCV verb words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i-i</td>
<td>pîrî</td>
<td>'to squeeze with force'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-e</td>
<td>cînê</td>
<td>'to prepare/boil meat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-o</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-u</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-a</td>
<td>pînâ</td>
<td>'to wash'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-i</td>
<td>gerî</td>
<td>'to meet'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-e</td>
<td>çerê</td>
<td>'to write'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-o</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-u</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-a</td>
<td>nêba</td>
<td>'to be high'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-i</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-e</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-o</td>
<td>hôkô</td>
<td>'to rinse'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-u</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-a</td>
<td>hôhâ</td>
<td>'to be greedy'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-i</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-e</td>
<td>müne</td>
<td>'to swallow'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-o</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-u</td>
<td>sûtû</td>
<td>'to lie dead'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-a</td>
<td>turâ</td>
<td>'to build'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-i</td>
<td>bâpî</td>
<td>'to sieve flour'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-e</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-o</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-u</td>
<td>dâgû</td>
<td>'to smell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-a</td>
<td>wara</td>
<td>'to fry'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tables below give the summary of Sets A and B CVCV pattern co-occurrence restrictions.

### Set A

#### 2nd Vowel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Vowel</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Set B

#### 2nd Vowel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Vowel</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For two syllable verbs, the second vowel is usually identical with the first vowel. The close vowels can also take the half-close vowels in the second syllable. Only /a/ can co-occur in any combination with any other vowel of either set.
2.3.2.3 Comment on /a/

/a/ has occurrence restrictions with vowel Set A. Words have not been found in the language with the sequence o-a and u-a in VCV pattern.

The fact that /a/ has no co-occurrence restrictions with vowel Set B seems to suggest that /a/ belonged to vowel Set B originally and in the course of time has extended its function to vowel Set A. Another possible postulation is that vowel Set A had a counterpart of /a/ originally (in proto Ebira, probably [ə] or [ʌ]) but the phonetic distinction between this vowel and [a] was lost and /a/ now additionally carries the functional load of the missing vowel. Speculative phonology is not part of the focus of this thesis. This comment is just a possible pointer as to why there are some co-occurrence restrictions with vowel Set A and there are none with vowel Set B.

The discussion of Ebira vowel harmony systems is by no means exhaustive here. These examples are just to highlight the important role of this phenomenon in the phonology and the grammar of the language. Detailed description of the preverbs in their harmonic sets within the verbal piece is given in chapter four. Furthermore, harmony principles are illustrated in Ebira sentence examples given in all the sections of this thesis. Instrumental recording of some harmonic pairs is given in Appendix 3 at the end of the thesis.
2.3.2.4 The Adverbs and Ideophones

The lexical verbal class includes the adverbs and ideophones. Although the term adverb is applied to some lexical items in Ebira, these adverbs differ in function and syntactic order from the adverbs in English. Examine the following English sentences and their Ebira equivalents.

**English** | **Ebira**
---|---
a) He speaks **loudly** | ò kàrèyi tụ țba
   he speak put up
b) He speaks **strongly** | ò sị ọmwe ọkàtèngụ kàrèyi
   he take voice strong speak
c) He speaks **quickly** | ò sị eyịhà kàrèyi
   he take haste speak
d) He speaks **gently** | ò tàgwà kàrèyi
   he gently speak.

In the English sentences above all the underlined words are adverbs and all these adverbs occur sentence final, although some of the adverbs could occur preceding the verb in some styles of English. In Ebira there is no adverb at all in sentences a) - c). The function of the adverb is carried by serial verbs and nominal phrases in these sentences. It is only in sentence d) of Ebira that
there is an adverb tānwā, 'gently', and it precedes the verb.

There are very few 'pure' adverbs in Ebira. These adverbs are in two classes, those which occur preceding the verb and those which occur following the verb. The underlined words are adverbs in the following examples.

nâ bůrû
----
go quickly

jě gěrî
----
stand firmly

tānwā kārẽyî
----
gently speak

wůsẽ rĩsā
----
quickly eat

Adverbs can be reduplicated for intensity in whatever position they occur, either before or after the verb.

Adverbs and ideophones are very similar in structure and function. Ideophones are items which add particular intensity and sound effect to a sentence in Ebira. Reduplication is a feature of ideophones.
Ideophones always occur after the verbs, e.g:

ɪzɛnɪ o sʊreyi woroni-woroni
bell it sound
'the bell sounded "woronyi-woronyi"'

ʊnɔŋkɔ o chãkã rũgũ-rũgũ
pot it break
'the pot broke "rũgũ-rũgũ"'

A few more ideophones are listed below:

bemi-bemi CVCV-CVCV 'wholly, completely'

zĩnã-zĩnã CVCV-CVCV 'forever and ever, eternally'

sẽne-sẽne or CVCV-CVCV or
sẽsẽne CVVCVCV 'very, very white'

sãkã-sãkã or CVCV-CVCV or
sãásãkã CVCV-CVCV 'completely, all'

vãnã-vãnã or CVCV-CVCV or 'to be very uncom-
vãavãnã or CVCVCVCV or fortable in sick-
vãnãa CV.CVČ 'ness or pain'
bonoko-bonoko or CVCVCV-CVCVCV or 'to be big and
bonokoo CVCVCVV shapeless'

Reduplication processes manifest some interesting phonological changes including metathesis. We need not give any emphasis to these here. However, it is worth noting that the development of geminate vowel sequences medially and finally, mentioned in 2.2.1, can be observed from the alternate forms of the reduplicated words above.
2.4 Syllabic Nasals

As mentioned in 2.1.2., syllable type 2 consists of a syllabic nasal plus tone and is followed immediately in the word by a CV syllable. The syllabic nasal may occur in words of either vowel harmony set A or B and does not interrupt the harmonic sequence system of the vowels. The syllabic nasal is always homorganic in point of articulation with the following consonant.

2.4.1 Bilabial Syllabic Nasal

/m/ [m] voiced bilabial syllabic nasal preceding bilabial consonants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m-p</td>
<td>ṁpré</td>
<td>'a bag'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m-b</td>
<td>ḷhímba</td>
<td>'seven'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m-m</td>
<td>ḷ màà vẹ́</td>
<td>'when I was coming...'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4.2 Alveolar Syllabic Nasal

/n/ [n] voiced alveolar syllabic nasal preceding alveolar consonants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n-t</td>
<td>ṃhẹ̀</td>
<td>'a typewriter'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-d</td>
<td>ḷdá</td>
<td>'father'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-n</td>
<td>ḷhinnà</td>
<td>'nine'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4.3 Palatal Syllabic Nasal

/p/ [ɲ] voiced palatal syllabic nasal preceding palatal and affricate consonants.

\begin{align*}
\text{p-ŋ} & \quad \text{'mother'} \\
\text{p-c} & \quad \text{ŋcɛrɛ} \quad \text{''monkey''} \\
\text{p-j} & \quad \text{ɛjaʃjakọ} \quad \text{''dotted maize cob''}
\end{align*}

2.4.4 Velar Syllabic Nasal

/ŋ/ [ŋ] voiced velar nasal preceding velar consonants.

\begin{align*}
\text{ŋ-k} & \quad \text{kọdọkọ} \quad \text{''bathing sponge''} \\
\text{ŋ-g} & \quad \text{aŋgo} \quad \text{''yam seedling''}
\end{align*}

2.4.5 Summary of Syllabic Nasals

/m/ precedes /p/, /b/ and /m/.

/n/ precedes /t/, /d/ and /n/.

/p/ precedes /p/, /c/ and /j/.

/ŋ/ precedes /k/ and /g/.

A syllabic nasal is always followed by a homorganic stop, affricate, or an identical nasal, except that no word has been found with the sequence η-ŋ.

The other consonants in the language are not preceded by syllabic nasals.
2.5 The Consonant Phonemes

Ebira has nineteen consonant phonemes.

2.5.1 Description

All the consonants are made with egressive lung air:

/p/ [pʰ] voiceless bilabial slightly aspirated plosive.

/pʰa/ [pʰa] 'to beg'

/b/ [b] voiced bilabial plosive.

/ba/ [ba] 'to dig'

/t/ [tʰ] voiceless alveolar slightly aspirated plosive.

/tʰa/ [tʰa] 'to weave (a rope)'

/d/ [d] voiced alveolar plosive.

/dᵃ/ [dᵃ] 'to cut'

/k/ [kʰ] voiceless velar slightly aspirated plosive.

/kʰa/ [kʰa] 'to tell, to say'

/g/ [g] voiced velar plosive.

/gᵃ/ [gᵃ] 'to divide'

All the voiceless plosives are slightly aspirated but this is not distinctive, and will not be indicated in the transcription from now on.

/v/ [v] voiced labio-dental fricative.

/vᵉ/ [vᵉ] 'to come'
/s/ [s] voiceless alveolar grooved fricative.
/sʲ/ [ sʲ ] 'to take'

[f] voiceless alveo-palatal grooved fricative.
[f] is an allophone of /s/ across morpheme boundaries in certain phonological conditions. This will be described later.

/z/ [z] voiced alveolar grooved fricative.
/zʲ/ [ zʲ ] 'to filter'

[ʒ] voiced alveo-palatal grooved fricative.
[ʒ] is an allophone of /z/ across morpheme boundaries in certain phonological conditions. It will be described along with [f].

/h/ [h] voiceless glottal fricative.
/hʲ/ [ hʲ ] 'to call'

/c/ [c] voiceless alveo-palatal affricate.
/cʲ/ [ cʲ ] 'to get nuts out of the shell with fingers'

/j/ [j] voiced alveo-palatal affricate.
/jʲ/ [ jʲ ] 'to cut stick with hand'

/m/ [m] voiced bilabial nasal.
/mʲ/ [ mʲ ] 'to do, to make'

/n/ [n] voiced alveolar nasal.
/ne/ [ ne ] 'to throw'

/p/ [p] voiced palatal nasal.
/pʲ/ [ pʲ ] 'to hit'

/ŋ/ [ŋ] voiced velar nasal.
/ŋɯ/ [ ŋɯ ] 'to enter'
/r/ [r] voiced alveolar tap.  
/rr/ [ɾɾ] 'to eat'

[1] is in free variation with [r] but most people use [r] in their speech.

/w/ [w] voiced bilabial semivowel.  
/wu/ [wu] 'to kill'

/y/ [y] voiced palatal semivowel.  
/yɛ/ [yɛ] 'to know'

2.5.2 Consonant Allophones and Conditioning

[f] and [ʃ]

[f] and [ʃ] occur as allophones of /s/ and /z/ respectively under the following phonological conditions:

/s/ in the sequence [sf] followed by a non-close vowel initial syllable across morpheme boundaries is realised as [ʃ]. The sounds in focus are underlined in the following examples:

Structure: VP + NP₀.

si + e: ɕ sʃ + ɛcɛ vɛ  > ɕʃɛcɛ vɛ

he took wine came  'he brought some wine'
\( s_i + e: \) \( {\ddot{\partial}} \) \( s_i + e \alpha \) \( v_{\ddot{e}} \rightarrow {\ddot{\partial}} \hat{e} \alpha v_{\ddot{e}} \) 

he took beans came 'he brought some beans'

\( s_i + o: \) \( {\ddot{\partial}} \) \( s_i + o \alpha \) \( v_{\ddot{e}} \rightarrow {\ddot{\partial}} \hat{e} o \alpha v_{\ddot{e}} \) 

he took child came 'he brought the child'

\( s_i + o: \) \( {\ddot{\partial}} \) \( s_i + o \alpha \) \( v_{\ddot{e}} \rightarrow {\ddot{\partial}} \hat{e} o \alpha v_{\ddot{e}} \) 

he took stick came 'he brought the stick'

\( s_i + a: \) \( {\ddot{\partial}} \) \( s_i + a \alpha \) \( v_{\ddot{e}} \rightarrow {\ddot{\partial}} \hat{e} a \alpha v_{\ddot{e}} \) 

he took egg came 'he brought the eggs'

Similarly /z/ in the sequence [ zı ] followed by a non-close vowel initial syllable is realised as [ ʒ ].

Structure: VP + NPₖ

[ zı ] 'to hurt' + NPₖ.

\( z_i + e: \) \( {\ddot{\partial}} \) \( z_i + e \alpha \) \( v_{\ddot{e}} \rightarrow {\ddot{\partial}} \hat{e} \alpha v_{\ddot{e}} \) 

it hurt children 'it hurt the children'

\( z_i + e: \) \( {\ddot{\partial}} \) \( z_i + e \gamma \) \( v_{\ddot{e}} \rightarrow {\ddot{\partial}} \hat{e} \gamma v_{\ddot{e}} \) 

it hurt body 'it hurt the body, i.e. he felt the pain'

\( z_i + o: \) \( {\ddot{\partial}} \) \( z_i + o \alpha \) \( v_{\ddot{e}} \rightarrow {\ddot{\partial}} \hat{e} o \alpha v_{\ddot{e}} \) 

it hurt child 'it hurt the child'
\[ \text{zi + o: } \text{o} \text{ zi + ãzâ } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ ããzâ} \]

it hurt person 'it hurt a person'

\[ \text{zi + a: } \text{o} \text{ zi + äzâ } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ ããzâ} \]

it hurt people 'it hurt the people'

On the other hand, /s/ and /z/ retain their phonetic qualities in sequence [si] or [zi] followed by close vowels.

\[ \text{si + i: } \text{o} \text{ si + ïzi v̥ } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ sizî v̥ } \]

he-took nuts came 'he brought bambara nuts'

\[ \text{si + i: } \text{o} \text{ si + ïŋō v̥ } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ sîŋō v̥ } \]

he-took scales came 'he brought the scales'

\[ \text{si + u: } \text{o} \text{ si + uye v̥ } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ sûye v̥ } \]

he-took meat came 'he brought some meat'

\[ \text{si + u: } \text{o} \text{ si + ùrā v̥ } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ sûrā v̥ } \]

he-took pig came 'he brought a pig'

\[ \text{zi + i: } \text{o} \text{ zi + ïzê } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ zîzê } \]

it hurt ize 'it hurt Ize'

\[ \text{zi + i: } \text{o} \text{ zi + ięcâ } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ zîcâ } \]

it hurt ęcâ 'it hurt ęcâ'

\[ \text{zi + u: } \text{o} \text{ zi + úrû } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ zûrû } \]

it-hurt ęrû 'it hurt ęrû'

\[ \text{zi + u: } \text{o} \text{ zi + ūno } \Rightarrow \text{o} \text{ zûno } \]

it-hurt cow 'it hurt the cow'
2.5.3 **Chart of the Consonant Phonemes**

The following chart gives a graphic display of Ebira consonants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plosives</th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vls</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>k</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vd</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricatives</td>
<td>vls</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vd</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>z</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricates</td>
<td>vls</td>
<td>c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vd</td>
<td>j</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasals</td>
<td>vls</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laterals</td>
<td>vls</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semivowels</td>
<td>vls</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the consonants can occur as syllable margin in word initial and word medial positions but never syllable or word final.

Note that the consonantal features, labialisation and palatalisation, are described in sections 2.1.5 and 2.1.6.

Throughout this thesis, the palatal and velar nasals are written phonemically as ɲ and ɳ. In the practical orthography for the language, however, they are written as ny and ng respectively.
2.6  Tone

Tone in Ebira functions at two distinct levels. It functions at the lexical level and at the grammatical level.

2.6.1 Tone Symbolisation

Tone is symbolised as follows:
- High tone - H - marked 
- Mid tone - M - unmarked
- Low tone - L - marked 
- High-Falling tone - HF - marked 
- Low-Rising tone - LR - marked 
- Down Step - H' - marked

Automatic tone downstep occurs only under specific tone contractions of HLH \( \rightarrow \) H'H (see 3.4.5).

It can be observed from the above that Ebira has three level tones and two kinetic tones. Lexical tone is directly related to the syllable structure as stated in 2.1. Every syllable has a tonal feature as one of its phonological components.

2.6.2 Tone Distribution

The level tones (high, mid, and low) have a very wide distribution. The two kinetic tones (high-falling and
low-rising) do not occur word initial or word medial, except high-falling tone which occurs on the one syllable verb prefix denoting person and number. The low-rising tone [\textsuperscript{\textbullet}] is found to occur only in the nine monosyllabic verbs listed below:

\begin{itemize}
  \item hé 'to be in possession of something by finding it'
  \item rē 'to lick (some liquid soup or oil)'
  \item nē 'to wipe (with hand, cloth, or duster)'
  \item jē 'to stand, to wait'
  \item zē 'to answer'
  \item rō 'to make a hole through a wall or a door'
  \item nō 'to make public announcement with special gong'
  \item tō 'to pick up small items from the ground'
  \item nā 'to break palm kernels with stones to get the seeds out'
\end{itemize}

2.6.3 \textbf{Lexical Tone on Monosyllabic Verbs}

At the lexical level, tone is phonemic in that it minimally distinguishes two or more lexical items. It is easy to observe some lexical contrasts on monosyllabic items especially verbs of CV syllable structure. Tone is an identificational feature of the verb word.

* See also \textsection 3.4.6 and 3.4.7
Sets of two contrastive tone verbs:

High  si  'to pay'
Low   si  'to look for, to want'
High  jǐ  'to have'
Mid   jì  'to choose'
Low   hǒ  'to ask'
Mid   hǒ  'to drive'
High  hē  'to excrete body waste (urine and faeces)'
Low-Rising  hē  'to be in possession of something by finding it'
Mid   nó  'to weave (a mat)'
Low-Rising  nó  'to make public announcement with special gong'
Low   rō  'to think'
Low-Rising  rō  'to make a hole through a wall or a door'
High  jē  'to be happy'
Low-Rising  jē  'to wait'
High  yī  'to steal'
High-Falling yī  'to refuse'

Sets of three contrastive tone verbs:

High  hū  'to drink'
Mid   hu  'to uproot'
Low   hū  'to roast in open fire'
Sets of four contrastive tone verbs are extremely rare. The only set found so far is listed below:

High  naï 'to sell'
Mid  na 'to open'
Low  naï 'to tear'
High-Falling  naï 'to leave'

Sets of five contrastive tone words have not been found in the language.

A table of monosyllabic verbs that contrast solely in lexical tone is given in Appendix I at the end of the thesis.

2.6.4  **Lexical Tone Patterns on Disyllabic Verbs**

A full range of nine lexical tone patterns that can occur on two CVCV syllable verbs are exemplified below:

1.  

2.  

's to be together in action'
Verbs of more than two syllables have extended pattern using the same high, mid, and low tones.

2.6.5 **Lexical Tone on Disyllabic Nouns**

Tone also distinguishes two or more nominal lexical items of VCV syllable structure.

Sets of two contrastive tone nouns:

- *usē* 'cough'
- *ūsē* 'question'
- *ihî* 'a case (usually long); fossils'
- *ihî* 'loss'
- *aŋa* 'blood'
- *aŋa* 'dew'
Sets of three contrastive tone nouns:

urú  'a kind of native red ointment worn by women who just delivered a new baby'
ūrū  'replacement of something on demand, compensation'
ūrū  'mushroom'

ọda  'a native tray'
ṣdā  'paint, tarmac'
ṣdā  'law, order, command'

Sets of four contrastive tone nouns are rare but they do occur:

ohi  'broom'
ohī  'whistle'
ohī  'a leader'
ohī  'answer'

2.6.6 Lexical Tone Patterns on Disyllabic Nouns

A system of eleven contrastive tone patterns occurs on two VCV syllable nouns.

1. HH  [——]  ọdá  'a place'
2. HM  [——]  fze  'a grass cutter (animal)'
3. HL  [——]  ọkú  'inner room'
Nouns of more than 3 syllables have extended pattern, using the same high, mid, and low tones.

These nouns and verbs are described here in relation to tones in isolation only. Examples of tone changes which occur when they function in the verbal piece are discussed in later chapters.
CHAPTER THREE

SYNTACTIC JUNCTURES

The major syntactic juncture features of Ebira concern vowel elision, tone changes, and syllable prosodies. Each of these features is described within the grammatical structure of Ebira sentences.

3.1 Vowel Elision

As Ebira is an open syllable language, the last segment of any word is always a vowel. The first segment of nominals, with the possible exception of certain bound pronouns, is always a vowel, while verbals and some functional words always start with consonants. Therefore, very frequently two vowels, labelled here as $V_1$ and $V_2$, come in juxtaposition. $V_1$ is the final vowel of the first item, and $V_2$ is the initial vowel of the second item. Within a grammatical phrase one of the two juxtaposed vowels is elided and the other one is retained. (There is only one condition in which both vowels are retained and this is described in section 3.4.7).

The nine vowel phonemes of the language can be divided into two classes according to their functional
manifestations at boundary junctures. These are close vowels and non-close vowels. The diagram below shows the divisions and their phonematic unit representations. The phonematic units are enclosed in brackets.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>FRONT</th>
<th>CENTRAL</th>
<th>BACK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CLOSE</td>
<td>Raised</td>
<td>i (I)</td>
<td>u (U)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lowered</td>
<td>ï</td>
<td>ù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NON-CLOSE</td>
<td>Raised</td>
<td>e (E)</td>
<td>o (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lowered</td>
<td>õ</td>
<td>œ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

In a simple grammatical $VP + NP_0$ structure the following pattern of vowel elisions occur:

3.1.1 Close Vowels I and U as $V_1$ and $V_2$

In the following examples the close vowels i, ï, u, and ù are presented in words and sentences to illustrate the pattern of elision that takes place when they occur in $V_1$ position and in $V_2$ position contiguously in certain grammatical structures.

3.1.1.1 I as $V_1$ and as $V_2$

The monosyllabic verb of CV structure /sǐ/ 'to want', is used as a typical word where the final vowel is /i/, that is $V_1$. Similarly, the verb /sĩ/ 'to take', is used as a typical word having /ï/ as its final vowel, $V_1$. 
Nominals having /i/ and /i/ as their initial vowels, such as in /izI/ 'bambara nuts' and /iŋo/ 'scales', illustrate /i/ and /i/ as V₂ at word junctures. When the vowels /i/ and /i/ are juxtaposed at word junctions, in either order, /i/ is elided and /i/ is retained. That means that the raised close front vowel /i/ dominates the lowered close front vowel /i/ at word junctions. Tones are marked in the examples that follow as there is tone movement or tone replacement when a vowel is elided. Tone movement is described in 3.4.

\[
i + i > i \quad sI + izI > sizI
\]

want bambara nuts
\[\delta \text{sizI}
\]

'he wanted bambara nuts'

\[
i + i > i \quad sI + iŋo > sIŋo
\]

want scale
\[\delta \text{sIŋo}
\]

'he wanted the scales'

\[
i + i > i \quad si + izI > sizi
\]

take bambara nuts
\[\delta \text{sizi}
\]

'he took bambara nuts'

\[
i + i > i \quad si + iŋo > sIŋo
\]

take scale
\[\delta \text{sIŋo}
\]

'he took the scales'
3.1.1.2  I as $V_1$;  U as $V_2$

The verbs /si/ and /sif/ (see 3.1.1.1) are used here again as words having final /i/ and final /i/. The nominals /uji/ 'bask' and /ujii/ 'sugar cane' are used as examples of typical words having /u/ and /u/ as initial vowels. When /i/ occurs as $V_1$ and /u/ as $V_2$, /i/ is elided and /u/ is retained. When /i/ occurs as $V_1$ and /u/ occurs as $V_2$, neither is retained; instead the resulting vowel is /u/. When /i/ occurs as $V_1$ and /u/ occurs as $V_2$, /i/ is elided and /u/ is retained. The following examples illustrate these changes.

\[
i + u > u \\
\text{vi + uji} > \text{suijii}
\]

look for basket
\[
\text{ho suiji}
\]

'h he looked for the basket'

\[
i + u > u \\
\text{vi + uji} > \text{suji}
\]

look for sugar cane
\[
\text{ho suji}
\]

'h he looked for the sugar cane'

\[
i + u > u \\
\text{vii + uji} > \text{suijii}
\]

take basket
\[
\text{ho suiji}
\]

'h he took the basket'
\[i + u \rightarrow u\quad \text{si} + \text{u}j\rightarrow \text{s}uji\]
take sugar cane
\[\text{ð s}uji\]
'he took the sugar cane'

Summary

Every vowel has two qualities out of the four given:

1. Raised or lowered;
2. Front or back.

In every combination of two close vowels (one final in a word and the other initial in the following word) in a phrase, the resulting vowel is the result of raised excluding lowered and back excluding front.

The same elision rules apply whatever the nature of the consonant that precedes \(V_1\).
All the examples above illustrate the grammatical sequence VP + NP. The same pattern of elision takes place within all grammatical phrases. Examples will now be given to illustrate the same combinations in the structure:

(N + N) + VP
NP + VP

The junction of NP + VP will be commented on later.

\[
\begin{align*}
i + i > i & \quad \text{ozí} + \text{Iże} + \overset{\circ}{\text{ve}} \\
\text{child} & \quad \text{Iże} \quad \text{he-came} \\
\text{NP} + \text{VP} & \\
\text{ozíIże} & \quad \overset{\circ}{\text{ve}} \\
'Ize's child came' \end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
i + i > i & \quad \text{ozí} + \text{Icà} + \overset{\circ}{\text{ve}} \\
\text{child} & \quad \text{Icà} \quad \text{he-came} \\
\text{NP} + \text{VP} & \\
\text{Ozícà} & \quad \overset{\circ}{\text{ve}} \\
'Icà's child came' \end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
i + u > u & \quad \text{ozí} + \text{Urù} + \overset{\circ}{\text{nà}} \\
\text{child} & \quad \text{Urù} \quad \text{he-go} \\
\text{NP} + \text{VP} & \\
\text{ozúUrù} & \quad \overset{\circ}{\text{nà}} \\
'Urù's child went' \end{align*}
\]
In this structure there is usually a pause between the NP functioning as subject and the VP, therefore no elision takes place at this juncture. But it is also possible to pronounce the clause in rapid speech without a pause between the NP and the VP in which case the rules for elision being described would operate.

3.1.1.3 U as $V_1$; I as $V_2$

The verbs /tʊ/ 'to beat' and /dʊ/ 'to chase' are used here as typical words having /u/ and /y/ as final vowels. The nominals /ɪzé/ 'Ize, female name' and /ɪcā/ 'male name' are used as words having /i/ and /ɪ/ as their initial vowels. When /u/ occurs as $V_1$ and /i/ occurs as $V_2$, /ɪ/ is elided and /u/ is retained. When /u/ occurs as $V_1$ and /i/ occurs as $V_2$, /ɪ/ is elided and /u/ is retained. When /y/ occurs as $V_1$ and /i/ occurs as $V_2$, /u/ is the resulting vowel. When /y/ occurs as $V_1$ and /i/ as $V_2$, /ɪ/ is elided and /u/ is retained. These changes are illustrated in the following examples:
The consonants (t- and d-) segments of the syllables and/or words are typical of other consonants when they occur in combination with /U/ to form words. Whatever consonant precedes /U/, the pattern of elision would be the same as the one described in 3.1.1.3 above.
In the (N + N)NP structure where U is $V_1$ and I or U occur as $V_2$ the pattern of elision is identical with that of VP + NP (see 2.1.1.3). The following two examples are given for further illustration.

$u + i \, u \, u\, u \, u\, v\, u\, d\, i\, v\, i\, d\, i\, v\, i$

madness $\, ì\, z\, é\, it\, bad$

N + N + VP

$u\, v\, ù\, z\, é\, ð\, div\, i$

'Ize's madness is bad/serious'

$u + u \, u \, u \, u \, u \, v\, u\, d\, i\, v\, i\, d\, i\, v\, i$

madness $\, ú\, m\, ù\, s\, á\, it\, finish$

N + N + VP

$u\, v\, u\, m\, ù\, s\, á\, ð\, t\, á$

'Umusa's madness is finished, i.e. Umusa is healed of madness'

Here again, because there is a natural pause between the NP functioning as the subject and the VP in the above structure, no elision takes place between the NP final vowel and the VP initial vowel, even though the two vowels come in juxtaposition.

3.1.1.4 $U$ as $V_1$ and as $V_2$

The verbs /tū/ 'to beat/hit'

and /dū/ 'to chase'

are used as examples of typical words which show the pattern of elision. When /u/ occurs as $V_1$; and /u/ occurs
as \( V_2, V_2 \) is elided and \( V_1 \) is retained, that is, /u/ is retained. When /\( \ddot{u} \)/ occurs as \( V_1 \) and /u/ as \( V_2 \), then \( V_2, /u/ \), is retained.

The nominals /us\( \ddot{u} \)/ 'rat'

and /\( \ddot{u}v\ddot{a} \)/ 'crocodile'

are used to illustrate words having /u/ and /\( \ddot{u} \)/ as the initial vowels.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{u + u} & \rightarrow \text{tū} + \text{us\( \ddot{u} \)} \rightarrow \text{tū\( \ddot{u} \)} \\
& \text{hit} + \text{rat} \\
& \text{tū\( \ddot{u} \)} \\
& \text{he hit a rat'}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{u + \( \ddot{u} \)} & \rightarrow \text{tū} + \text{\( \ddot{u}v\ddot{a} \)} \rightarrow \text{tū\( \ddot{a} \)} \\
& \text{hit} + \text{crocodile} \\
& \text{tū\( \ddot{a} \)} \\
& \text{he hit a crocodile'}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\( \ddot{u} \) + u} & \rightarrow \text{dū} + \text{us\( \ddot{u} \)} \rightarrow \text{dū\( \ddot{u} \)} \\
& \text{chase} + \text{rat} \\
& \text{dū\( \ddot{u} \)} \\
& \text{he chased a rat'}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\( \ddot{u} \) + \( \ddot{u} \)} & \rightarrow \text{dū} + \text{\( \ddot{u}v\ddot{a} \)} \rightarrow \text{dū\( \ddot{a} \)} \\
& \text{chase} + \text{crocodile} \\
& \text{dū\( \ddot{a} \)} \\
& \text{he chased a crocodile'}
\end{align*}
\]
It is evident from these examples that the raised close back vowel /u/ dominates the raised and lowered close front vowels /i/ and /ɨ/, and the lowered close back vowel /ʊ/ at word junctions.

3.1.2 Close Vowels as $V_1$, Non-Close Vowels as $V_2$

The pattern of elision is illustrated below.

3.1.2.1 I as $V_1$; and the Non-Close Vowels, E, O and A as $V_2$

When either of the close front vowels, /i/ or /ɨ/, come in juxtaposition with any of the non-close vowels, e, ɛ, o, ɔ, and a at word junctions, the close vowel is elided and the non-close vowel is retained.

Two verbs, /yi/ 'to steal'
and /ji/ 'to cut'
are used in sentences of VP + NP structure to illustrate the elision pattern of close front vowel in $V_1$ position.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{i + e} & \rightarrow \text{e yi} + \text{ɛcɛ} \rightarrow \text{yɛcɛ} \\
& \text{steal} \quad \text{wine} \\
& \text{δ yɛcɛ hù} \\
& \text{'he stole some wine and drank it'}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{i + e} & \rightarrow \text{e yi} + \text{ɛbå} \rightarrow \text{yɛbå} \\
& \text{steal} \quad \text{chain} \\
& \text{δ yɛbå} \\
& \text{'he stole the chain'}
\end{align*}
\]
i + e > e  ji + åde > jëbå

cut chain

â jëbå

'he cut the chain off the door'

Similarly:

i + o > o  yî + óbô > yôbô  'steal a rope'

i + o > o  yî + qocî > yôcî  'steal a cane'

i + a > a  yî + âgå > yâgå  'steal a chair'

î + e > e  ji + âgû > jëgû  'cut small tribal marks'

î + o > o  ji + óbô > jôbô  'cut a rope'

î + o > o  ji + qocî > jôcî  'cut a stick'

î + a a ji + âvî > javî  'cut a leaf'

For description of syllable prosodies which occur when the consonant preceding I is s, or z, or h, see section 3.3. For all other consonants the elision pattern is as illustrated above.

3.1.2.2 U as V₁; and the Non-Close Vowels

E, O, A as V₂

The close back vowels, /u/ and /û/ in V₁ position and non-close vowels listed above in V₂ position at word junctions give rise to labial syllable prosody. This is described in detail in 3.2. However, two examples are given here to illustrate phonetic characteristics of the vowels in juxtaposition.
3.1.3 Non-Close Vowels E, O, A as V₁

When a non-close vowel occurs in V₁ position, there is regularity in the pattern of elision. V₁ is always elided and V₂ retained. It does not matter which vowel occurs in V₂ position, whether it is a close vowel or a non-close vowel. In the next examples, using again the VP + NP structure, the pattern of elision is illustrated.

It will be noticed that the preverb /o/ or /ə/ retains in the elided forms of the phrase the quality which it has in the non-elided forms. On the surface, this appears to violate the rules of vowel harmony, but in fact the preverb maintains the harmony it has with its verb, and this helps to preserve and identify this verb semantically.
3.1.3.1   E as $V_1$

a) $e$ as $V_1$ in VP /rê/ 'to see' + $V_2$

$e + i > i$   \(rê + îsî\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(rîsî\)  
\(\delta rîsî\)  'he saw a fly'

$e + i > i$   \(rê + stå\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(rîstå\)  
\(\delta rîstå\)  'he saw the cloth'

$e + u > u$   \(rê + unë\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(rûne\)  
\(\delta rûnë\)  'he saw a gazelle'

$e + u > u$   \(rê + ôno\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(rûno\)  
\(\delta rûno\)  'he saw a cow'

$e + e > e$   \(rê + ekû\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(rêkû\)  
\(\delta rêkû\)  'he saw a masquerade'

$e + e > e$   \(rê + êvû\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(rêvû\)  
\(\delta rêvû\)  'he saw a goat'

$e + o > o$   \(rê + ozi\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(rôzi\)  
\(\delta rôzi\)  'he saw a child'

$e + o > o$   \(rê + ôza\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(rôza\)  
\(\delta rôza\)  'he saw a person'

$e + a > a$   \(rê + âza\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(râza\)  
\(\delta râza\)  'he saw some people'

b) $e$ as $V_1$ in VP /mê/ 'to make' + $V_2$

$e + i > i$   \(mê + îhi\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(mihi\)  
\(\delta mihi\)  'he made a quiver'

$e + i > i$   \(mê + îså\)   \(\Rightarrow\)   \(miså\)  
\(\delta miså\)  'he cooked food'
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\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ to} + \text{ezî } \rightarrow \text{tezî} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęŋa } \rightarrow \text{teŋa} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōbō } \rightarrow \text{tōbō} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōhā } \rightarrow \text{tohā} \]

\[ o + a \rightarrow a \text{ tō} + \text{āzā } \rightarrow \text{tāzā} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęzî } \rightarrow \text{tezî} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęŋa } \rightarrow \text{teŋa} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōbō } \rightarrow \text{tōbō} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōhā } \rightarrow \text{tohā} \]

\[ o + a \rightarrow a \text{ tō} + \text{āzā } \rightarrow \text{tāzā} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęzî } \rightarrow \text{tezî} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęŋa } \rightarrow \text{teŋa} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōbō } \rightarrow \text{tōbō} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōhā } \rightarrow \text{tohā} \]

\[ o + a \rightarrow a \text{ tō} + \text{āzā } \rightarrow \text{tāzā} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęzî } \rightarrow \text{tezî} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęŋa } \rightarrow \text{teŋa} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōbō } \rightarrow \text{tōbō} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōhā } \rightarrow \text{tohā} \]

\[ o + a \rightarrow a \text{ tō} + \text{āzā } \rightarrow \text{tāzā} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęzî } \rightarrow \text{tezî} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęŋa } \rightarrow \text{teŋa} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōbō } \rightarrow \text{tōbō} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōhā } \rightarrow \text{tohā} \]

\[ o + a \rightarrow a \text{ tō} + \text{āzā } \rightarrow \text{tāzā} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęzî } \rightarrow \text{tezî} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęŋa } \rightarrow \text{teŋa} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōbō } \rightarrow \text{tōbō} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōhā } \rightarrow \text{tohā} \]

\[ o + a \rightarrow a \text{ tō} + \text{āzā } \rightarrow \text{tāzā} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęzî } \rightarrow \text{tezî} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęŋa } \rightarrow \text{teŋa} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōbō } \rightarrow \text{tōbō} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōhā } \rightarrow \text{tohā} \]

\[ o + a \rightarrow a \text{ tō} + \text{āzā } \rightarrow \text{tāzā} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęzî } \rightarrow \text{tezî} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęŋa } \rightarrow \text{teŋa} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōbō } \rightarrow \text{tōbō} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōhā } \rightarrow \text{tohā} \]

\[ o + a \rightarrow a \text{ tō} + \text{āzā } \rightarrow \text{tāzā} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęzî } \rightarrow \text{tezî} \]

\[ o + e \rightarrow e \text{ tō} + \text{ęŋa } \rightarrow \text{teŋa} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōbō } \rightarrow \text{tōbō} \]

\[ o + o \rightarrow o \text{ tō} + \text{ōhā } \rightarrow \text{tohā} \]

\[ o + a \rightarrow a \text{ tō} + \text{āzā } \rightarrow \text{tāzā} \]
3.1.3.3 A as $V_1$

a as $V_1$ in VP /ná/ 'to sell' + $V_2$

a + i $\geq$ i ná + íhí $\Rightarrow$ nhíhí
ô nhíhí 'he sold a quiver'
a + i $\geq$ i ná + ítā $\Rightarrow$ nítā
ô nítā 'he sold cloth'
a + u $\geq$ u ná + uye $\Rightarrow$ nûye
ô nûye 'he sold meat'
a + ũ $\geq$ ũ ná + ũrā $\Rightarrow$ nûrâ
ô nûrâ 'he sold a pig'
a + è $\geq$ è ná + ècè $\Rightarrow$ nécè
ô nécè 'he sold wine'
a + è $\geq$ è ná + èzè $\Rightarrow$ nûzè
ô nûzè 'he sold a big drum'
a + o $\geq$ o ná + òbò $\Rightarrow$ nòbò
ô nòbò 'he sold a rope'
a + o $\geq$ o ná + òhà $\Rightarrow$ nòhà
ô nòhà 'he sold a spear'
a + a $\geq$ a ná + ãgà $\Rightarrow$ nãgã
ô nãgã 'he sold a chair'
### 3.1.4 Summary Chart of Vowel Elision Patterns

The following chart gives the overall picture of vowel elision patterns including labial prosodic features (see 3.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$V_1$</th>
<th>$V_2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
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<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>u</td>
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<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above chart we observe that:

a) in all combinations where both $V_1$ and $V_2$ are vowels of the close set (i, i, u, u),
   i) raised vowels (i, u) dominate non-raised vowels (i, u);
   ii) backness dominates frontness.

b) In all combinations where $V_1$ and/or $V_2$ is a vowel of the non-close set (e, e, o, o, a), $V_2$ always dominates $V_1$. 

3.1.5 Harmony of the Subject (Preverb) Pronoun

It will be observed from the examples in the preceding sections that in the grammatical structure Pronoun + Verb + Noun object, the pronoun vowel harmonises with the vowel of the verb. Even when the vowel of the verb is lost by elision the pronoun continues to harmonise with that underlying vowel, irrespective of the harmony set of the noun. In the normal running pronunciation, therefore, any harmonic similarity between the pronoun and the new combination of verb + noun object is accidental, the pronoun in some cases being in harmony, and in other cases out of harmony.

The phonological notation can be stated thus:

\[ \text{Pr. Vb. N. obj.} \]
\[ H a/b [ (V CV) ] + H a/b [ (VCV) ] = \]
\[ H a/b [ (V) ] + H \ a/b [ (CVCV) ] \]

3.2 Labial Syllable Prosody

A syllable prosody is a feature which characterises a whole syllable, rather than one specific element of that syllable.

The syllables /tu/ and /du/, for example, are characterised by lip rounding for the consonants as much as for the vowels. Indeed, in the junction forms this prosody is maintained by the lip rounding for the consonant even
when the vowel is elided. This applies to all -Cu and -Cũ examples, whatever the C, when followed by a non-close vowel. Labial prosody is represented by \( w \) in the elision forms.

3.2.1 \textbf{U as } V_1 \text{ in } VP + NP \text{ Structures}

\( tu + e \rightarrow twe \rightarrow tũ + ezi \rightarrow twẽzi \)
- \( õ twẽzi \)
- \( 'he beat the children' \)

\( tu + e \rightarrow twe \rightarrow tũ + evũ \rightarrow twẽvũ \)
- \( õ twẽvũ \)
- \( 'he beat a goat' \)

\( tu + o \rightarrow two \rightarrow tũ + ozĩ \rightarrow twõzi \)
- \( õ twõzi \)
- \( 'he beat a child' \)

\( tu + õ \rightarrow twɔ \rightarrow tũ + ŵzã \rightarrow twɔzã \)
- \( õ twɔzã \)
- \( 'he beat a person' \)

\( tu + a \rightarrow twa \rightarrow tũ + āzã \rightarrow twāzã \)
- \( õ twāzã \)
- \( 'he beat people' \)
\begin{align*}
du + e & > dwe \\
du + ezì & > dwezì \\
\text{chase children} \\
\text{\'he chased the children away} \\
du + e & > dwe \\
du + evü & > dwęvü \\
\text{chase goat} \\
\text{\'he chased a goat (away)}' \\
du + o & > dwo \\
du + ðzì & > dwozì \\
\text{chase child} \\
\text{\'he chased a child (away)}' \\
du + o & > dwo \\
du + ðzä & > dwźå \\
\text{chase person} \\
\text{\'he chased a person (away)}' \\
du + a & > dwa \\
du + ãzä & > dwąza \\
\text{chase people} \\
\text{\'he chased people (away)}' \\
\end{align*}

We can represent these examples in the following phonological notation.

\[ w(CV_1) + (V_2) \Rightarrow w(CV_2) \]
3.2.2  **U as V₁ in (N + N)NP Structure**

When /u/ and /υ/ occur as V₁ in N + N complex NP structure they manifest exactly the same labial syllable prosody as in VP + NP listed above. (This confirms the regularity of labial syllable prosody resulting from /u/ and /υ/ in the environment of non-close vowels in the language.) Examples where /u/ and /υ/ occur as V₁ are given in (N + N)NP structures and in a larger structure of NPₛ + VP + NPₒ.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{u + o} & \rightarrow \text{wò} \quad \text{e}_v\text{u} + \check{\text{m}}\text{u} \text{yā} \rightarrow \check{\text{e}}\text{vuwōmūyā} \\
\text{goat} + \check{\text{m}}\text{u} \text{yā} & \quad \text{goat (of) } \check{\text{m}}\text{u} \text{yā} \\
|\text{N + N}| & \\
\text{NP} & \\
\text{NP + VP Structure:} & \\
\text{e}_v\text{u} + \check{\text{m}}\text{u} \text{yā} + \check{\text{r}} \text{ī} + \text{ẹnu} + \check{\text{m}}\text{ū} \text{ha} & \text{goat (of) } \check{\text{m}}\text{u} \text{yā} \text{ it ate } \text{yam (of) } \check{\text{m}}\text{ū} \text{ha} \\
\text{NPₛ} & + \text{VP} + \text{NPₒ} \\
\text{The sentence in the elided form would be:} & \\
\check{\text{e}}\text{vwōmūyā} & \quad \check{\text{r}} \text{ēnwōmūha} \\
\text{goat (of) } \check{\text{m}}\text{ūyā} & \text{it ate } \text{yam (of) } \check{\text{m}}\text{ūha} \\
\check{\text{m}}\text{ūyā's goat ate } \check{\text{m}}\text{ūha's yam} & \\
\text{The underlined syllables represent the rounding juncture prosody of the (N + N) NP structure.}
\end{align*}
\]
3.3 Palatal Syllable Prosody

Like the labial syllable prosody, palatal syllable prosody occurs at morpheme or word junctions. But unlike the labial prosody it is limited to syllables beginning with one of the consonants /h/, /s/, and /z/, and occurring before front close vowels /i/ and /i/ when these segments occur in CV words and such words come in juxtaposition with other words having non-close initial vowels. When a word, having a CV sequence where the C is /h/, /s/ or /z/ and the V is /i/ or /i/, is followed by a non-close initial vowel in the next word, palatal prosody always occurs at the junction. In the case of /h/ + /i/ or /i/ the prosodic feature /y/ is written immediately following it /hy/. In the cases of /s/ and /z/ + /i/ or /i/ the palatal exponent of /i/ or /i/ would give rise to allophonic variation [ʃ] and [ʒ] respectively. These are exemplified below.

3.3.1 /hi/ or /hi/ + Non-Close Vowels E, O, A

The structure VP + NP of the imperative and the indicative moods, is used in the examples.

VP /hɿ/ 'to buy'
or /hɿ/ 'to call'
is used in the examples.

Semantic constraints limit the choice of VP to /hɿ/ or /hɿ/ 'to buy', or 'to call' respectively. There are se-
quences /hǐ/ 'to sweep' and /hǐ/ 'to weave', and /hi/ 'to string (beads)'. These can only precede particular kinds of nouns and such nouns do not have non-close initial vowels. However, the principle of palatal prosody would apply in any environment of /hi/ or /hǐ/ plus a nominal with a non-close initial vowel.

Selected noun phrases are used to follow the VP in the following examples:

\[ hǐ + e \rightarrow hye \]
\[ hǐ + ęcě \rightarrow hyęcě \]
\[ buy + wine \]
\[ ṭ hyęcě \]
\[ 'he bought some wine' \]

\[ hǐ + ę \rightarrow hye \]
\[ hǐ + ęza \rightarrow hyęza \]
\[ buy + beans \]
\[ ṭ hyęza \]
\[ 'he bought some beans' \]

\[ hǐ + o \rightarrow hyo \]
\[ hǐ + ozī \rightarrow hyōzī \]
\[ call + child \]
\[ ṭ hyōzī \]
\[ 'he called the child' \]

\[ hǐ + ō \rightarrow hyō \]
\[ hǐ + ōmųyā \rightarrow hyōmųyā \]
\[ call + ōmųyā \]
\[ ṭ hyōmųyā \]
\[ 'he called ōmųyā' \]
hi + a  >  hya  
hi + anø  >  hyano

buy + salt

'he bought some salt'

3.3.2 /si/ or /si/ + Non-Close Vowels, E, O, A

/si/ or /si/ followed by a non-close initial vowel in the next word gives rise to the allophonic variant [ʃ]. The following examples are written phonemically except that the phonetic symbol [ʃ] is used to indicate the fused form.

si + e  > [ʃe]  
    si  + ezl  >  [ʃezl] 
look for + children 
[ ʃezl ]

'he looked for the children'

si + ø  > [ʃe]  
    si  + øza  >  [ʃøza] 
look for + beans 
[ ʃøza ]

'he looked for some beans'

si + ø  > [ʃo]  
    si  + ozl  >  [ʃozl] 
look for + child 
[ ʃozl ]

'he looked for the child'
si + o > [Jo] sɪ + əʊmʊya > [ʃəmʊya]
look for + əmʊya
[ əʃəmʊya]
'he looked for Omʊya'

si + a > [fa] sɪ + anə > [fanə]
look for + some salt
[ əfanə]
'he looked for salt'

3.3.3 /zi/ or /zi/ + Non-Close Vowels E, O, A

Similarly, /zi/ or /zi/ in the environment of non-close vowels gives rise to the allophonic variant [ʒ] at word junctions.

zi + e > [ʒə] zɪ + ezɪ > [ʒezɪ]
hurt + children 'hurt the children'
(ɨɾəʂ̥) ə ʒezɪ
(head) it-hurt + children
'the children had headaches'

zi + e > [ʒə] zɪ + ənebeŋi > [ʒənebeŋi]
hurt + elder brother
(ɨɾəʂ̥) ə ʒənebeŋi
'the elder brother had a headache'
zi + o > [3o] zi + ozí > [3ozí]
hurt + child
(iresô) o3ozí
'the child had a headache'

zi + o > [3o] zi + ōmūyā > [3omūyā]
hurt + ōmūyā
(iresô) o3omūyā
'ōmūyā had a headache'

zi + a > [3a] zi + ādāava > [3ādāava]
hurt + ādāava
(iresô) o3ādāava
'ādāava had a headache'

3.3.4 /hi/, /si/, and /zi/ in (N + N)NP Structure

All the examples given for /hi/, /si/, and /zi/ above are in VP + NP structure. It is pertinent to point out the same palatal prosodic rule would apply in (N + N)NP structure. One example each in which /hi/, /si/, /zi/ sequences occur in (N + N)NP structures will suffice to confirm the validity of the rule.

ohi + ozí > ohyōzi (see 3.5.1)
broom + child 
broom (of) child
'the child's broom'
poker + yam

' a poker for picking hot yams
from the pot'

child + ōmūyā

' ōmūyā's child'

3.3.5 /hi/, /si/, or /zi/ + Close Vowels, I and U

/hi/, /si/, or /zi/ followed by a close initial vowel
in the next word does not manifest palatal juncture syl-
lable prosody. Examine these examples:

hī + i > hi
buy + izē

' he bought izē (grass cutter)'

hī + ū > hu
buy + pig

' he bought a pig'
It can be observed that it is the normal rule of vowel elision of close vowels that operates in the above examples. See 3.1.
3.4 Tone Changes

When two vowels of successive syllables come in juxtaposition one of the vowels is elided and the other one retained as described in 3.1. Every syllable has a tone largely carried by the vowel in Ebira, and morphotonemic changes that occur differ from the patterns of the vowels described. The three level tones of the language exhibit varying dominant characteristics at word junctions.

These are exemplified below, using the imperative mood of the verbal piece of VP + NP structure. This structure also illustrates the contractions of three syllable tones to two tones. The labels T₁ and T₂ are used to illustrate the pattern of tone changes at junctions. T₁ is the tone on the final syllable of the verb. T₂ is the tone of the initial syllable of the noun object.

3.4.1 High Tone /'/ as T₁

When High tone occurs as T₁, whatever other tone occurs as T₂, T₁, High tone, will always dominate T₂.

T₁ T₂ Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T₁</th>
<th>T₂</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>yif + fpe &gt; yipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>steal + flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'steal reed flute'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[---]</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>[---]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H + H M</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
<td>H M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.2 Mid Tone /-/ as \( T_1 \)

When Mid tone occurs as \( T_1 \) any tone that may occur as \( T_2 \) will always dominate \( T_1 \).

\[
\begin{align*}
M + H > H & \quad du + fze > duze \\
& \quad \text{chase + fze 'chase the grass cutter'} \\
& \quad [\_ \_ \_ \_ ] > [\_ \_ ] \\
& \quad M + H M > H M \\
M + M > M & \quad du + uye > duye \\
& \quad \text{chase + animal 'chase the animal'} \\
& \quad [\_ \_ \_ \_ ] > [\_ \_ ] \\
& \quad M + M M > M M \\
M + L > L & \quad na + ðzê > nðzê \\
& \quad \text{open + door 'open the door'} \\
& \quad [\_ \_ ] > [\_ \_ ] \\
& \quad M + L L > L L
\end{align*}
\]
3.4.3 **Low Tone */~* as \( T_1 \)**

Similarly, when Low tone occurs as \( T_1 \), any tone that may occur as \( T_2 \) will dominate \( T_1 \).

\[
L + H \geq H \quad \text{hi} + \text{fpe} \geq \text{hi}pe \\
\text{buy + flute} \quad \text{buy a reed flute}' \\
[\_\_\_\_] \geq [\_\_\_\_] \\
L + H \ M \geq H \ M
\]

\[
L + M \geq M \quad \text{då} + \text{ep\i} \geq \text{de\i} \\
\text{fetch + water} \quad \text{fetch water}' \\
[\_\_\_\_] \geq [\_\_\_\_] \\
L + M \ M \geq M \ M
\]

\[
L + L \geq L \quad \text{n\e} + \text{\e\p\i} \geq \text{n\e\p\i} \\
\text{cook + soup} \quad \text{cook the soup}' \\
[\_\_\_\_] \geq [\_\_\_\_] \\
L + L \ L \geq L \ L
\]

3.4.4 **A Summary Chart of the Three Level Tones at Junctions**

The table overleaf gives the overall summary of the shifting and dominance of the three level tones at word junctions.
We can observe from the chart that:

a) High tone, whether it occurs as $T_1$ or as $T_2$ dominates other tones.

b) $T_2$ dominates $T_1$ in all other cases.

3.4.5 Automatic Downstep

When high tone as $T_1$ is followed by low tone as $T_2$, the high tone dominates but automatic downstep occurs when the tone on the following syllable is high. For example:

$VP + NP$ \[ r_f + ürā \rightarrow ürā^* \] 'eat pig (pork)'
\[ H + L H \rightarrow H' H \]
eat + pig

$(N + N)NP$ \[ ozī + Êzē \rightarrow ozīzē \] 'Èzé's child'
\[ M H + L H \rightarrow M H'H \]
child + Êzē

* ['] after high tone denotes downstep.
The tone environment, $H + LH \Rightarrow H'H$, seems to be the only environment found yet where automatic downstep occurs. $H'H$ is the same phonetically as $HM$.

3.4.6 High-Falling Tone [$\wedge$] at Junctions

High-falling tone does not occur word initial except on the verb prefix /$\delta$/ where the syllable may stand as an independent morpheme sometimes. High-falling tone normally occurs word final and it may come in juxtaposition with other tones. When it occurs at morpheme or word junctions its high tonetic exponent is dominant and it would dominate other tones just like the level high tone - either in VP + NP or $(N + N)NP$ structure as shown below. The high-falling tone functions at junctions in exactly the same way as high tone.

$$VP + NP \quad kūrā + oyī \Rightarrow kūrōyī$$

'cry (at) + thief' 'cry at a thief'

$$H\ HF + MH \Rightarrow HHH$$

$\delta$ kūrōyī 'he shouted and/or clapped his hands at a thief who is caught'

$$NP + NP \quad øpō + ãri \Rightarrow õpåri$$

'long drum + ãri' 'Ari's long drum'

$$H\ HF + LM \Rightarrow HHM$$

õpåri $\delta$ żōżå

'long drum (of) ãri is good'

'Ari's long drum is good'
3.4.7 **Low-Rising Tone [▽] at Junctions**

It was mentioned earlier that low-rising tone has a very rare occurrence and distribution in the language. It occurs only on the monosyllabic verbs listed in 2.6.2. For that reason, it only occurs in VP + NP structure and it can only occur as $T_1$ and never as $T_2$. This is the only situation in the language where $V_1$ and $V_2$ are juxtaposed that both vowels retain their vocalic character. When low-rising tone occurs as $T_1$, its tonetic exponents of low and high spread over the two vowels that are juxtaposed. The low tone exponent occurs on $V_1$ while the high tone exponent dominates the inherent tone of $V_2$.

The VP

```
/hē/
```

'to be in possession of something by finding it'

is used to juxtapose with nominals having initial high, mid, and low tones.

```
he + fpe > hēfpe  'find and possess reed flute'
find + flute
LR + HM > LHM
δ hēfpe  'he is in possession of the reed flute he found'
```
hē + ēnu > hēēnu 'find and possess a yam'
find + yam
LR + MM > LHM

8 hēēnu 'he is in possession of a yam
he found'

hē + ūŋo > hēūŋo 'find and possess a cow'
find + cow
LR + LM > LHM

8 hēūŋo 'he is in possession of a cow
he found'
3.5 **High Tone as a Syntactic Juncture Feature**

High tone is used to mark a genitive relationship and a locative relationship between two nominals. The genitive high tone can only occur in an NP + NP structure. The locative high tone can occur in an NP + NP structure as well as in VP + NP structure. These are described below giving some emphasis to syntactic demarcative features as well.

3.5.1 **The Genitive High Tone**

The genitive relationship between two nominals is marked by a high tone on the initial syllable of the second nominal. Thus irrespective of the inherent tones of $V_1$ and $V_2$, this genitive high tone dominates. Most nouns can occur in genitival relationship with other nouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun₁</th>
<th>Noun₂</th>
<th>Genitive NP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ozi</td>
<td>ïzé</td>
<td>oziïzé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M H</td>
<td>L H</td>
<td>M H'H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>ïzé</td>
<td>'ïzé's child'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ënu</td>
<td>ozi</td>
<td>ën'ozi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M M</td>
<td>M H</td>
<td>M H H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yam</td>
<td>ozi</td>
<td>'the child's yam'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
$$\begin{align*}
\text{ösi} & + \quad \text{enu} & \quad \text{öfenu} \\
\text{LL} & + \quad \text{MM} & \quad \text{LHM} \\
\text{poker} & + \quad \text{yam} & \quad \text{"the poker (of) for yam"} \\
\text{ipå} & + \quad \text{čcè} & \quad \text{ipècé} \\
\text{M H} & + \quad \text{LL} & \quad \text{MHL} \\
\text{cup} & + \quad \text{wine} & \quad \text{"the cup of wine"} \\
\text{oghá} & + \quad \text{ize} & \quad \text{oghize} \\
\text{M H} & + \quad \text{MM} & \quad \text{MHM} \\
\text{spear} & + \quad \text{grasscutter} & \quad \text{"spear of grasscutter, i.e. a spear for hunting grasscutter"} \\
\text{ipš} & + \quad \text{ozǐ} & \quad \text{ipōzǐ} \\
\text{HH} & + \quad \text{MH} & \quad \text{HHH} \\
\text{flute} & + \quad \text{child} & \quad \text{"the child's flute"} \\
\text{enu} & + \quad \text{fdá} & \quad \text{enudá} \\
\text{MM} & + \quad \text{HH} & \quad \text{MHH} \\
\text{yam} & + \quad \text{fdá} & \quad \text{"Ida's yam"} \\
\text{čcè} & + \quad \text{fdá} & \quad \text{čfída} \\
\text{LL} & + \quad \text{HH} & \quad \text{LHH} \\
\text{wine} & + \quad \text{fdá} & \quad \text{"Ida's wine"}
\end{align*}$$
Thus we can posit that in addition to the grammatical function, high tone is an important syntactic juncture feature. It always supersedes other tones at such word junctions.

3.5.2 The Locative High Tone

The locative relationship between two nominals in a transitive clause is marked by a high tone on the initial syllable of the second nominal. Similar to the genitive high tone, the locative tone can occur on NP + NP structure. The distinction between the genitive high tone and the locative high tone is syntactically and semantically determined. One main distinction is that the second nominal phrase carrying initial high tone in locative phrases is always a name of a place or a particular location whereas the second nominal phrase of the genitive can be any noun.
The first noun is the direct object of the verb and the second noun is a locative and may be considered as a separate phrase.

There may be a natural pause between \( \text{NP}_1 \) and \( \text{NP}_2 \) in the above structure, and no vowel elision takes place between the two vowels that come in juxtaposition.

There is a class of verbs which take locative phrase directly without any other NP preceding the LP. These are verbs in which there is a relationship with a speci-
fic location implied. These include verbs like,

- [râ] 'to live in or inhabit a place'
- [zwë] 'to run in a race at a place'
- [ge] 'to meet at a place'

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{VP} & \text{NP}_{\text{Loc}} \\
\text{ō rā + abā} & \text{ō rābā} \\
\text{HF H + M H} & \text{HF H H} \\
\text{he live + abā} & \text{'he lived in Abā'}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{ō zwē + ēkō} & \text{ō zwēkō} \\
\text{HF L + L H} & \text{HF H'H} \\
\text{he run + ēkō} & \text{'he ran (a race) at Ekö'}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{ē ge + ēgē} & \text{ē gege} \\
\text{HF H + L H} & \text{HF H H} \\
\text{they meet + ēgē} & \text{'they met at Ege'}
\end{array}
\]

Similar to the genitive tone, the locative high tone, in addition to its grammatical function, marks a syntactic junction. The junctions between enu and âgeva; fze and òhù; râ and abâ; zwē and ēkō; and ge and ēgē in the above sentences are marked by high tone.

We can conclude this section with the remark that high tone is a dominant tone, carrying heavy lexical, grammatical, and juncture functions in Ebira.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE VERBAL PIECE: PHRASE RANK

4.1 The Verbal Piece

The term 'verbal piece' is well known in linguistic studies, but is often used in slightly different ways. In this thesis the term verbal piece is used to cover any grammatical unit (at whatever rank) which has a verb as its nucleus. It enables me to treat various categories of the verbal clause, the verbal phrase, the verbal group, and the verbal word. The description of the verbal piece in Ebira covers a very large part of the grammar of the language. It is the core of the grammar.

4.2 The Grammatical Hierarchy

For descriptive purposes, a grammatical hierarchy comprising various units is established. The units are sentence, clause, phrase, and word. Each unit is made up of units of the next lower rank. Thus sentence unit consists of clauses, clause unit consists of phrases, and phrase unit consists of words.
4.2.1 Sentence Rank

The structure of the sentence unit can be diagrammed as follows:

\[
S \rightarrow + \text{Dep. Cl.}^3 + \text{Ind. Cl.} + \text{Dep. Cl.}^3
\]

The sentence normally contains one obligatory independent clause, also called the main clause, one or more optional clauses before the independent clause, and one or more optional clauses after the independent clause. Up to three dependent clauses may occur in sequence but usually not more than one occurs.

Examples:

a) // Omuya o o m e u k o r e t e r e /  
   Omuya he-if do work well/hard  
   Dep. Cl.  
   O v a n i e k e h i //  
   he will have money  
   Ind. Cl.  
   'if Omuya works hard, he will be rich'

b) // Omuya a a m e u k o r e t e r e /  
   Omuya he-is doing work well/hard  
   Ind. Cl.  
   ' m m e r e e //  
   when I see him  
   Dep. Cl.  
   'Omuya was working hard when I saw him'
Sentence (a) contains one dependent clause before the main clause and sentence (b) contains one dependent clause after the main clause. Conditional dependent clauses usually precede the main clause, and purpose and reason dependent clauses usually follow the main clause.

4.2.2 Clause Rank (Verbal Clauses Only)

The structure of the verbal clause consists of an obligatory verbal phrase, optional nominal subject and optional nominal object. It can be diagrammed as:

\[
\text{Verb Cl. } \rightarrow \pm \text{NP}_s + \text{VP} + \text{NP}_o
\]

While NP_s is described here as 'optional', whether or not a given clause will include an NP_s, will depend on:

1. the mood of the clause: Imperative clauses never include an NP_s;
2. the discourse structure: for example, where a sequence of clauses share the same NP_s, this will usually occur only in the first clause of the sequence.

Similarly, whether or not a given clause includes an NP_o is determined by two factors:

1. the nature of the verb in the VP: for example, transitive verbs are usually followed by NP_o,
intransitive verbs are never followed by $NP_0$
(see further, 5.5);

(2) the discourse structure of the text: for example, in Serial Verb Constructions, more
than one verb may share the same $NP_0$, and this
will occur only in the first clause of the
series, although its presence is implied in
subsequent clauses. (See chapter 6 for Serial
Verb Constructions.)

Expansion of the clause consists of optional Temporal
phrase, or Adverbial phrase, or Locative phrase. See
further description in chapter 5.

4.2.3 Phrase Rank

There are several types of phrase units. These are:

Nominal phrase
Verbal phrase
Adverbial phrase
Temporal phrase
Locative phrase

The focus of this description is the Verbal Phrase.
The structure of other types of phrases is only described
to the extent that is necessary to explain the verbal
piece.
4.3 The Verbal Phrase

The verbal phrase is the nucleus of the clause. The nucleus of the verbal phrase is the verb word, which is obligatory and constant in form. Every verbal phrase contains a verb word.

4.3.1 The Structure of the Verbal Phrase

Grammatical changes, such as difference of mood, tense, number, person, and polarity are signalled by the use of preverbal items, some of which are words, others being affixes. Preverbs also signal some dependent or independent relationships in the clause. These preverbs vary in tone and phonetic shape. In particular, their form is governed by the vowel harmony set of the verb which they qualify. Thus if the vowel of the verb word belongs to vowel harmony Set A, the vowels of all its preverbs also belong to Set A.

Up to three preverbs may occur in a verbal phrase, and preverbs are therefore grouped according to 'orders', showing the order in which they will occur when they co-occur in the same VP. Order 1 preverbs occur first, followed by Order 2 preverbs, followed by Order 3 preverbs, followed by the verb. There are, however, a number of co-occurrence restrictions, which will be described below.
(a)  3rd per. sing.  neg. fut.  verb
he  not  will  come

'he will not come'

(b)  3rd per. sing.  neg. fut.  verb  pron. obj.
he  not  will  sell  it

'he will not sell it'

Analysis of the language makes it necessary to set up a number of grammatical categories, which are summarised in section 4.3.2. In brief, these are signalled by the different orders of preverbs as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order 1 Signals</th>
<th>Order 2 Signals</th>
<th>Order 3 Signals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tense: Past-simple</td>
<td>Polarity: Negative</td>
<td>Tense: Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>or</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual</td>
<td>Tense: Perfective</td>
<td>or General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person: 1st, 2nd, 3rd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number: Singular and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus person and number are signalled by preverbs of Order 1, polarity by preverbs of Order 2, while the differences of tense may be signalled by preverbs of any of the three orders in particular cases.

Order 1 preverbs are prefixes and are phonologically bound to the verb or to any preverb which they precede, although in the orthography they are written as separate words.

Another element of the VP is the pronoun object, a 'postverb' which is a suffix to the verb word. See example (b) above. The form of the pronoun object is also governed by the vowel harmony Set of the verb.

Thus the structure of the verbal phrase may be diagrammed as follows:

$$\text{VP} \rightarrow + \text{Pre } V_1 + \text{Pre } V_2 + \text{Pre } V_3 + V + \text{Post } V$$

All verbal phrases have an obligatory verb item, and (except the imperative) an obligatory Order 1 preverb. These structures account for all 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular and plural examples in the past simple, progressive, and habitual positive tenses. Negative examples have the additional Order 2 negative preverb. Perfective and Future tense examples have the appropriate Order 2 or Order 3 preverbs.
4.3.2 Summary of Grammatical Categories Signalled in the Verbal Phrase in Independent Clauses

The following display summarises the grammatical categories which are signalled in verbal phrase:

```
MOOD
  - Indicative
  - Interrogative
  - Imperative
  - Subjunctive

TENSE
  (indicative and interrogative clauses only)
    - Present (continuous)
      - Simple
      - Perfective
    - Past
      - General
    - Future
      - Immediate
    - Habitual

POLARITY
  - Positive
  - Negative

PERSON
  - First
  - Second
  - Third

NUMBER
  - Singular
  - Plural
```

Note that there are no gender distinctions in the grammatical categories of the VP.
If one took full account of high register as a feature of Interrogative pieces, it might be possible to consider Mood as a category not of the verbal phrase but of the whole verbal clause. Here, however, Mood is taken as a category of the verbal phrase since there are distinctive features for Mood within the verbal phrase. (See 4.5.1 for the definition of high register.)

There is concord within the clause with respect to number and person between the noun phrase subject ($NP_s$) and the verb phrase (VP) determined by the $NP_s$ and marked by sets of preverbs as follows:

- **Singular:** o, ø and a
- **Plural:** e, ə and (a)

**Examples:**

**Singular:**

- ocu ô re ekû
- ocu he see masquerade

$NP_s + VP \quad NP_o$

'Ocu saw the masquerade'

- ocu ô ná enu
- ocu he sell yam

$NP_s + VP \quad NP_o$

'Ocu sold some yams'
Plural:

ocu ọnịrị ọke ọ ọre ẹkụ
ocu and oke they see masquerade
\[\text{NP}_s + \text{VP} \quad \text{NP}_o\]
'Occu and Oke saw the masquerade'

ocu ọnịrị ọke ọ nà ẹmụ
cu and oke they sell yams
\[\text{NP}_s + \text{VP} \quad \text{NP}_o\]
'Occu and Oke sold some yams'

The only exception to the concord rule is that in the present continuous tense of the indicative mood the pre-verb for the 3rd person singular and plural is the same, āā.

Examples:

Singular:

\[\text{ocu āā vɛ}\]
\[\text{NP}_s + \text{VP}\]
'Ocu is coming'
Plural:

\[
\text{o} \quad \text{oniri} \quad \text{oke} \quad \text{aa} \quad \text{võ}
\]

\[
\text{o} \quad \text{cu} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{oke} \quad (\text{he-is}) \quad \text{coming}
\]

\[
\text{NP}_s \quad + \quad \text{VP}
\]

'Ocu and Oke are coming'

More examples of concord can be observed in chapter 5 where Clause Rank is discussed.

Any given verbal phrase exemplifies one option from each of the sets of options listed above. Thus a VP will be either Indicative, or Interrogative, or Imperative, or Subjunctive. A given Indicative or Interrogative VP will also be either present continuous, or past, or future, positive or negative, also either first, second, or third person, and either singular or plural.

There are a number of co-occurrence restrictions in the selections of these options, and these will be described below.

Charts 1 - 4 below (sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7) display the specific sets of preverbs which express each of these categories in the VP, and also (chart 4) the preverbs which signal some dependent clause relationships.

Chart 1 displays the preverbs which signal TENSE options.
Chart 2 displays the preverbs which signal MOOD options.
Chart 3 displays the preverbs which signal NEGATIVE POLARITY.
Chart 4 displays the preverbs which signal DEPENDENT CLAUSE relationships.

For each chart, there are two variant forms, vowel harmony Set A and vowel harmony Set B. As described earlier, it is the vowel harmony Set of the verb which determines the harmony Set of all the preverbs in any VP.

PERSON and NUMBER categories are displayed on the charts as they interplay with other categories. Sometimes preverbs signalling person and number fuse with other preverbs.

Example: ́m mēē hū
PreV₁ + V
am I + drink
'am I drinking?'

In the preverb ́m mēē it is not possible to say which part is person, which part is number and which part is tense. There are more preverbs of this structure in the charts.

INDICATIVE MOOD, POSITIVE POLARITY and INDEPENDENT CLAUSE relationship are taken as the basic unmarked form of the VP.
4.4 CHART 1: TENSE

Chart 1 shows how preverbs signal different TENSE options in indicative, positive verbal phrases. It is significant that the range of tense options which occur in interrogative verbal phrases and also in negative indicative verbal phrases is different from the tense options in indicative positive verbal phrases. These are displayed in Chart 2 (for interrogative) and Chart 3 (for negative) respectively.

There are no contrastive tense options for either the Imperative or Subjunctive moods.

(Please see next two pages.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENSE</th>
<th>1st Pers.</th>
<th>2nd Pers.</th>
<th>3rd Pers.</th>
<th>1st Pers.</th>
<th>2nd Pers.</th>
<th>3rd Pers.</th>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present Continuous</td>
<td>mèè</td>
<td>wèè</td>
<td>è è</td>
<td>yèè</td>
<td>wèè ...</td>
<td>è yèè</td>
<td>LL</td>
<td>(H M H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Simple</td>
<td>mè</td>
<td>wè</td>
<td>è</td>
<td>yè</td>
<td>wè ...</td>
<td>è</td>
<td>HF</td>
<td>hú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perf.</td>
<td>mè rèè</td>
<td>wè rèè</td>
<td>è rèè</td>
<td>yè rèè</td>
<td>wè rèè</td>
<td>è rèè</td>
<td>H M H</td>
<td>ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perf.</td>
<td>mè sì</td>
<td>wè sì</td>
<td>è sì</td>
<td>yè sì</td>
<td>wè sì</td>
<td>è sì</td>
<td>H H</td>
<td>sìsì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future General</td>
<td>mi vè</td>
<td>u vè</td>
<td>o vè</td>
<td>i vè</td>
<td>u vè</td>
<td>e vè</td>
<td>M HF</td>
<td>'drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Immediate</td>
<td>mèè vè</td>
<td>wèè vè</td>
<td>èè vè</td>
<td>yèè vè</td>
<td>wèè vè</td>
<td>è yèè</td>
<td>LL HF</td>
<td>'throw'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual</td>
<td>miì</td>
<td>uu</td>
<td>oo</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>uu ...</td>
<td>èe</td>
<td>M M</td>
<td>'paint'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Harmony Set B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present Continuous</td>
<td>màà</td>
<td>wàà</td>
<td>ãã</td>
<td>yàà</td>
<td>wàà</td>
<td>ëyàà</td>
<td>L L</td>
<td>(H H'H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Simple</td>
<td>mà</td>
<td>wà</td>
<td>ò</td>
<td>yà</td>
<td>wà</td>
<td>ë</td>
<td>HF</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfective</td>
<td>mà ráà</td>
<td>wà ráà</td>
<td>ò ráà</td>
<td>yà ráà</td>
<td>wà ráà</td>
<td>êráà</td>
<td>H M H</td>
<td>hî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfective</td>
<td>mà sì</td>
<td>wà sì</td>
<td>ò sì</td>
<td>yà sì</td>
<td>wà sì</td>
<td>êsì</td>
<td>H H</td>
<td>cãkã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future General</td>
<td>mì và</td>
<td>ù và</td>
<td>ò và</td>
<td>i và</td>
<td>ù và</td>
<td>ê và</td>
<td>M HF</td>
<td>'sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Immediate</td>
<td>màà và</td>
<td>wàà và</td>
<td>ãã và</td>
<td>yàà và</td>
<td>wàà và</td>
<td>ê yàà</td>
<td>L L HF</td>
<td>'buy'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual</td>
<td>mìì</td>
<td>ùù</td>
<td>òò</td>
<td>ìì</td>
<td>ùù</td>
<td>êë</td>
<td>M M</td>
<td>'break'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Past perfective preverb has two forms, the particles rée or ráà and sì or sì

Both of them denote perfective and both are in current use. They can be used interchangeably in most contexts by the same speaker. The only distinction which occurs in their use is described in 4.4.3.
Points of Interest

1. Note that the contrast between Harmony Set A preverbs and Harmony Set B preverbs in the charts is not purely phonological. One might have expected that first person singular Set B would be me, however, instead the form which occurs is maa. Some forms, however, are purely phonologically conditioned. A study of all four charts of the preverbs shows that the following rules apply:

   - i / ɪ is always phonologically predictable
   - u / u
   - o / ɔ

   but e may pair with e (phonological)
   or with a (morphological)

Note that a never occurs in Set A preverbs. In preverbs, a only occurs in the Set B counterpart of preverbs which have the vowel e in Set A. Thus in preverbs there are really only 4 vowel oppositions, as opposed to 5 oppositions in all other word classes and positions. See the comment in 2.3.2.3 on the ambivalence of a.

2. From the above it may be seen that the preverbs in Ebira are extremely complex. In this description I do not attempt to explain everything. A comparative
study of related languages might give insight on the historical origin of the present forms, but such a study is outside the scope of this synchronic description.

3. Note that the preverb for the 2nd person is the same for singular and plural, we/wa. nini is a plural marker that is always added after the verb when the 2nd person subject is plural to distinguish it from the 2nd person singular.

nini is not a part of any preverb and it is independent of the intra-vowel harmony sequences of the VP. It always occurs after the VP and the object of the VP, hence the dots between the VP and nini in all the charts. Pluralisation will be described in full in 4.8.

4. As shown in Chart 1, there are tonal classes of verbs, and tone has been discussed in detail in 2.6.3 and 2.6.4.
4.4.1 **Tense: Present Continuous**

The Order 1 preverb which signals the Present Continuous tense in the VP is:

- mēē '1st person singular' for harmony Set A verbs,

and

- māā '1st person singular' for harmony Set B verbs.

Examples:

**SET A**

- mēē

Order 1

1st pers. sing.

Present Cont. Tense

I am drink

VP

'I am drinking'

**SET B**

- māā

Order 1

1st pers. sing.

Present Cont. Tense

I am sell

VP

'I am selling'
A paradigm of the Present Continuous tense preverbs in the VP is given below:

**SET A**
- mēē hū 'I am drinking'
- wēē hū 'you (sing.) are drinking'
- ēē hū 'he is drinking'
- yēē hū 'we are drinking'
- wēē hū nīnī 'you (pl.) are drinking'
- ēyēē hū 'they are drinking'

**SET B**
- māā nā 'I am selling'
- wāā nā 'you (sing.) are selling'
- āā nā 'he is selling'
- yāā nā 'we are selling'
- wāā nā nīnī 'you (pl.) are selling'
- ēyāā nā 'they are selling'

**4.4.2 Tense: Past Simple**

Although this tense has usually been named Past Simple because it most frequently has past meaning, in fact, it can also have present meaning in some contexts. There is no contrast between past and present in Ebira in the simple form of the VP. Distinctions of time are indicated by other expressions, such as temporals.
could mean

mē  hū  (eyīneyīni)
'I drink (every day)'

or

mē  hū  (ērī)  
'I drank (yesterday)'

The Order 1 preverb which signals this tense in the
VP is

mē  for 1st person singular for Set A

and

mā  for 1st person singular for Set B.

The paradigm for this tense is as follows:

SET A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preverb</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'I drank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'you (sing.) drank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'he drank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'we drank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wē</td>
<td>hū nǐnī</td>
<td>'you (pl.) drank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'they drank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mà</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>'I tore'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wá</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>'you (sing.) tore'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ò</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>'he tore'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yá</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>'we tore'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wà</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>niní</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>è</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.3 Tense: Past Perfective

The Past Perfective tense is signalled by two preverbs. These are preverbs of Orders 1 and 2.

Preverb Order 1 is mé and Order 2 is sǐ or rēe for Set A.

Preverb Order 1 is má and Order 2 is sǐ or rāa for Set B.

There are two forms of the preverb particle denoting perfective both in Sets A and B. There does not seem to be any distinction in meaning between either of these Order 2 particles. The same speaker may use them interchangeably.

There is, however, a difference of form in the way that the two particles are used in the Past Perfective tense. This can be illustrated from the following example:

mé sǐ hú
or mé rēe hú
both mean 'I have drunk'

In a VP where there is a pronominal object or a nominal object, the object normally follows the verb. However, when the perfective particle sǐ / sǐ is used
the object may precede the verb as in the following examples:

mē sī ēcē hū
I have wine drunk
'I have drunk wine'

and

mē sī ɕ hū
I have it drunk
'I have drunk it'

Note that the form of the preverb sī is still governed by the vowel harmony set of the verb, even though it is separated from it by the pronominal object or NP₀.

When rēe / rāa perfective particle is used the object never precedes the verb.

Examples:

me rēe hū ɕ
I have drink it
'I have drunk it'

ma rāa rǐ ɕ
I have eat it
'I have eaten it'

The paradigm for the Past Perfective tense follows:
Past Perfective Tense

**SET A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>hú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>hú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>hú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>hú níni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>é</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>hú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mé</td>
<td>rëe</td>
<td>hú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>rëe</td>
<td>hú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>rëe</td>
<td>hú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye</td>
<td>rëe</td>
<td>hú níni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mé</td>
<td>rëe</td>
<td>hú</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SET B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>má</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wá</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wá</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>nà níni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>é</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>má</td>
<td>rëa</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wá</td>
<td>rëa</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>rëa</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye</td>
<td>rëa</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wá</td>
<td>rëa</td>
<td>nà níni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>é</td>
<td>rëa</td>
<td>nà</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.4 Tense: Future

Ebira distinguishes between two forms of the future. These are Future General, and Future Immediate. The Future General refers to any time from the moment of speaking till indefinite time in the future. It could be the next hour, the next day, the next month or many years to come. Events or things referred to in Future General may or may not happen.

On the other hand, the Future Immediate refers to time that is definite and not too far away. Events referred to in the Immediate Future Tense are most likely to happen within a foreseeable definite time. Usually there are signs or some evidence which suggest some degree of certainty.

Both Future General and Future Immediate are signalled by two preverbs. They differ in Order 1 preverb but the Order 3 preverb is the same for both.

4.4.4.1 Future General

Future General is signalled by the preverbs:

Order 1 mî (1st pers. sing.) and Order 3 vé for Set A

harmony words;

Order 1 mî (1st pers. sing.) and Order 3 vâ for Set B

harmony words.

The examples are given in the paradigm overleaf.
**SET A**

mf vē hū  'I will drink'

.Qt vē hū  'you (sing.) will drink'

.日本人 vē hū  'he will drink'

.日本人 vē hū  'we will drink'

.日本人 vē hū  'you (pl.) will drink'

.日本人 vē hū  'they will drink'

**SET B**

mf vâ nā  'I will sell'

.Qt vâ nā  'you (sing.) will sell'

.日本人 vâ nā  'he will sell'

.日本人 vâ nā  'we will sell'

.日本人 vâ nā  'you (pl.) will sell'

.日本人 vâ nā  'they will sell'
4.4.4.2 Future Immediate

The Future Immediate is signalled in the VP by the preverbs

Order 1 mēē (1st pers. sing.) and Order 3 vē for Set A

---

Order 1 maa (1st pers. sing.) and Order 3 va for Set B

---

harmony verbs;

and

The paradigm:

**SET A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mēē</th>
<th>vē</th>
<th>hū</th>
<th>'I am about to drink'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wēē</td>
<td>vē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'you (sing.) are about to drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ēē</td>
<td>vē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'he is about to drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yēē</td>
<td>vē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'we are about to drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wēē</td>
<td>vē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'you (pl.) are about to drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e yēē</td>
<td>vē</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'they are about to drink'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SET B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>māā</th>
<th>vā</th>
<th>nā</th>
<th>'I am about to sell'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wāā</td>
<td>vā</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'you (sing.) are about to sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>āā</td>
<td>vā</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'he is about to sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yāā</td>
<td>vā</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'we are about to sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wāā</td>
<td>vā</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'you (pl.) are about to sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e yāā</td>
<td>vā</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'they are about to sell'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.5 **Tense: Habitual**

The Habitual tense in Ebira denotes actions which are performed regularly and have become the habit of the individuals concerned. This tense represents what may be translated in English as, *usually*, *normally*, or *habitually*. The tense is signalled in the VP by preverb Order 1 only which is

- **Set A**
  - **mii** (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
  - **uu** (2nd pers. sing.)
  - **oo** (3rd pers. sing.)
  - **ii** (1st pers. pl.)
  - **uu** (2nd pers. pl.)
  - **ee** (3rd pers. pl.)

- **Set B**
  - **mi**: (1st pers. sing.)
  - **uu**: (2nd pers. sing.)
  - **oo**: (3rd pers. sing.)
  - **i**: (1st pers. pl.)
  - **uu**: (2nd pers. pl.)
  - **ee**: (3rd pers. pl.)

This is the only tense that carries mid tone and mid tone only in the preverbs in all its forms. The paradigm is given below.

| 
|---|
| **Set A** |
| mii  | hű    | 'I habitually drink' |
| uu   | hű    | 'you (sing.) habitually drink' |
| oo   | hű    | 'he habitually drinks' |
| ii   | hű    | 'we habitually drink' |
| uu   | hű nini | 'you (pl.) habitually drink' |
| ee   | hű    | 'they habitually drink' |
| **Set B** |
| miː | ná    | 'I habitually sell' |
| uuː | ná    | 'you (sing.) habitually sell' |
| ooː | ná    | 'he habitually sells' |
| iː  | ná    | 'we habitually sell' |
| uuː | ná nini | 'you (pl.) habitually sell' |
| ee  | ná    | 'they habitually sell' |
The Indicative Mood has already been illustrated in Chart 1, where all the examples are indicative. Chart 2 shows how preverbs signal different options in the verbal phrase for the other moods.

(Please see next two pages.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOOD</th>
<th>1st Pers.</th>
<th>2nd Pers.</th>
<th>3rd Pers.</th>
<th>1st Pers.</th>
<th>2nd Pers.</th>
<th>3rd Pers.</th>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>m mēe</td>
<td>wē e</td>
<td>ē ēe</td>
<td>f yēe</td>
<td>u wēē...</td>
<td>ē yēe</td>
<td>nimir</td>
<td>hū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>ū wēē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>f yēe</td>
<td>u wēē...</td>
<td>ē yēe</td>
<td>nimir</td>
<td>hū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>mēe</td>
<td>mēe</td>
<td>wēē</td>
<td>wēē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>nimir</td>
<td>rō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>mēe</td>
<td>wēē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>nimir</td>
<td>zizī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>mēe sī</td>
<td>mēe sī</td>
<td>wēē sī</td>
<td>wēē sī</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>nimir</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>mēe vē</td>
<td>wēē vē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>nimir</td>
<td>H H H ' Roast'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>mēe vē</td>
<td>wēē vē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>nimir</td>
<td>H H H ' Think'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>mēe vē</td>
<td>wēē vē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>nimir</td>
<td>H H H ' Roast'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>mēe vē</td>
<td>wēē vē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>ē ē ē</td>
<td>nimir</td>
<td>H H H ' Think'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>'shake'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>ē</td>
<td>ye</td>
<td>we...nimir</td>
<td>ē</td>
<td>M (L)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Harmony Set B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Present</td>
<td>mú māa</td>
<td>ū wāa</td>
<td>ā āā</td>
<td>ì yāā</td>
<td>ū wāā...</td>
<td>ĕ yāā</td>
<td>H H'H</td>
<td>nā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Continuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-T Past</td>
<td>māā</td>
<td>wāā</td>
<td>ìī</td>
<td>yāā</td>
<td>wāā...</td>
<td>ĕī</td>
<td>H H</td>
<td>hū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Simple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Past</td>
<td>māā ēí</td>
<td>wāā ēí</td>
<td>ìī ēí</td>
<td>yāā ēí</td>
<td>wāā ēí...</td>
<td>ĕī ēí</td>
<td>H H H</td>
<td>cākā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Perfective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-A Future</td>
<td>māā vā</td>
<td>wāā vā</td>
<td>ìī vā</td>
<td>yāā vā</td>
<td>wāā vā...</td>
<td>ĕī vā</td>
<td>H H H</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Habitual</td>
<td>m māa</td>
<td>ū wāa</td>
<td>ē ēō</td>
<td>ì yāa</td>
<td>ū wāa...</td>
<td>ĕ ĕē</td>
<td>M H M</td>
<td>'sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Imperative</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>wa</td>
<td>ē</td>
<td>ya</td>
<td>wa...nīnī</td>
<td>ē</td>
<td>M (L)</td>
<td>'break'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in the Indicative Mood, rée / ráa may occur as alternative to sī / sī in the past perfective tense.
4.5.1 The Interrogative Mood

The Interrogative mood is also signalled by preverbs in the verbal phrase. All the tenses listed in Chart 1 may be used in the Interrogative mood, except that there is only one form of the future, Future General, with no contrast between Future General and Future Immediate. This reflects the fact that Future Immediate always implies some degree of definiteness, a definite expectation that the action or event will happen, and this is semantically incompatible with the Interrogative mood.

In addition to specific preverbs with high tone shown in Chart 2, high register is a feature of the Interrogative mood. High register is defined as raising of the voice pitch above the normal pitch level when uttering a phrase or a sentence. The high pitch spreads over the entire phrase or utterance delimited by pauses.

4.5.1.1 The Interrogative Present Continuous Tense

The Interrogative mood in the Present Continuous tense is marked by a double Order 1 preverb which is:

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{1} \text{mæs} (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs} \]

and

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{1} mæs (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.} \]

A study of column one of Chart 2 and comparison with Chart 1 will show why the term 'double order 1' preverb is used here. When the Order 1 preverb has a simple
vowel in the Indicative form, the Interrogative is signalled (partially) by doubling that vowel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Interrogative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Order 1 preverb</td>
<td>Order 1 Preverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1st pers. sing.)</td>
<td>(1st pers. sing.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Simple:</td>
<td>mē / mā</td>
<td>mēē / māā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfective:</td>
<td>mē / mā</td>
<td>mēē / māā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future General:</td>
<td>mi / mi</td>
<td>mēē / māā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But when the preverb already has a double vowel in the Indicative form,

Examples:

Present Continuous: mēē / māā  
mū mēē / mū māā  
Habitual: mii / mii  
mū mēē / mū māā

the Interrogative is signalled (partially) by a syllabic prefix to the preverb, whose form is largely phonologically conditioned by the following sounds:

- m- before m  
- u- / u- before w  
- e- / e- before e / e  
- o- / o- before o / o  
- e- before e (Ha)  
- a- before a (Hb)  
- i- / i before y  
- e- / e- before y

( ) = Harmony Set A and Harmony Set B.
The paradigm examples for the Interrogative Present Continuous tense follow. Since these forms are exclusively interrogative, there is no need to use a question mark, ?.

SET A

mí méé hú 'am I drinking?'
ů wée hú 'are you (sing.) drinking?'
ě ěé hú 'is he drinking?'
ê yée hú 'are we drinking?'
ů wée hú nǐnǐ 'are you (pl.) drinking?'
ě yée hú 'are they drinking?'

SET B

mí màá ná 'am I selling?'
ů wàá ná 'are you (sing.) selling?'
ě ūú ná 'is he selling?'
ê yáá ná 'are we selling?'
ů wàá ná nǐnǐ 'are you (pl.) selling?'
ě yáá ná 'are they selling?'

4.5.1.2 The Interrogative Past Simple

The Interrogative Mood in the Past Simple tense is marked by Order 1 preverb:

méé (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
and
màá (1st pers. sing) for harmony Set B verbs.
The Interrogative mood in the Past Perfective is marked by Order 1 and Order 2 preverbs:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{m\text{\text{}}} & \quad \text{s\text{\text{}}} (1\text{st pers. sing.}) \quad \text{for Set A harmony verbs} \\
\text{m\text{\text{}}} & \quad \text{--} \quad \text{--} \\
\text{\text{\text{}}} & \quad \text{s\text{\text{}}} (1\text{st pers. sing.}) \quad \text{for Set B harmony verbs} \\
\text{\text{\text{}}} & \quad \text{--} \quad \text{--}
\end{align*}
\]

The paradigms are:
SET A

méè sǐ hū 'have I drunk?'
weg sǐ hū 'have you (sing.) drunk?'
ôô sǐ hū 'has he drunk?'
yêê sǐ hū 'have we drunk?'
wêê sǐ hū nînî 'have you (pl.) drunk?'
eëe sî hū 'have they drunk?'

SET B

màa sǐ nā 'have I sold?'
wàa sǐ nā 'have you (sing.) sold?'
ôô sǐ nā 'has he sold?'
yàa sǐ nā 'have we sold?'
wàa sǐ nā nînî 'have you (pl.) sold?'
eëe sî nā 'have they sold?'

4.5.1.4 The Interrogative Future

The Interrogative Mood in the future tense in the VP is just one form, the Future General. It is signalled by Order 1 and Order 3 preverbs:

méè vè (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A

and

màa vâ (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set B

Examples: (See overleaf).
4.5.1.5 The Interrogative Mood in Habitual Tense

The Interrogative mood in the Habitual tense is marked in the VP by double Order 1 preverb:

\[ \text{SET A} \]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{m} & \text{ mée vê ħū} & \text{'}shall I drink'? \\
\text{u} & \text{ wée vê ħū} & \text{'}will you (sing.) drink'? \\
\text{o} & \text{ oō hū} & \text{'}will he return'? \\
\text{i} & \text{ yée ħū} & \text{'}shall we drink'? \\
\text{u} & \text{ wée ħū nǐnǐ} & \text{'}will you (pl.) drink'? \\
\text{e} & \text{ ē ē ħū} & \text{'}will they drink'? \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[ \text{SET B} \]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{māā vā nā} & \text{'}shall I sell'? \\
\text{wāā vā nā} & \text{'}will you (sing.) sell'? \\
\text{oō vā nā} & \text{'}will he sell'? \\
\text{yāā vā nā} & \text{'}shall we sell'? \\
\text{wāā vā nā nǐnǐ} & \text{'}will you (pl.) sell'? \\
\text{ēē vā nā} & \text{'}will they sell'? \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{m mée (1st pers. sing.) for Set A verbs} \\
\text{m māā (1st pers. sing.) for Set B verbs.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[ \text{SET A} \]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{m} & \text{ mée ħū} & \text{'}do I habitually drink'? \\
\text{u} & \text{ wée ħū} & \text{'}do you (sing.) habitually drink'? \\
\text{o} & \text{ oō ħū} & \text{'}does he habitually drink'? \\
\text{i} & \text{ yée ħū} & \text{'}do we habitually drink'? \\
\text{u} & \text{ wée ħū nǐnǐ} & \text{'}do you (pl.) habitually drink'? \\
\text{e} & \text{ ē ē ħū} & \text{'}do they habitually drink'? \\
\end{align*}
\]
4.5.2 The Imperative Mood

The Imperative Mood in the VP has zero preverb and it is tenseless. By its structure and semantics, it can occur with second person singular and plural only. It consists only of a verb in the VP, optionally followed by a pronoun object post-verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) hū</td>
<td>a) hū nini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) hū quel</td>
<td>b) hū quel nini</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Imperative Mood is a command addressed to a second person. Therefore any action verb can occur in the Imperative Mood. Stative verbs do not occur in the Imperative Mood.
4.5.3 The Subjunctive Mood

The Subjunctive mood in the VP is similar to the Imperative mood in that it is a mild command or a wish. It expresses meaning similar to the meaning expressed by should, ought to, or let ... in English.

The mood is signalled by Order 1 preverb.

me (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs

and

ma (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

Examples:

**SET A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preverb</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'I should drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'you (sing.) should drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ō</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'he should drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'we should drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>nini</td>
<td>'you (pl.) should drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ê</td>
<td>hū</td>
<td>'they should drink'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SET B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preverb</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ma</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'I should sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'you (sing.) should sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ō</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'he should sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ya</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'we should sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa</td>
<td>nini</td>
<td>'you (pl.) should sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ê</td>
<td>nā</td>
<td>'they should sell'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that 3rd person singular and plural preverbs have low tone, while the others have mid tone.
4.6  **CHART 3: NEGATIVE POLARITY**

Chart 3 shows how preverbs signal Negative Polarity in the verbal phrase in the Indicative.

4.6.1  **Negative Indicative Tenses**

There are fewer tense options in negative indicative verbal phrases than in positive indicative verbal phrases. The tenses signalled by preverbs in the negative VP include only the Past Simple, the Past Perfective, Future General, and Habitual tenses.

See over for charts.
### Harmony Set A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Polarity</td>
<td>mē yī</td>
<td>wē yī</td>
<td>ɗ yī</td>
<td>yē yī</td>
<td>wē yī...</td>
<td>ē yī</td>
<td>H H</td>
<td>hū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Simple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfective</td>
<td>mēē yī</td>
<td>wēē yī</td>
<td>ɗō yī</td>
<td>yēē yī</td>
<td>wēē yī</td>
<td>ēē yī</td>
<td>H L H</td>
<td>pēhē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>mē yī vē</td>
<td>wē yī vē</td>
<td>ɗ yī vē</td>
<td>yē yī vē</td>
<td>wē yī vē</td>
<td>ē yī vē</td>
<td>H H HF</td>
<td>'drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual</td>
<td>mē me</td>
<td>wē me</td>
<td>ɗ me</td>
<td>yē me</td>
<td>wē me...</td>
<td>ē me</td>
<td>H M</td>
<td>'see'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 'winnow'
**HARMONY SET B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sing.</td>
<td>me yi</td>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>de yi</td>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>ee yi</td>
<td>... nini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>me mi</td>
<td>we mi</td>
<td>de mi</td>
<td>we mi</td>
<td>ee mi</td>
<td>... nini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Simple</td>
<td>me yi</td>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>de yi</td>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>ee yi</td>
<td>... nini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfective</td>
<td>me yi</td>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>de yi</td>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>ee yi</td>
<td>... nini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>me yi va</td>
<td>we yi va</td>
<td>de yi va</td>
<td>we yi va</td>
<td>ee yi va</td>
<td>... nini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual</td>
<td>ma ma</td>
<td>wa ma</td>
<td>de ma</td>
<td>wa ma</td>
<td>ee ma</td>
<td>... nini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH HF</td>
<td>'go'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>nà</td>
<td>râ</td>
<td>râ</td>
<td>râ</td>
<td>râ</td>
<td>'eat'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative is signalled basically by yi- / yi-.

Comparison with Chart 1 shows the following points of interest:

(a) In the Past Perfective, the preverb rê- / râ- is not used but there is apparent compensatory lengthening of the 1st preverb.

(b) In the Habitual tense, a completely different form, me / ma, is used to signal negative.
I have given ample paradigms for Charts 1 and 2. I will just give a harmony pair paradigm for each of the tenses in Chart 3.

4.6.1.1 The Negative Indicative: Past Simple

The Negative Indicative in the Past Simple tense is signalled by preverbs:

- me yi (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
- me yi (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

SET A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preverb</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>me yi</td>
<td>hú</td>
<td>'I did not drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>hú</td>
<td>'you (sing.) did not drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ò yi</td>
<td>hú</td>
<td>'he did not drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye yi</td>
<td>hú</td>
<td>'we did not drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>nínì</td>
<td>'you (pl.) did not drink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ë yi</td>
<td>hú</td>
<td>'they did not drink'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SET B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preverb</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>me yi</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>'I did not sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>'you (sing.) did not sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ò yi</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>'he did not sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye yi</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>'we did not sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we yi</td>
<td>nínì</td>
<td>'you (pl.) did not sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ë yi</td>
<td>ná</td>
<td>'they did not sell'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.6.1.2 The Negative Indicative: Past Perfective

The Negative Indicative in Past Perfective tense is signalled by preverbs:

- **Set A**
  - **mēē yi** (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
  - **wēē yi** (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs

- **Set B**
  - **mēē yi** (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
  - **wēē yi** (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

**Set A**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mēē yi</td>
<td>ré</td>
<td>'I have not seen'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wēē yi</td>
<td>ré</td>
<td>'you (sing.) have not seen'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dōō yi</td>
<td>ré</td>
<td>'he has not seen'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yēē yi</td>
<td>ré</td>
<td>'we have not seen'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wēē yi</td>
<td>ré nini</td>
<td>'you (pl.) have not seen'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ēē yi</td>
<td>ré</td>
<td>'they have not seen'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Set B**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mēē yi</td>
<td>rī</td>
<td>'I have not eaten'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wēē yi</td>
<td>rī</td>
<td>'you (sing.) have not eaten'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dōō yi</td>
<td>rī</td>
<td>'he has not eaten'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yēē yi</td>
<td>rī</td>
<td>'we have not eaten'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wēē yi</td>
<td>rī nini</td>
<td>'you (pl.) have not eaten'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ēē yi</td>
<td>rī</td>
<td>'they have not eaten'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.1.3 The Negative Indicative Future

The Negative Indicative in Future tense is signalled by preverbs:

mė yǐ vē (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs

and

mē yǐ vâ (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

Set A

mē yǐ vē hū 'I will not drink'
we yǐ vē hū 'you (sing.) will not drink'
ō yǐ vē hū 'he will not drink'
yē yǐ vē hū 'we will not drink'
wē yǐ vē hū nǐnǐ 'you (pl.) will not drink'
e yǐ vē hū 'they will not drink'

Set B

mē yǐ vâ nā 'I will not sell'
wē yǐ vâ nā 'you (sing.) will not sell'
ō yǐ vâ nā 'he will not sell'
yē yǐ vâ nā 'we will not sell'
wē yǐ vâ nā nǐnǐ 'you (pl.) will not sell'
e yǐ vâ nā 'they will not sell'
4.6.1.4 The Negative Indicative - Habitual

The Negative Indicative in the Habitual tense is signalled by preverbs:

me me (1st per. sing) for harmony Set A verbs

and

ma ma (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

Set A

me me hú ñbíya 'I do not habitually drink beer'
we me hú ñbíya 'you (sing.) do not habitually drink beer'
ó me hú ñbíya 'he does not habitually drink beer'
yé me hú ñbíya 'we do not habitually drink beer'
we me hú ñbíya níñi 'you (pl.) do not habitually drink beer'
ó me hú ñbíya 'they do not habitually drink beer'

Set B

ma ma rif ñrá 'I not not habitually eat pork'
wá ma rif ñrá 'you (sing.) do not habitually eat pork'
ó ma rif ñrá 'he does not habitually eat pork'
yá ma rif ñrá 'we do not habitually eat pork'
wá ma rif ñrá níñi 'you (pl.) do not habitually eat pork'
ó ma rif ñrá 'they do not habitually eat pork'
Note that the negative order 2 preverbs for the Habitual tense is:

me / ma in contrast to the normal
yɨ / yɨ in other tenses.

The language employs the preverbs me / ma in the negative habitual to maintain the mid tone which is characteristic of the Habitual tense since yɨ / yɨ negative particles always carry high tone.
4.6.2  **Negative Tenses in the Interrogative Mood**

The Negative tense in the Interrogative Mood is not signalled by preverbs in the VP but by another element of the VP which may be labelled a prosodic suffix of the VP. This prosodic suffix is lengthening of the final vowel of the VP which will carry a mid tone and is a syllable on its own. Generally any indicative VP can be interrogativised in Ebira by lengthening the final vowel and the lengthened vowel will always carry mid tone. All the tenses which occur in the Negative Indicative VP could also occur in the Negative Interrogative VP. High Register as a feature of Interrogative has already been mentioned (4.5.1). Just a few sets of examples are given below. See 5.10.1 for further discussion.

**Past Simple:**

**SET A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Form</th>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mē yī</td>
<td>hū u</td>
<td>'did I not drink?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wē yī</td>
<td>hū u</td>
<td>'did you (sing.) not drink?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o yī</td>
<td>hū u</td>
<td>'did he not drink?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yē yī</td>
<td>hū u</td>
<td>'did we not drink?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wē yī</td>
<td>hū u nǐnǐ</td>
<td>'did you (pl.) not drink?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ē yī</td>
<td>hū u</td>
<td>'did they not drink?'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SET B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Form</th>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mē yī</td>
<td>nā a</td>
<td>'did I not sell?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wē yī</td>
<td>nā a</td>
<td>'did you (sing.) not sell?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o yī</td>
<td>nā a</td>
<td>'did he not sell?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yē yī</td>
<td>nā a</td>
<td>'did we not sell?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wē yī</td>
<td>nā a nǐnǐ</td>
<td>'did you (pl.) not sell?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ē yī</td>
<td>nā a</td>
<td>'did they not sell?'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other tenses of the Negative Interrogative have paradigm examples similar to the above. The important point is that the final lengthened vowel always carries mid tone and constitutes an additional syllable.

4.6.3 **Negative Imperative Mood**

The Negative Imperative is formed by an initial āsū plus the verb. This āsū does not harmonise with any other forms, it remains invariable. It is difficult to classify it as a preverb, as it does not have the usual characteristics of preverbs. It cannot occur alone, and it occurs only as a way of making the negative imperative.

Examples:

2nd per. sing. āsū nā
don't go
'don't go'

2nd per. pl. āsū nā nĩĩ

don't go pl.
'(you pl.) don't go'

4.6.4 **Negative Subjunctive Mood**

As in the Negative Imperative, negation is not signalled in the VP by a preverb. The Negative Subjunctive has a negative phrase similar to the Negative Imperative but longer in structure. This is followed by an Order 1
preverb identical to those occurring in the Positive Sub-
junctive. See Chart 2. The negative phrase for the
Subjunctive is:

äsū zë ka 'don't let, or should not'

Examples:

SET A
äsū zë ka me hū 'don't let me drink'
äsū zë ka we hū 'don't [let you (sing.)] drink'
äsū zë ka o hū 'don't let him drink'
äsū zë ka ye hū 'don't let us drink'
äsū zë ka we hū niŋi 'don't [let you (pl.)] drink'
äsū zë ka e hū 'don't let them drink'

SET B
äsū zë ka ma nā 'don't let me sell'
äsū zë ka wa nā 'don't [let you (sing.)] sell'
äsū zë ka o nā 'don't let him sell'
äsū zë ka ya nā 'don't let us sell'
äsū zë ka wa nā niŋi 'don't [let you (pl.)] sell'
äsū zë ka e nā 'don't let them sell'

The negative phrases for the Imperative and the Sub-
jective are not part of NP or part of VP. They are some
of the neutral elements in the language which have syn-
tactic functions but are not conveniently assigned to a
particular unit.
4.7 CHART 4: DEPENDENT CLAUSES

There are two dependent clause relationships which in Ebira are signalled by preverbs, unlike their English translations. These are "if" and "when" dependent clauses. Chart 4 displays these dependent clause preverbs.

See the next two pages.
# Harmony Set A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;IF&quot; Present</td>
<td>mëëë</td>
<td>wëëë</td>
<td>ëëë</td>
<td>yëëë</td>
<td>wëëë</td>
<td>ñëëë</td>
<td>(L H M)</td>
<td>hë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Simple</td>
<td>më ê</td>
<td>wë ê</td>
<td>ëê</td>
<td>yë ê</td>
<td>wë ê</td>
<td>ñë ê</td>
<td>L H</td>
<td>rë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfective</td>
<td>mëë si</td>
<td>wëë si</td>
<td>ëë si</td>
<td>yëë si</td>
<td>wëë si</td>
<td>ñëë si</td>
<td>L H H</td>
<td>hûûë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>mëë vë</td>
<td>wëë vë</td>
<td>ëë vë</td>
<td>yëë vë</td>
<td>wëë vë</td>
<td>ñëë vë</td>
<td>L H HF</td>
<td>&quot;drink&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| "WHEN" Present    | në mëë          | ñëëë           | ñëëë           | i mëë            | ñëëë            | ñëëë            | H L L  | 'see' |
| Continuous        |                |                |                |                 |                 |                 |       |       |
| Past Simple       | në më           | ñëë           | ñëëë           | ñëëë            | ñëëë            | ñëëë            | H L   | 'ask' |

## Harmony Set B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPENDENT CLAUSES</th>
<th>PERSON AND NUMBER</th>
<th>TONE</th>
<th>VERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present</strong></td>
<td>māa</td>
<td>wāāa</td>
<td>ūāa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>māa</td>
<td>wāā</td>
<td>ūō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>māā sī</td>
<td>wāā sī</td>
<td>ūō sī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>māā vā</td>
<td>wāā vā</td>
<td>ūō vā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHEN</strong></td>
<td>mī māā</td>
<td>ūī māā</td>
<td>ūō māā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>mī mē</td>
<td>ūī mē</td>
<td>ūō mē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7.1 Dependent Clauses "if" and "when"

Two dependent clause relationships are signalled by preverbs in the verbal phrase, "if" dependent clause relationship and "when" dependent clause relationships. Four tenses are signalled by preverbs in "if" clause relationships. These are Present Continuous tense, Past Simple, Past Perfective and Future General. Two tenses are signalled in "when" clause relationships which are present continuous and past simple tenses. Examples of dependent clauses are better presented in relationships with independent clauses. A set of examples in past simple tense are given for "if" dependent clauses and another set of examples in past simple tense also is presented for "when" dependent clauses.

4.7.1.1 Dependent Clause "if"

The preverb for "if" dependent clause in the past simple tense in the VP is

mēē (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs

and

māā (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

SET A
(a) mēē hūsē, mî vâ dō
I-if ask, I will get
'if I ask, I will get'
(b) \( \text{wee hûsê, ŭ vâ dô} \)
you (sing.)-if ask, you (sing.) will get
'if you (sing.) ask, you (sing.) will get'

(c) \( \text{ôô hûsê, ŭ vâ dô} \)
he-if ask he will get
'if he asks, he will get'

(d) \( \text{yêê hûsê, ŭ vâ dô} \)
we-if ask we will get
'if we ask, we will get'

(e) \( \text{wee hûsê nînî, ŭ vâ dô nînî} \)
you-if ask pl. you will get pl.
'if you (pl.) ask, you (pl.) will get'

(f) \( \text{ëë hûsê è vâ dô} \)
they-if ask they will get
'if they ask, they will get'

SET B

(a) \( \text{màâ hî ìsà, mi vâ rî ô} \)
I-if buy food I-should eat it
'if I buy food, I should eat it'

(b) \( \text{wàâ hî ìsà, ŭ vâ rî ô} \)
you-if buy food you-should eat it
'if you buy food, you should eat it'
4.7.1.2 Dependent Clause "when"

The preverb for "when" dependent clause in the past simple tense in the VP is Order 1 double preverb.

\[ \text{mē} (1\text{st pers. sing.}) \] for harmony Set A verbs

\[ \text{mē} (1\text{st pers. sing.}) \] for harmony Set B verbs.

**SET A**

(a) \[ \text{mē} \text{ rē } \text{ e}, \text{ dāhī} \]

I-when see him he-is well

'when I saw him, he was alright'

(b) \[ \text{u mē} \text{ rē } \text{ e}, \text{ dāhī} \]

you-when see him he-is well

'when you saw him, he was alright'
(c) ɗ mē rē ē, ɗ dāhī
he-when see him he-is alright
'when he saw him, he was alright'

(d) ɗ mē rē ē, ɗ dāhī
we-when see him he-is well
'when we saw him, he was alright'

(e) ɗ mē rē ē nini, ɗ dāhī
you-when see him pl. he-is well
'when you (pl.) saw him, he was alright'

(f) ɗ mē rē ē, ɗ dāhī
they-when see him he-is well
'when they saw him, he was alright'

SET B

(a) mē vē, mā rī isdiction
I-when come I eat food
'when I came, I ate food'

(b) ɗ mē vē, wā rī isdiction
you-when come you eat food
'when you came, you ate food'

(c) ɗ mē vē, ɗ rī isdiction
he-when come he eat food
'when he came, he ate food'
(d) ṭ mè vë yà rî  isá
we-when come we eat food
    'when we came, we ate food'

(e) û mè vë nînî, wâ rî  isá nînî
you-when come pl. you eat food pl.
    'when you (pl.) came, you (pl.) ate food'

(f) e mè vë, e rî  isá
they-when come they eat food
    'when they came, they ate food'

Note that only "when" dependent clause relationship
is exemplified in the preceding section. "When" as a
question word and as a time reference word has other
forms in Ebira. Those forms are not discussed here as
they are not signalled by preverbs within the VP.
4.8 **Pluralisation**

Pluralisation is normally a grammatical category within the Nominal Phrase in the structure of the clause. But in Ebira, where some clauses may not have an NP but only VP, pluralisation is manifested in the preverb of the VP, except in one case: 2nd person plural. In 2nd person plural, the preverb is the same as 2nd person singular, and a plural marker, ńińi, is always appended to the VP. I will briefly describe pluralisation in the NP and then expand more on the use of ńińi to pluralise elements in the VP.

4.8.1 **Pluralisation in the Nominal Phrase**

The initial vowel singular/plural class system mentioned in 2.3.1 as a remnant from distant Bantu connection is limited to a few nominals and is not typical of Ebira pluralisation. These are repeated here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ọzà</td>
<td>ázà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ọnge</td>
<td>anéẹ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onọrụ</td>
<td>anorụ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ọzọga</td>
<td>ńińi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ọhịnị</td>
<td>eńińi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ozị</td>
<td>ezị</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ọsẹ</td>
<td>eńẹ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 'a person'        - 'people'
- 'a woman'         - 'women'
- 'a man'           - 'men'
- 'a visitor'       - 'visitors'
- 'a co-wife'       - 'co-wives'
- 'child'           - 'children'
- 'wife'            - 'wives'
More commonly the language distinguishes between singular and plural in three ways, namely:

(a) by multiple nominal phrase,
(b) by using numerals,
(c) by using the plural marker particle nini.

4.8.1.1 Pluralisation by listing a number of nouns

One way of indicating plural in Ebira is just by listing names of individuals as items in the NP of the clause.

Example:

OKE, ICA, IZE, OCU ọ ve
Oke, Ica, Ize, Ocu they came

NP  VP
'Oke, Ica, Ize, Ocu, came'

In this form of pluralisation the preverb of the VP is always the plural form of the 3rd person, e or ë, except in the present continuous tense, where the singular form of the preverb is often used in the VP following a multiple NP as subject.

As already mentioned in 4.3.3, VP must include a preverb indicating person and number even if there is also a preceding NP subject.

Examples:

OKE ọ wụ w॥
OKE he kill them

'Oke killed them'
okë ọnịrị ịzé ọ ọụ
okë and ịzé they came
'Oke and Izé came'

In the next sentence following in the discourse, Oke is likely to be pronominalised, and taken up by the resumptive pronoun ọ / ọ (according to harmony with the verb) and this pronoun is also the preverb. Similarly with Okë ọnịrị Ịzé, being taken up with e / ĕ.

For pronoun subjects and objects see 5.9, Tables 1-3.

4.8.1.2 Pluralisation by Numerals

One other way of indicating plural in the language is by the use of specific numerals to qualify any noun in the NP.

Examples:
(a) ezụ ụnụya ọ ọụ
children two they-came

| N + NUM |
------------
 NP     VP

'two children came'

(b) Okë ọ wụ uye ụnụa
Okë he-kill animal four |

NP     VP     NP

'Oke killed four animals'
4.8.1.3 Pluralisation by Particle Marker, nini

The third way and the most common way of indicating pluralisation is by the use of the plural particle marker, nini.

In the NP, nini can pluralise either noun or pronoun (whatever function the NP may have). It only pluralises nouns or pronouns which refer to animate beings, whether persons or animals.

nini can also pluralise elements in the VP (although it is not itself an element of the VP) as follows:
1. a 2nd person pronominal preverb (subject);
2. a 2nd person pronominal object postverb.
These will be discussed and illustrated further in 4.8.2.

In all cases, tones on nini are as follows:
(a) mid-mid, nini, if it qualifies a pronoun, either a free pronoun or pronoun element in the VP:
(b) low-mid, n̄ini, if it qualifies a noun.

The following examples will clarify the use of the two forms of nini / n̄ini.

(a) n̄ini, qualifying nominal NP\(s\) and NP\(_o\)
\[
\text{Øzokù n̄ini ë wù uye n̄ini.}
\]
elder pl. they-kill animal pl.

NP\(s\) VP NP\(_o\)

'the elders killed the animals'
(b) nini, qualifying a free pronoun and nini qualifying NP

`swu nini  e re  ezi nini.

you pl.  they-see  the children

Pn. NP  VP  NP

'you (pl) saw the children'

(c) nini, qualifying an element in the VP

`wu  nini

you  kill  pl.

VP

'you (pl) killed'

(d) nini qualifying the NP of the VP and nini qualifying the pronominal subject element of the VP

`wu  uye  nini  nini

you  kill  animal  pl.  pl.

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{VP} \\
\text{NP} \\
\end{array} \]

'you (pl) killed the animals'

(e) nini, qualifying object postverbs

`oke  o re  wu  nini

oke  he-see  you  pl.

NP  VP

'Oke saw you (pl)'
It can be observed from the above, particularly example (d), that the language employs low-mid tone for
nin which pluralises nominals and mid-mid tone for nin which pluralises pronominals and both avoid semantic
ambiguity.

4.8.2 The Use of nin to Qualify Elements in the VP

In all the charts where preverbs signal various categories of the VP, the form for 2nd person singular and
plural is the same. nin is appended to the VP to
distinguish the plural from the singular. As already
mentioned in the previous section, nin may qualify

elements of the VP which refer to 2nd person plural,
where the reference is to animate beings. Multiple NP
and Numerals are pluralisation forms used for inanimate
things.

Some representative examples of various categories of
the VP where nin occur to pluralise the 2nd person
are given below.

4.8.2.1 The Indicative Positive: Past Simple

(a) we hū nin
you drink pl.

VP pl.

'you (pl.) drank'
(b) \( \text{wê} \ \text{hû} \ \check{c} \ \text{nînî} \)
\( \text{you} \ \text{drink it} \) \( \text{pl.} \)
\( \text{VP} \) \( \text{pl.} \)
'you (pl.) drank it'

c) \( \text{wê} \ \text{hû} \ \check{c} \check{c} \ \text{nînî} \)
\( \text{you} \ \text{drink wine} \) \( \text{pl.} \)
\( \text{VP} \) \( \text{NP_0} \) \( \text{pl.} \)
'you (pl.) drank wine'

4.8.2.2 The Interrogative Mood: Past Perfective

\( \text{wêê} \ \text{sî} \ \check{c} \check{c} \ \text{hû} \ \text{nînî} \)
\( \text{you} \ \text{have wine drink} \) \( \text{pl.} \)
\( \text{VP} \) \( \text{NP_0} \) \( \text{pl.} \)
'have you drunk wine?'

4.8.2.3 The Imperative Mood

Although the Imperative Mood has zero preverb, to distinguish a command to singular 2nd person, and plural 2nd person, \text{nînî} is just appended to the VP.

(a) \( \text{nå} \ \text{nînî} \)
\( \text{go} \) \( \text{pl.} \)
\( \text{VP} \) \( \text{pl.} \)
'you (pl.) go'
(b) hi ezf nĩni nĩni
call children pl. pl.
VP NP_o pl. pl.
'you (pl.) call the children'

It is significant to note that, nĩni is an independent plural marker of fixed form. It is not considered to be an element of the VP for two reasons:

1. All elements of the VP are governed by the harmony set of the verb, but nĩni is fixed in its form.

2. It may be separated from the VP by other elements of the clause, as illustrated in 4.8.2.1. (b) and (c) above.

nĩni and nĩni are two of the fixed particles which have important syntactic and grammatical functions in the NP and VP of the language.
5.1 The Clause

As already described briefly in 4.2.2, the clause can be diagrammed as:

\[
\text{Cl.} \rightarrow \pm \text{NP}_s + \text{VP} + \text{NP}_o
\]

The verbal phrase is the obligatory nuclear element of every verbal clause. Thus a clause may consist of just the verbal phrase. As already mentioned in chapter four, the presence of NP\(_s\) and NP\(_o\) is determined by the nature of the verb and other grammatical options. This will be discussed further below. Expansion of the clause may occur, either at the beginning of or at the end of the clause, such as Locative Phrase (LP), Temporal Phrase (TP), and Adverbial Phrase (AP). These are outside the scope of this description.

The function of the verb classes in the clause will be described in this chapter with particular reference to transitivity. The verb is the point of origin for the preverbs harmonically and the central point of reference for distinguishing various types of verbal clauses.
The following types of verbal clauses are distinguished in Ebira:

- Transitive 5.2
- Ditransitive 5.3
- Semi-transitive 5.4
- Intransitive 5.5
- Stative 5.6
- Equative 5.7
- Copula 5.8

Thus seven types of clauses are established according to the functions of the verb which is head of the clause and the nominal phrase elements of the clause which complement the verb in the transitivity system. These types will now be described in detail.

After the discussion of clause types, further features of the clause rank will be described, namely:

- Pronoun System 5.9
- Interrogation and Interrogative Words 5.10
5.2 Transitive Clause

The transitive clause is marked by a class of verbs which take direct NP objects. The majority of Ebira verbs belong to this class. Transitive clauses may occur in any mood, tense, polarity, person, or number. All transitive verbs express actions.

The structure of transitive clause can be diagrammed as:

\[
\text{Trans. Cl.} \rightarrow \pm \text{NP}_{s} + \text{VP} + \text{NP}_{o}
\]

\(\text{NP}_{o}\) is an obligatory element which complements the verb in the transitive clause. Some of the common verbs used in transitive clauses include:

- rẹ 'to see'
- rí 'to eat'
- hụ 'to drink'
- đọ 'to get'
- hị 'to weave'
- nā 'to sell'
- cẹ 'to break'
- hụ 'to boil'

- cẹrẹ 'to write'
- cẹkẹ 'to break'

Some of these verbs will be used in the examples below to illustrate transitivity in various categories.
Examples:

(a) ọrẹ o zi
ọrẹ she-see child
(NP_s) VP NP_o
'Ize saw the child' (indicative)

(b) ọnịri ẹri ọ zi
Ize and ẹri they-see child
(NP_s) VP NP_o
'Ize and Arif saw the child' (indicative)

Note that while it is possible to have sentences without an NP_s, the shape of the preverb order 1 shows the person and number of NP_s which usually will have occurred previously in the discourse.

(c) ọ rẹ o zi
he see child
VP NP_o
'he saw the child' (indicative)

(d) ọ rẹ o zi
they see child
VP NP_o
'they saw the child' (indicative)
e) ẹẹ ná ẹnu
they (inter.) sell yams
'did they sell yams?' (interrogative)

f) cẹrẹ iwe
write book
'write a book' (imperative)

g) ẹ hị ịta
they (should) buy cloth
'they should buy a piece of cloth'
(subjunctive)
5.3 **Ditransitive Clause**

Some ideas, which in many languages are expressed by ditransitive verbs, are expressed in Ebira by Serial Verb constructions. See chapter 6. There are, however, a few verbs which can occur in ditransitive clauses in the language. Ditransitivity has the feature of duality, i.e. two NP are involved, the first being the recipient of the action. Like transitive clauses, ditransitive clauses may occur in any mood, tense, polarity, person or number. The structure of ditransitive clauses can be diagrammed as:

\[
\text{Ditrans. Cl.} \rightarrow \pm \text{NP} + \text{VP} + \text{NP} + \text{NP}_{1} + \text{NP}_{2}
\]

There are just six verbs found in this class as yet. They are:

- **zũ** 'to show someone something'
- **kọ** 'to teach someone something'
- **kũ** 'to shave (hair) for someone' 'to lift someone's legs'
- **jį** 'to bite (someone) a bite'
- **dâ** 'to cut part of someone off'
- **cře** 'to plant fear in someone'

The use of these verbs will be illustrated in the examples below.
Examples:

(a) ʘ zũ  ozi  ćeva
    he show  child  oracle
    VP  NP<sub>ol</sub>  NP<sub>2</sub>
    'he showed the child the oracle'
    (indicative positive)

(b) ʘ yi  kọ  ʘza  iwe
    he not teach  person  book
    VP  NP<sub>ol</sub>  NP<sub>2</sub>
    'he did not teach a person to read a book'
    (indicative negative)

(c) mi  vã  kũ  ʘmûyã  ĩrẽsũ
    I will shave  ʘmûyã  head
    VP  NP<sub>ol</sub>  NP<sub>2</sub>
    'I will shave/trim ʘmuya's hair'
    (indicative future general)

(d) ĩrẽf  ƈo  ji  ĩzẽ  ĩrẽrũ
    dog  it  bite  Ĩzẽ  bite
    (NP<sub>s</sub>)  VP  NP<sub>ol</sub>  NP<sub>2</sub>
    'did the dog bite Ĩze?'
    (interrogative past)
Note the difference between relationships of the two NP in a ditransitive clause as distinct from relationships in a genitive complex NP functioning as object:

1. Tone
2. Word order

Ditransitive Clause

\[ mā kǔ ọmụyà ịresụ \]
I shave/trim ọmụyà head

\[ 'I shaved (to) ọmụyà's hair' \]

Genitive NP

\[ ọ ná ẹnu ọmụyà \]
he sell yams (of) ọmụyà

\[ 'he sold ọmụyà's yams' \]
In the ditransitive clause, both $NP_1$ have a direct relationship to the verb, the first being the recipient of the action.

In the genitive construction, however, the second NP element of the genitive complex NP is related directly to the first NP element, the first being the possessed item and the second the possessor. At the clause level, the complex NP functions as a unit.

In Ebira the genitive construction is used only to express possession. Many concepts which in English might be expressed by a genitive construction are expressed in Ebira by a ditransitive clause.
5.4 Semi-transitive Clause

Semi-transitive clauses are characterised by the occurrence of a verb expressing motion and a NP\(_o\) which semantically refers to a goal. The NP occurring as object always refers to a place. The NP\(_o\) cannot be pronominalised and that is an important feature of this type of clauses. When the goal referred to is a person or a thing, the serial verb construction is used as in example (iii) below. For detailed description of serial verb constructions (SVC), see chapter six.

The structure of the clause can be diagrammed as:

\[
\text{Semi-trans. Cl.} \quad \rightarrow \quad + \text{NP}_s + \text{VP} + \text{NP}_o + \text{TP}
\]

Some verbs which occur in semi-transitive clauses include:

- n\(\text{ọ}\) 'to go'
- v\(\text{ẹ}\) 'to come'
- zw\(\text{ẹ}\) 'to run'
- h\(\text{ịr\’a}\) 'to fly'
- t\(\text{ụr\’a}\) 'to crawl'

There are three ways of expressing the action 'to go' in Ebira:
i) na always occurs in intransitive clauses.
E.g:

Ø na
he go
VP
'he went' (indicative past)

ii) nọ always occurs in semi-transitive clause which takes NP₀ as object.
E.g:

Ø nọ eehf
he go home
VP NP₀
'he went home'

iii) na occurs in complex verb constructions as an auxiliary verb. It cannot occur clause final and it cannot take an object. It can only co-occur with another verb where 'motion to' is required. For further discussion see 6.4.1.3.
E.g:

Ø na hị ìtà
he go buy cloth
VP NP₀
'he went to buy cloth'
Examples of semitransitive clauses:

(a) ozi ẻे tūrā  ābārā
    child  he - crawl  room
    (NP)    VP      NP_o
    'the child is crawling in the room' (indicative)

(b) vē  āārē  ɣhwɔɔo
    come  farm  tomorrow
    VP    NP_o    (TP)
    'come to the farm tomorrow' (imperative)

Note that vē, 'come', can be used either semitransitively or intransitively, that is, in a semitransitive clause, or intransitive clause.

E.g:  ēē  vē
    they  come
    VP
    'did they come?' (interrogative past)

See the next section for further examples of intransitive clauses.
5.5 **Intransitive Clause**

The intransitive clause does not normally take an object. It has the structure thus:

\[
\text{Intra. Cl.} \rightarrow + \text{NP}_s + \text{VP}
\]

The intransitive clause can occur in any mood, tense, polarity, person or number. Some common verbs used in the intransitive clause include:

- nâ 'to go'
- vế 'to come'
- tă 'to be finished'
- hẻ 'to be retarded in growth'
- hĩ 'to be full'
- sũ 'to die'
- gu 'to be complete'

Examples:

(a) hô tă

it finish

VP

'it is finished'

(b) ozi ônica ô hẻ

child that he is retarded

(NP_s) VP

'that child is retarded (in growth)' i.e.

'the child is a dwarf' (indicative present past simple)
(c) ụnọkọ ọ sị hị
(pot) it - has full
(NP_s) VP
'the pot has been filled'
(past perfective indicative)

(d) ịdị ịzé ẹẹ vẹ sụ
father ịzé he - about die
(NP_s) VP
'Ize's father is about to die'
(future immediate indicative)
5.6 Stative Clause

The stative clause never has an object. The clause describes the state of something. The stative clause differs from the intransitive clause of the preceding section in that:

(a) the stative clause can only occur in the indicative and interrogative moods, past simple and future tenses. It cannot occur in the imperative and subjunctive moods, or in habitual tense, whereas the intransitive clause can occur in all the grammatical categories.

(b) the verbs which occur in stative clauses are characterised by the fact that nouns can be readily derived from the verb roots by adding the nomiliser prefixes

\[ o- / -\emptyset \text{ or } u- / \emptyset - \]

Examples:

\[ \begin{array}{lll}
\text{bąpį} & \\ \text{uąpį} & \\ \\
\text{węyį} & \\ \text{ųwęyį} & \\ \\
\text{jójį} & \\ \text{ųjójį} & \\ \\
\text{kątą} & \\ \text{ųkątą} & \\ \\
\text{bürgũ} & \\ \text{ųbürgũ} & \\ \\
\end{array} \]

'to be big' \text{ bąpį } \\
'bigness'

'to be small' \text{ węyį } \\
'smallness'

'to be black' \text{ jójį } \\
'blackness'

'to be strong' \text{ kątą } \\
'strength'

'to be thick' \text{ bürgũ } \\
'thickness'
Prefixes cannot be added to the verbs that occur in the intransitive clause to derive nouns from them.

The structure of the stative clause can be diagrammed as:

\[ \text{Stat. Cl.} \rightarrow + \text{NP} + \text{VP} \]

Some verbs which occur in stative clauses are listed below. It is interesting to note that they are all disyllabic in phonological structure.

- báji 'to be big'
- divi 'to be bad'
- vórō 'to be straight'
- hérē 'to be light'
- rátā 'to be heavy'
- gana 'to be wide'
- ṣurā 'to be hot'
- kátā 'to be strong'
- wēyī 'to be small'
- zōzā 'to be good/beautiful'
- rårā 'to be twisted'
- gödō 'to be long/tall'
- būrū 'to be thick'
- jōji 'to be black/dark'
- hīnē 'to be sweet'
Examples of these verbs in stative clause are given below:

(a) ozi  ḗzé ṣ bápi
    child ḗzé he - big
    (NP_s)    VP
    'Ize's child is big' (indicative present tense)

(b) oze ṣ yí gana
    road ṣ it - not wide
    (NP_s)    VP
    'the road is not wide' (negative polarity present tense)

(c) ṣpa ṣọ rátá
    load ṣ it - heavy
    (NP_s)    VP
    'is the load heavy?' (interrogative, present tense)

(d) ozi ṣonọni ṣ yí vâ godo
    child this he not will tall
    (NP_s)    VP
    'this child will not be tall'
    future negative indicative)
5.7 **Equative Clause**

The equative clause expresses a descriptive relationship between two nominals. It can be stated in the indicative interrogative mood and past simple and future tenses. It does not occur in the imperative, subjunctive, habitual and present continuous tense categories. The structure of the equative clause can be diagrammed as:

\[ \text{Eq. Cl.} \rightarrow \text{NP + VP + NP} \]

Only one verb has been found to occur in this clause so far. It is:

\[ \text{vį} \quad \text{'to be'} \]

One may ask, is /vį/ a verb at all?

It is a verb and it constitutes a class of its own. Like other verbs it takes preverbs which harmonise with it, and like a majority of other verbs it has a CV structure.

Examples: (see overleaf)
(a) arí ọ ọkúrúkú
ari is farmer
NP (sing.) VP NP
'Ari is a farmer' (indicative mood)

(b) oké ọnĩři ẹ̀ńi ọsóhú níni
| oké and ẹ̀ńi | are trader pl.
NP (pl.) VP NP
Oké and Arí are traders' (indicative)

(c) ẹ̀nĩnĩ ẹ̀yí ọzúbe níni
they they-not-are hunter pl.
NP VP NP
'they are not hunters' (negative indicative)

(d) ẹdá ọ́zé ọ́ọ́ ọgúeyí
father ọ́zé he - is close eye person
NP VP NP
'is Ize's father a blind man?' i.e.
'is Ize's father blind?' (interrogative mood)

Note that /vị/ can only take preverbs of Set B because it belongs to that harmonic set.
5.8 **Copula Clause**

The copula clause expresses an identification relationship. It only occurs in the Indicative mood and the Interrogative mood of the prosodic type (see 5.10.1 for interrogation by a prosody).

The structure can be diagrammed as:

\[ \text{Cop. Cl.} \rightarrow \text{NP + copula} \]

Ebira has just two copulas which are:

\[ \text{yọ 'it is'} \]
\[ \text{yị 'this is'} \]

Examples:

(a) Ḫidù yọ
lion it is
NP copula
'it is a lion' (Indicative mood)

(b) oyị yọ ọ
thief he is
NP copula
'is he a thief?' (Interrogative mood)
There is a distinction in the usage of the copulas yō and yi.

yi is used for description, e.g. This is my father's house.

yō answers the question 'What is that?' or 'Who is that?'

My house yō.

My father yō.
5.9 The Pronoun System in the Clause

Pronominal pieces occur as nominal phrases functioning in the clause as NP_s. They may also occur in subject relationship in the VP, as well as in object relationships in the VP, preverbs or postverbs respectively. When functioning in the VP, they are phonologically bound to other elements of the VP. As these pronominal pieces have different forms and functions in these positions within the clause, the full system is displayed in tabular forms below and examples given.

Table 1 shows the independent pronouns NP which may function as head of NP_s in the clause.

Table 2 shows the pronominal pieces, part of VP but not NP, which (in combination with various tones) signal:

a) tense as well as person and number;

b) subject relationship of the VP in the clause.

Table 3 shows pronominal pieces, elements of the VP, which function as objects in the clause.
Table 1: Independent Pronouns ($NP_s$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>ëmi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>ëwụ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>ọnị</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The independent pronouns as $NP_s$ are normally used for emphasis and in discourse for resumptive pronoun $NP_s$.

Examples:

ëmi má rị ịsá

I I eat food

$NP_s$ $VP$ $NP_o$

'I ate the food'

ëwụ wá rị ịsá

you you eat food

$NP_s$ $VP$ $NP_o$

'you ate the food'
The pronoun subjects in the gloss translation in the above examples are usually emphasised by extra stress in English.

It can be observed in Table 1 and the examples that all the independent pronouns belong to Harmony Set B. The preverbs following them in the clause agree with them.
in number and person but not in harmony. This confirms the validity of the pronouns as independent NPs.

It is of interest that all independent grammatical words have vowels of Set B. These include the independent pronoun subjects above, the negative imperative word āṣū in 4.6.3, the plural marker nini in 4.8.1.3, the copulas yō and yī in 5.8, and the preposition ิน in 6.4.1.1.

Table 2: Pronominal Piece (Preverb), element of the VP, may function as subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>mi, me/mi, mē, ma</td>
<td>i, ye/i, yē, ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>u, we/y, wē, wa</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>o / o</td>
<td>he, she,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See Charts 1 - 4 in chapter 4 for detailed description of the preverbs.
Table 3: Pronominal Piece (Postverb), elements of the VP, functions as object

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>mi/mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>wu/wu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>-o, -ë*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following examples illustrate the pronominal postverb pieces as part of VP in the clause.

1st per. sing. - Set A

Ízę  ò  sì  mi
Ízę  she  look for  me
NPₜ  VP
'Izę looked for me'

1st per. sing. - Set B

Ízę  ò  hì  mi
Ízę  she  call  me
NPₜ  VP
'Izę called me'

* ø represents non-close vowels.
2nd per. sing. - Set A

okè ḏ tū wu
okè he beat you

NP_s VP

'Okè beat you'

2nd per. sing. Set B

okè ḏ tū wu
okè he pull you

NP_s VP

'Okè pulled you out'

3rd per. sing. Set A

 İzè ḏ ḍ hi ṭ
İZè she weave it

NP_s VP

'Izé wove it'

3rd per. sing. Set B

İze ḏ hî ọ
İzé she call him

NP_s VP

'Izé called him'
3rd per. sing. - Set A

*icā*  ġ  hū  ġ
*icā*  he  drink  it

NP<sub>s</sub>  VP

'İcā drank it'

3rd per. sing. - Set B

*icā*  ġ  hū  ġ
*icā*  he  open  it

NP<sub>s</sub>  VP

'İcā opened it'

These other examples are given without Person, Sets A and B, NP<sub>s</sub>, and VP labels.

*ocu*  ġ  ne  ĝ
*ocu*  he  throw it

'Ocu threw it'

*ocu*  ġ  mē  ģ
*ocu*  he  do it

'Ocu did it'
The following examples illustrate plural pronominal postverb pieces.

 Cinderellas they had yis
 they they beat us
 'they beat us'

 Cinderellas they had yis
 they they chase us
 'they chased us'

 Mascarade he beat you ninis
 'the mascarade beat you (pl.)'
eku  ṣ du  wu  nini
masquerade he chase you nini
'the masquerade chased you (pl.)'

eku  ṣ tu  wá
masquerade he beat them
'the masquerade beat them'

eku  ṣ du  wá
masquerade he chase them
'the masquerade chased them'

It can be observed from Table 3 and the examples that the 3rd person singular has interesting forms harmonically and phonologically.

For 3rd person singular:
(a) -ṣ occurs as pronominal object when the final vowel of the verb is one of the close vowels, I and U;

(b) -š when the final vowel of the verb is a non-close vowel, E, O, A, this vowel is lengthened for pronominal object.

For 3rd person plural:
there is just one form, wá, for pronominal object for both harmony Sets A and B.
For the pronouns, high tone is a shared feature for singular and plural forms of the object pronominal 3rd person pieces, and mid tone is shared for 1st and 2nd person pieces.
5.10 **Interrogation and Interrogative Words in the Clause**

Most clause types described so far can occur in the interrogative mood which is evinced by a particular verbal phrase with specific preverbs (4.5.1). There are two other ways of transforming indicative clauses into questions. These are:

(a) by a prosodic system of the language
(b) by the use of question words

5.10.1 **Interrogation by Prosodic Element**

Any indicative clause can be transformed into a question by simply reduplicating the final vowel of the item in clause final position, the added vowel carrying mid-tone, and constituting a syllable on its own.

The added final vowel is a prosodic element of the entire clause and a feature of the interrogative mood.

This type of interrogative mood always requires a 'yes' or 'no' answer. These are referred to as polar questions.

The structure of the clause can be diagrammed thus:

\[
\text{Cl.} \rightarrow \neg \text{NP} + \text{VP} \pm \text{NP}_0 + \varpi^* 
\]

\* \varpi is a prosodic element representing any vowel phoneme of the language.
As elsewhere, mid-tone is not marked.

Examples:

(a) Ṽez o rë ozí i
   Ṽez she - see child
   (NPₜ) VP NP₀
   'did Ṽez see the child?' (transitive clause, polar question)

(b) ọ vë e
   he come
   VP
   'did he come?' (intransitive polar question)

(c) okë ọ kù ozí iřẹṣú ụ
   okë he-shave child head
   (NPₜ) VP NP₀₁ NP₀₂
   'did Okë shave the child's hair?' (ditransitive polar question)

(d) ḋcà vj oyf i
    ḋcà is thief
    NP VP NP
    'is ḋca a thief?' (equative clause polar question)
5.10.2 **Interrogative Words**

There are some particles in the language which are used to introduce particular content questions of the clause. They are similar to 'wh' question words of English.

These words are:

- *isi* 'what'
- *izi* 'where'
- *ihi* 'when (specific day, time, reference)
- *ène* 'who'
- *sëvë dë* 'why'
- *mëmë/mëmë* 'how

**Examples:**

(a) *isi õ më*  
what he - do  
VP  
'what did he do?'

(b) *izi ɖ yá*  
where you - be  
VP  
'where are you?'
(c) ḡiḥi ṣe ṣe
when he - come
VP
'when (which specific day) did he come?'

(d) ẹnụ ọrụ
who he - see
VP
'who did he see?'

(e) seve di ṣi cáká ọ
why you - break it
VP
'why did you break it?'

(f) ọ mẹmɛ mɛ ɛ
you how do it
VP
'do you how it?'

With one expection, meme/meme 'how', interrogative words occur before the VP in the clause, irrespective of their grammatical relationship to the verb.

The exception, meme/meme, 'how', occurs within the VP, after the pronominal preverb, and preceding any other preverbs and the verb. It is of interest that, because
it occurs within the VP, its vowel sequence is governed in respect of harmony by the vowels of the verb.

Examples:

(a) ꠧ ꠑ ꠙ ꠭ ꠐ ꠑ ꠱ ꠗ ꠐ 'how did you write it?'

(b) ꠧ ꠑ ꠙ ꠭ ꠐ ꠡ ꠗ ꠐ 'how did you winnow it?'

An alternative analysis would be to consider meme/meme as a preverb being part of the VP. However, interrogative words substitute for phrase units which are elements of the clause, e.g. for NP₀, NPₛ; meme/meme substitutes for an adverbial phrase (how, this is how). Therefore it is considered as a feature of the clause, like other interrogative words.
Examples:

Question: ḍ měmē ãa vę
    he how is coming
prev ques. VP
'how is he coming?'

Answer: umätō ãa sį vę nį
    (by) car he -is take come
    adv. phr VP nį*
'he is coming by car'

* nį is a particle that has a syntactic function in discourse, in that it always ends a declarative or a narrative statement. For example:
    ḋekura ọbànjị ọ vị nị
city big it is nị
    'it is a big city'

See the narrative story in chapter seven for further examples of nị.
CHAPTER SIX

THE VERBAL PIECE: SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

6.1 The Serial Verb Construction

The Serial Verb Construction, SVC for short, is a syntactic phenomenon found in many languages of West Africa, especially the Kwa group under the Niger-Congo family. It is an important aspect of the verbal system of Kwa languages and it has attracted the attention of many linguists for some time now. The phenomenon has been called by various names such as 'String Verbs', 'Verbal Combinations', 'Verbs in Series' and 'Compressed Sentence Constructions'. Modern scholars, including some indigenous West African linguists like Dr Bamgbose (1972, 1974, 1982), Dr Awobuluyi (1967, 1973), and Dr George (1975)*, who have written extensively on this verbal structure, seem to have reached a consensus of opinion in adopting the name 'Serial Verb Construction'. I am using that label in my discussion of the topic with regard to Ebira in this chapter. I aim to briefly describe the

* References give the author and dates of works on the topic. These are listed in alphabetical order and in date order for any particular author in the Bibliography at the end of the thesis. Author and date only are cited in the text.
structure as it operates in the language. Occasional references are made to Yoruba or Nupe to point out similarities and differences since these language are related to one another.
6.2 Syntactic Characteristics of Serial Verb Constructions in Kwa Languages

The syntactic characteristics of SVC are featured in a clause or a sentence by a sequence of two or more verbs or verb phrases without any overt connective word between them.

These series of verbs in the clause share a single subject and often a single object. They also share the same preverbs. The following examples from Ebira, Yoruba and Nupe will illustrate the occurrence of these verbs in the sentence.

Ebira:

\[
\text{oke } \text{ọ } \text{ve} \quad \text{vá } \text{sì} \quad \text{àpáánà}
\]

'oke he - come come take gun

'Oke came and took a gun'

Yoruba:

\[
\text{olú } \text{wà } \text{gbè} \quad \text{Ibọn}
\]

'olu came to take gun

'Olu came and took the gun'

Nupe:

\[
\text{tsoda } \text{bè} \quad \text{lá} \quad \text{egbà}
\]

'tsoda came took axe

'Tsoda came and took the axe'
It can be observed from the above examples that the notion which is expressed by a series of two or three verbs in the three languages can be expressed in English by two verbs and a connective or by two verbs and a preposition. Sometimes the notion expressed by two serial verbs in serial verb languages may be expressed by one verb in English. Serial Verb Construction is a complex structure.

Serial Verb Constructions can occur in grammatical categories of the VP established in Ebira in chapters four and five. These will be exemplified in the remaining sections of this chapter. All the verbs functioning as part of series in SCV will always share the same categorial features, i.e. they will share the same mood, the same tense, the same person and number, and the same polarity, and not have these categories separately.
6.3 The Verbal Status of Serial Verbs

There are several types of criteria by which verbal status may be determined in Ebira. The primary criterion is function in the verbal phrase. Secondary criteria are syllable structure and tonal pattern, all verbs have a distinctive phonological pattern. Judged by these criteria, each of the words underlined in the Ebira sentence above is potentially an independent verb except v§ which is the auxiliary form for v§, 'to come'. The auxiliary verbs are described later, in 6.5. For syllable structure of verbs, see 2.1.3. For tone and tone patterns on verbs, see 2.6.3 and 2.6.4.

It will be described further how verbs in series function as heads of verbal clauses and convey a composite notion as opposed to how each verb in the series functions independently and conveys its inherent lexical meaning. One example below may suffice at this point.

\[\text{Izé  ṣi  sì̄  ēcē  vē} \]
\[\text{Ize  she - take  wine  come} \]
\[\text{'Izé brought some wine'} \]

In the above sentence Ebira serial verbs sì and vē express an action which is expressed in English by one word, 'to bring'. The two Ebira verbs which express the concept of bringing have their individual meanings apart
from the concept of bringing. They can be used independently of each other as follows:

(a) **sĩ** 'to take'

ō sĩ ṣẹpá ṣòbápì
he take load big

'hе took a big load'  i.e.
'hе carried a big load'

(b) **ve** 'to come'

ō ve ììẹrì
he come yesterday

'hе came yesterday'

In the Serial Verb Construction sĩ and ve combine to function as the head of the VP of the indicative clause.

Function is the main criterion by which we categorise individual verbs and serial verbs in sentence constructions.
6.4 Types of Serial Verb Constructions in Ebira

Four types of Serial Verb Constructions are found in Ebira. These include:
1. Concomitant Serial Verb Construction
2. Co-ordinate Serial Verb Construction
3. Comparative Serial Verb Construction
4. Complex Serial Verb Construction

Each of these types is described in the context of category options in which they occur with illustrative examples.

6.4.1 Concomitant Serial Verb Construction

In Concomitant Serial Verb Construction, two or three verbs are jointly used to express a concept. It may be possible for such a concept to be expressed in another language by a single verb, but semantically composite verb. The concomitant SVC can occur in indicative and interrogative moods, all the tenses, polarity; 1st, 2nd or 3rd person; singular or plural. But most of the examples are in the indicative.

An account of a limited number of common verbs in concomitant serialisation surveyed is briefly given below.
Two action verbs which occur very frequently in serialisation are:

- sì 'to take, to carry'
- yì 'to give'

Two motion verbs which also occur frequently in serialisation are:

- nà / na 'to go'
- vè / vá 'to come'

(Note that these are allomorphs, not harmony sets.)

Two location verbs which occur in serialisation are:

- tõ 'to be on / in'
- gë 'to hang on, to put on'

6.4.1.1 The Verb sì, 'to take'

Although both sì and yì occur very frequently in concomitant serialisation, the two verbs behave differently with regard to syntactic order.

- sì never occurs as last verb in a series.
- yì always occurs last in the series.

sì can be said to be the most common and the most complex of all the serial verbs of Ebira. It can co-occur with almost any other verb in serial combination. It can even co-occur with itself in some cases. Its semantic interpretation varies from context to context.
In most cases it combines with the other verb or verbs in series to represent composite concepts.

Examine the following occurrences of sî in various sentences.

(a)  
\[
\text{ocu} \quad \ddot{s} \quad \text{sî} \quad \ddot{u} \text{hwô} \\
\text{ocu} \quad \text{he - take} \quad \text{knife}
\]
'Ocu took a knife'

(b)  
\[
\text{ocu} \quad \ddot{s} \quad \text{sî} \quad \ddot{u} \text{hwô} \quad \ddot{v} \text{ê} \\
\text{ocu} \quad \text{he - take} \quad \text{knife} \quad \text{come}
\]
'Ocu brought a knife'

(c)  
\[
\text{ocu} \quad \ddot{s} \quad \text{sî} \quad \ddot{u} \text{hwô} \quad \ddot{d} \dot{a} \quad \ddot{e} \text{nu} \\
\text{ocu} \quad \text{he - take} \quad \text{knife} \quad \text{cut yam}
\]
'Ocu cut the yam with a knife'

(d)  
\[
\text{ocu} \quad \ddot{s} \quad \text{sî} \quad \ddot{u} \text{hwô} \quad \ddot{y} \dot{i} \quad \ddot{I} \ddot{z} \ddot{e} \\
\text{ocu} \quad \text{he - take} \quad \text{knife} \quad \text{give} \quad \ddot{I} \ddot{z} \ddot{e}
\]
'Ocu gave the knife to Ize'

(e)  
\[
\text{ocu} \quad \ddot{s} \quad \text{sî} \quad \ddot{u} \ddot{y} \ddot{a} \quad \ddot{r} \ddot{f} \quad \ddot{o} \ddot{z} \ddot{I} \\
\text{ocu} \quad \text{he - take} \quad \text{suffering} \quad \text{eat} \quad \text{child}
\]
'Ocu punished the child' or 'Ocu caused the child to suffer'

(f)  
\[
\text{ocu} \quad \ddot{s} \quad \text{sî} \quad \ddot{u} \ddot{v} \ddot{I} \ddot{s} \quad \ddot{s} \quad \ddot{s} \quad \ddot{y} \ddot{I} \quad \ddot{m} \ddot{i} \\
\text{ocu} \quad \text{he - take} \quad \text{hand} \quad \text{take-it} \quad \text{give} \quad \text{me}
\]
'Ocu gave it to me by hand'
It is not intended here to go into an exhaustive semantic interpretation and analysis of the occurrence of each of the sî in the above serial combinations. However, a brief remark will illustrate the frequency and the complexity of sî in serial combination with other verbs.

Sentence (a) is the only example above in which sî carries its primary lexical meaning in the sentence. In sentences (b) - (f) the composite meaning conveyed by the verbs in series differ from one to the other - although sî is shared by all. In sentences (e) - (f) the English verbs representing the composite meanings of the Ebira verbs in series have prepositions attached to them. One can observe that a concept conveyed by two different word classes in English, i.e. preposition and verb, is conveyed by one in Ebira which is the verb. It is a general observation that Kwa languages very rarely make use of prepositions syntactically, but use verbs to express relationships such as instrument, direction, and accompaniment (and many other relationships) which in many other languages, English in particular, are expressed by prepositions. It may be conjectured that perhaps English prepositions were once verbs!
There is just one preposition / ìnf/ found in Ebira as yet. The preposition is used to cover the semantic areas normally conveyed by the English prepositions 'into', 'inside', 'among'.

Examples:

ocu ṣ yâ ìnf eehi
ocu he is inside the house
'Ocu is inside the house'

ocu ṣ no ìnf ibâñki
ocu he go inside bank
'Ocu went to the bank'

ocu ṣ yâ ìnf aza oni eku tû
ocu he is in people which masquerade beat
'Ocu is among the people the masquerade beat'

okè onirì ocu ò ò ìnf eehi
okè and ocu they enter inside house
'Oke and Ocu went into the house'

Note that ìnf is another grammatical word which does not harmonise with any other form; it is invariable. (See 5.9 note for comment on independent grammatical words.)
6.4.1.2 The Verb yi 'to give'

As mentioned in the preceding section, yi is another verb which occurs frequently in serial construction. It never occurs as VP\(_1\) in the series but it can occur as a single independent verb in a sentence. It can occur in a transitive clause as in this sentence:

\[ \text{Izé} \quad \delta \quad \text{yi} \quad \text{ozí} \quad \text{îsá} \]
\[ \text{Izé she-give child food} \]

'Izé fed the child'

In serial construction yi normally occurs in transitive clauses where there are direct and indirect objects. The first verb in the series, where there are only two verbs, may be labelled VP\(_1\) and the second verb may be labelled VP\(_2\). The VP\(_1\), which may be any transitive verb, is followed by the direct object and yi, which is always the VP\(_2\), is followed by the indirect object. But yi is in serial relationship with VP\(_1\) as they both share one NP and the same preverbs.

Examples:

(a) \[ \text{Izé} \quad \delta \quad \text{si} \quad \text{îsa} \quad \text{yi} \quad \text{ozí} \]
\[ \text{Izé she-take food give child} \]

'Izé gave food to the child'

(b) \[ \text{okë} \quad \delta \quad \text{hi} \quad \text{îta} \quad \text{yi} \quad \text{ósë} \quad \text{ani} \]
\[ \text{okë he-buy cloth give wife his} \]

'Oke bought a piece of cloth for his wife'
(c) okē ṣ ce irecē yi ḍinjốyì
oxē he-lice lie give chief

'Okē lied to the chief'

(d) okē ṣ ṃ ukọ́ro yi ḍinjốyì
oxē he-do work give chief

'Okē works for the chief'

All the four Ebira sentences above have the same structure. VP₂ extends and complements the meaning of VP₁. Together the two verbs give a composite meaning of the VP in the sentence.

Comparing sì and yi, we can observe that there is order of sequence in Serial Verb Constructions. Some verbs can occur as VP₁ and others can occur as VP₂ only. With regard to these two commonest verbs in SVC, sì always occurs as VP₁ and yi always occurs as VP₂, as already indicated. We can notice further that the notion conveyed by one or either of the verbs in a SVC is usually carried by the preposition in English. Professor Bamgbose, commenting on this particular aspect, remarks,

There is no reason why a notion expressed by one language through a preposition or an adverb cannot be expressed through a verb by another language. This is the whole basis of differentiating functions of the verb in an SVC.⁴

---

6.4.1.3 Motion Verbs ná 'to go' and vá 'to come' in Serial Verb Constructions

The motion verbs ná and vá constitute another interesting pair in Serial Verb Constructions. The two verbs have variant forms which occur in specific clause types and syntactic order.

The motion 'to go' has three forms as mentioned earlier in 5.4:

ná occurs in intransitive clauses
nọ occurs in semi-transitive clauses
na occurs in Serial Verb Constructions.

The motion 'to come' has two forms:

vá occurs in intransitive and semi-transitive clauses
vá occurs in Serial Verb Constructions.

Whenever ná and vá occur in an SVC the notion of 'purpose' is introduced into the sentence. These two forms of 'to go' and 'to come' in SVC can be labelled auxiliary verbs. They do not occur as independent VP's. They always occur with other independent verbs. For this reason they can co-occur with their other independent forms in sentences. Examine the following:
The above is one occasion where it is possible to have three verbs in series in a sentence, although one is auxiliary and always introduces the semantic notion of purpose. Auxiliary verbs are very few in the language. They are described in 6.5. Whenever the idea of purpose is introduced into an action where motion is involved it is the auxiliary form that is used as in:

(a) ṣọ na na rì isà
he go go eat food
'hhe went (in order to) eat food'

(b) ṣọ ẹgbà hì ìtà
he come come buy cloth
'hhe came (in order to) buy cloth'

By way of comparison with the next door neighbour Kwa language to Ebira, Yoruba Serial Verb Constructions differ from Ebira Serial Verb Constructions with regard to the number of verbs in series in similar constructions. Yoruba uses two verbs where Ebira may use three. Yoruba
has just one form for the motion 'to go', \( lọ \), and the motion 'to come', \( wá \). The following sentences illustrate the comparison.

**Ebira:**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{okè} & \quad \text{ọ} \quad \text{nà} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{rì} \quad \text{ìsá} \\
\text{okè} & \quad \text{he - go} \quad \text{go} \quad \text{eat} \quad \text{food} \\
\end{align*}
\]

'Okè went and ate food'

**Yoruba:**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ołú} & \quad \text{lọ} \quad \text{jè} \quad \text{onjè} \\
\text{ołú} & \quad \text{go} \quad \text{eat} \quad \text{food} \\
\end{align*}
\]

'Olú went to eat food'

It may be pointed out also that Yoruba does not have the preverbs in the verb pieces as there are in Ebira. Ebira Serial Verb Constructions are more complex in some respects than Yoruba Serial Verb Constructions.

6.4.1.4 **Locative Verbs \( tù \) and \( gè \) in Serial Verb Construction**

Two verbs which occur in Concomitant Serial Verb Construction in Ebira are:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\( tù \)} & \quad \text{'to put on, to put under'} \\
\text{\( gè \)} & \quad \text{'to hang on'} \\
\end{align*}
\]
These verbs always occur as $VP_2$ in serialisation with particular reference to a location. They can only occur with $sì$, 'to take', as $VP_1$.

Examples:

(a) okè ḍ $sì$ े$pá$ tụ ɨɾɛ̊sù əɡa
okè he - take load put head chair
'Okè put the load on the chair'

(b) okè ḍ $sì$ े$pá$ tụ ɨɾuvô əɡa
okè he - take load put bottom chair
'Okè put the load under the chair'

(c) okè ḍ $sì$ āmù ɡɛ ọcf
okè he - take cap hang tree
'Okè hung the cap on the tree'

In sentence (a) $sì$ - - - tụ in relation to ɨɾɛ̊sù 'head' gives the concept 'put on'. Similarly, in (b) $sì$ - - - tụ in relation to ɨɾuvô, 'bottom', gives the concept 'put under'. In sentence (c) $sì$ - - - ɡɛ gives the concept of 'hang on'

Note that body nouns are used to express specific parts of a location normally expressed by prepositions in English. In (c), where there can be no semantic ambiguity, the body names are not used.

Note that $sì$ occurs in all the three sentences but its basic meaning is not obvious at all in the composite meaning of the verbs. This illustrates a case in which
the total meaning of the verbs in series form one concept and become more important than the individual meaning of each verb. This is typical of Concomitant Verb Serialisation.

6.4.2 Co-ordinate Serial Verb Construction

In the co-ordinate SVC two verbs are used in a sentence in a particular sequential order. The action expressed by VP\textsubscript{1} precedes that of the VP\textsubscript{2}. Where there is a sequence of transitive verbs which share the same NP\textsubscript{0} semantically, that NP\textsubscript{0} is only expressed overtly in the first NP of the series. Each verb in Co-ordinate SVC always carries the meaning it would have in a simple sentence.

Examples:

(a) okë ḏ hĩ uye riot
    okë he - buy meat eat

    'Okë bought meat and ate it'

(b) izé ḏ vwọ ñkà vẹ
    izé she - cook ñkà come

    'Izé cooked ñkà and brought it'

In co-ordinate SVC, it is possible to have two transitive verbs in one sentence as in (a) above. It is also possible to have a transitive verb and an intransitive verb as in (b) above.
One characteristic of co-ordinate SVC sentence is that it can be extended to have two parts joined by a co-ordinate connective, di, and then add a terminal particle marker, ni. The introduction of the co-ordinate connective and a terminal particle alters the style of the sentence. Note this:

(c) okë ọ hị uye d'ọ rịọ ni
okë he-bought meat and he ate it ni
'Okë bought meat and ate it'

In English, sentences (a) and (c) have the same translation but in Ebira there is stylistic difference. Sentence (a) is used in conversation and in descriptive discourse while sentence (c) is used in narrative discourse. Serial Verb Construction is not just a surface syntactic phenomenon, it is a stylistic and a semantic feature of the language.

Common Verbs in Co-ordinate SVC

The following verbs are frequently used together in co-ordinate SVC:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VP₁</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hị</td>
<td>'to buy'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mọ</td>
<td>'to make'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kà</td>
<td>'to move'</td>
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<tr>
<td>pà</td>
<td>'to beg'</td>
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<td>và</td>
<td>'to turn'</td>
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<tr>
<td>rị</td>
<td>'to eat'</td>
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<tr>
<td>nà</td>
<td>'to sell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vọ</td>
<td>'to come'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rị</td>
<td>'to eat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nà</td>
<td>'to go'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is of interest to note the tonal features of these verbs. All the verbs in \( VP_1 \) are monosyllabic low tone verbs and all the verbs in \( VP_2 \) are monosyllabic high or high-falling tone verbs. This is a surprising feature but it has been observed to be true in all the examples which have been examined. This tonal regularity may not necessarily be the case when disyllabic or multisyllabic verbs are involved.

6.4.3 Comparative Serial Verb Construction

Comparatives involving size, length, width, and weight are normally expressed in SVC structures in Ebira. Stative verbs and one specific comparative verb, hu, 'more / less', or 'more than / less than' characterise this structure. The following sentences illustrate the degrees of comparison in the language.

(a)  ámbè  ìzè  ọ  bàmì
    room  ìzè  it-is  big
    'Ìzè's room is big'

(b)  ámbàrà  okè  ìjì  bàmì  hu
    room  okè  it-is  big  more
    ámbè  ìzè  nì
    room  ìzè
    'Okè's room is bigger than Ìzè's room'
The verb hu, 'to be more than or less than' is the only comparative verb which occurs in comparative SVC in Ebira. To get the notion of superlative degree, an ideophone, kere-kere, is always appended to the VP hu, which literally means, 'more than, than' or 'less than, than'.

Some verbs used in Comparative SVC include:

- wọyi hu 'smaller than'
- ganu hu 'wider than'
- godọ hu 'longer/taller than'
- hẹrẹ hu 'lighter than'

6.4.4 Complex Serial Verb Construction

Complex Serial Verb Constructions involve some abstract concepts normally expressed by one verb in English. Complex SVC results from the fact that neither of the two verbs in series has direct connection with the composite meaning of the verbs put together. Furthermore, the complex SVC has a fixed collocation of verbs. Both verbs must be present for the sentence to be meaningful.
Examples:

(a) ocu  ᵇ ṃ dọ  okẹ  Ṽ wǔ  
    ocu  he - get  okẹ  hear
    'Ocu believed Okę'

(b) okẹ  ᵇ ṃ dọ  Ṽ izé  ṃ há  
    okẹ  he - get  Ṽ izé  save
    'Okę saved Izé'

Common verbs in complex SVC are:

dọ  ṃ wǔ  'to believe'

dọ  ṃ há  'to save'

The difference between the Concomitant Serial Verb Construction and the Complex Serial Verb Construction is that, in the Complex type, the meaning of the two verbs taken together is one concept, which cannot be derived from the meaning of the two parts taken separately. In the Concomitant type, however, the composite meaning can be derived from the meaning of the verbs which make up the series. In the Co-ordinate type, each verb retains its separate meaning unmodified.
6.5 **Auxiliary Verbs**

Auxiliary verbs differ from other verbs in that auxiliary verbs cannot occur independently functioning as heads of verbal phrases. In respect of phonological structure, however, auxiliary verbs have the same structure as other verbs. They always retain their harmony set. There are only three auxiliary verbs found in Ebira as yet. For two of them, na and vá, there are apparently related forms which can occur independently in the clause. See 5.5.

The three auxiliary verbs are:

- zǔ 'can'
- na 'to go'
- vá 'to come'

na and vá are already described in 6.4.1.3.

Examples are given here for zǔ only.

- ò zǔ rì īsá
  he can eat food
  'he can eat food'

- ò zǔ zwè ěcf
  he can run run
  'he can run'
The description of the Serial Verb Construction in Ebira is by no means exhaustive in this chapter. My aim has been to highlight the most important aspects of the SVC in relation to the total verbal system of the language.
Chapter seven gives a transcription of an Ebira narrative folk tale, together with a representation of its analysis of various units of the verbal piece. The fable is typical narrative normally told to the children during the evening moonlight entertainment in a compound home. I heard the story when I was young and I recently recorded, edited, and transcribed it. There are many fables about the hare and the tortoise in the language. This is just one of them. In this fable, the hare is said to be older than the tortoise.

The narrative is presented as follows:

Line 1: gives a broad phonetic transcription, showing vowel elisions and tone changes of connected speech;

Line 2: gives a phonemic word-by-word transcription with all the tones;

Line 3: gives phrase level analysis;
Line 4: gives clause level analysis;

Line 5: gives a literal word-for-word translation;

Line 6: gives a free idiomatic translation;

Line 7: gives a grammatical category label.

A single bar - / - indicates phrase breaks, a double bar - // - marks the end of dependent clauses, and a triple bar - /// - indicates the end of a sentence.

SVC indicates Serial Verb Construction in the phrase or in the sentence.

The following abbreviations are used for types of clauses in line four:

dep. tr. cl. dependent transitive clause
ind. tr. cl. independent transitive clause
dep. semi-tr. cl. dependent semi-transitive clause
ind. semi-tr. cl. independent semi-transitive clause
dep. intr. cl. dependent intransitive clause
ind. intr. cl. independent intransitive clause
ind. eq. cl. independent equative clause
ind. cop. cl. independent copula clause
The Text

The Hare and the Tortoise

1. a) yhyâdéji onîr̥pâkû yi
   b) uhî âdéji onîrî ðpâkû / yi //
   c) NP VP
   d) ind. cop. cl.
   e) fable hare and tortoise this is
   f) THIS IS A FABLE OF THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE.
   g) Indicative Mood.

2. a) ëkûhyônuma âdéjôhyôpâkû
   b) ëkuhî ônuma / âdéji / ô hî ðpâkû //
   c) P (introd.) NP VP
   d) ind. trans. cl.
   e) day one hare he-call tortoise
   f) ONE DAY THE HARE CALLED THE TORTOISE.
   g) Indicative Mood.

3. a) d' ôkàářihini //
   b) df' ôka ářihini
   c) VP
   d) dep. intr. cl.
   e) and he-say please
   f) AND HE SAID PLEASE
264

a) ḍ̱ vá sâaṣóni nîḏótấnî nî
b) ḍ̱ vy̱ sâaṣá ɒnî nò ƒḏá ḍ̱tá  anál nî /// SVC
c) VP
d) ind. semi-trans. cl.
e) he-come follow him go place friend his
f) HE SHOULD PLEASE GO WITH HIM TO HIS FRIEND'S HOUSE.
g) Subjunctive Mood.

4. a) d' ōpâkú kooho nî
b) ḏ f̱ ōpâkú / ka oooho nî ///
c) NP VP
d) ind. semi-trans. cl.
e) and tortoise say O.K.
f) AND THE TORTOISE SAID ALRIGHT.
g) Indicative Mood.

5. a) f̱jéḵuẖf̱ sf̱ tû d' ēñf̱nâà nà nî
c) NP VP NP VP
d) dep. intr. cl. indep. intr. cl.
e) when day has reach and they are going
f) THEY STARTED GOING WHEN THE DAY CAME.
g) Indicative Mood.
6. a) ɗɗɛjɒhyɒpɔkwɔzɛ ɗ'ɔka yɛɛ tʊzɔɔ
b) ɗɗɛjɪ / ɗ hɪ şpɔkʊ ɗzɛ / / dʃ ɗ ɔka / / yɛɛ tʊ ɪzɔɔ / / 
c) NP VP VP VP 
d) dep. tr. cl. dep. intr. cl. dep. semi-tr. cl.
e) hare he-call tortoise road and he-say if-we reach there
f) HALF WAY, THE HARE CALLED THE TORTOISE AND SAID, WHEN WE GET THERE,

a) ɔtám ɗɔ ʂísa ʋɛ
b) ɔtá ʂmɪ / ɗɔ ʂí ʂísa ʋɛ / / SVC

c) NP VP 
d) dep. tr. cl.
e) friend my if-he take food come
f) IF MY FRIEND BROUGH FOOD,

a) navɔ ma ʋdɪ rɪsa dʃɔwa vʌ ɬɪsa ɔ
b) navɔ ma ʋ:dɪ rɪsá // dʃ wa vʌ rɪsá ɔ // / 
c) VP VP 
d) dep. tr. cl. ind. tr. cl.
e) wait I first eat food and you will eat food
f) LET ME EAT FIRST BEFORE YOU EAT.
g) Subjunctive Mood.
7. a) d' ọpụkụ kẹnẹ vonùrà
   b) dị ọpụkụ ka // ẹnẹ vi vonùrà ///
   c) NP VP NP VP NP
   d) dep. intr. cl. ind. equ. cl.
   e) and tortoise say who is fool
   f) THE TORTOISE ASKED, "WHO IS A FOOL?"
   g) Interrogative Mood.

8. a) ojọwéyi vọrọ kọ vidị rịsá
   b) ozị ọwéyi / ọ vọrọ ka // ọ vidị rị isá //
   c) NP VP VP
   d) dep. st. cl. dep. tr. cl.
   e) child small it-is right that he first eat food
   f) THE YOUNGER PERSON OUGHT TO EAT FIRST

a) d' ọzọkwọ vá rịsa nị
   b) dị ọzọkwụ ọ vá rị isá nị ///
   c) NP VP
   d) ind. tr. cl.
   e) and older person he will eat food
   f) BEFORE THE OLDER PERSON SHOULD EAT.
   g) Subjunctive Mood.
9. a) ḥjēnīni tūzọ
    b) ḥjē ḥnīni tū ūzọ //
    c) NP VP
    d) dep. semi-tr. cl.
    e) when they reach there
    f) WHEN THEY GOT THERE,

    a) d' ādéjī wèrè na kàà yọtānī ka
    b) d ḥ ādējī / wèrè na kàà y ḣ ķ tā ānī ka // SVC
    c) NP VP
    d) dep. tr. cl.
    e) and hare quietly go tell it give friend his that
    f) THE HARE SECRETLY WENT TO TELL HIS FRIEND THAT

    a) ḥjòò sfìsà vè
    b) ḥjī ḥòò sfìisà vè // SVC
    c) VP
    d) dep. tr. cl.
    e) when if-he take food come
    f) WHEN HE BRINGS FOOD,
a)  ámb.  yºpâk¶  ka
b)  ámb á yi  ópâk¶  ka  // SVC
c)  VP
d)  dep. tr. cl.
e) he-should tell it give tortoise that
f) HE SHOULD TELL THE TORTOISE

a)  ámbs¶·nî na déni óswe  âgºv¶  ka
b)  ámbsá  onî na dâ épi óswe  âgºv¶  ka  // SVC
c)  VP
d)  dep. tr. cl.
e) he-should follow him go fetch water at-spring because that
f) TO GO WITH HIM TO THE SPRING (place) BECAUSE

a) épi  tá  o
b) épi  ò tá  o  //
c) NP  VP
d) ind. intr. cl.
e) water it-finish
f) THE (drinking) WATER IS FINISHED.
g) Indicative Mood.
10. a) d' qta deji kooho ni
    b) df qta adeji / ka ooho ni ///
    c) NP VP
    d) ind. tr. cl.
    e) and friend hare say O.K.
    f) THE HARE'S FRIEND AGREED.
    g) Indicative Mood.

11. a) fjosisa ve
    b) fji s jis ni ve /// SVC
    c) VP
    d) dep. tr. cl.
    e) when he take food come
    f) WHEN HE BROUGHT SOME FOOD,

    a) d' gkopak wo sasoni noswe ni
    b) df s ka / gpak / sasas oni no oswe ni /// SVC
    c) VP NP VP
    d) ind. semi-tr. cl.
    e) and he say tortoise he-should follow him go spring
    f) HE TOLD THE TORTOISE TO FOLLOW HIM TO THE SPRING.
    g) Subjunctive Mood.
12.  a)  
\[ \text{they have gone and hare eat food that completely} \]

b)  
\[ \text{d' o si zwe na te ni} \]

c)  
\[ \text{and he has run go hide} \]

d)  
\[ \text{Indicative Mood.} \]

13.  a)  
\[ \text{when tortoise and friend hare come} \]

b)  
\[ \text{ind. intr. cl.} \]

c)  
\[ \text{dep. tr. cl.} \]


a) e ñadejì pòòrò e yi ré é

b) e si ñadejì pòòrò // e yi ré é ///

c) VP VP

d) dep. tr. cl. ind. tr. cl.

e) they look for hare long time they not see him

f) THEY LOOKED FOR HARE EVERYWHERE THEY COULD NOT FIND HIM

g) Indicative Mood.

14. a) ujwàâ kwòpàkù ëtëëtërë

b) ujwë / àà kù òpàkù ëtërë-ëtërë ///

c) NP VP

d) ind. tr. cl.

e) hunger it-is-biting tortoise very well

f) THE TORTOISE WAS VERY HUNGRY

g) Indicative Mood.

15. a) d' òpàkù ka pàà

b) dì òpàkù / ka pàà

c) NP VP

d) dep. tr. cl.

e) and tortoise say never

f) THE TORTOISE VOWED NEVER
a) ṣọọma ọrọ ọrọ ọka ọrọ jẹ́ ọjọ
b) ṣọọ / ọrọ ọrọ ọka ọrọ ọka ọjọ jẹ́ ọjọ // SVC

c) NP  VP

d) ind. tr. cl.

e) he he-never again follow hare go out

f) TO GO ANYWHERE WITH THE HARE.

g) Indicative Mood.

16. a) ṣòrfìjììòò ṣòrfìjììòò

b) ṣòrfì́ ọ̀nọ̀ ṣòrfì́ ọ̀nọ̀

c) d) general concluding phrase

e) from day that from day that

f) FROM THAT DAY

a) ṣò́pà́kùnùràdèjì ṣọ̣ ma ọzì ọjọ

b) ṣò́pà́kù̀ ọ̀nìrì̀ ḍèjì / ṣọ̣ ma ọzì ọjọ //

c) NP  VP

d) ind. intr. cl.

e) tortoise and hare they never go about

f) THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE NEVER WENT OUT TOGETHER.

g) Indicative Mood.
17. a) ḷ̀h̀h̀h̀h̀oyòl ò̀jé ᱞ̀dè́jó̀pò́tò̀bò́òò
   b) ḷ̀h̀h̀h’à / è́jì̀jé ò̀jé íìì̞è̀kà / è́dè́jì̀f àò̀mòì̀ ò́lò́òòòò òòòòòò
   c) NP VP NP VP
   d) dep. intr. cl. ind. tr. cl.
   e) greediness it-not allow that hare he-should have friend proper
   f) THE HARE NEVER HAD A TRUE FRIEND BECAUSE OF GREEDINESS.
   g) Indicative Mood.
## APPENDIX I.

### A CHART OF MONOSYLLABIC VERBS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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A LIST OF MONOSYLLABIC VERBS

Appendix 2 shows a list of monosyllabic verbs with their gloss meaning.

pá  'to train or raise up a child'
pa  'to play tricks'
pã  'to beg'
pō  'to be cheap'
pō  'to mix flour in liquid'
bē 'to ambush, to trap someone'
bē 'to carve (wood)'
ba  'to fast'
bā  'to dig'
bō  'to be old'
tī 'to sigh, to groan'
tē  'to be made ashamed'
tē  'to hide'
dā 'to light a fire'
da  'to display wares'
dā 'to cut'
dụ  'to chase'
du  'to be spoiled'
dū  'to clear bush for farming'
kā 'to get water or grains with a cup from a big container'
ka 'to say'
kā 'to fish in a small river by damming and clearing the water away'
kǒ 'to teach, to learn'
kū 'to gather'
kǔ 'to play football'
kū 'to foam or water to boil over'
kū 'to be late'
kű 'to happen in ancient times'
gē 'to sew'
ga 'to praise in song'
gā 'to share'
gū 'to take side with'
gū 'to be complete'
gū 'to plant yam seedling'
gū 'to thatch a house'
gū 'to close (a door)'
vḍ 'to be ripe'
vḍ 'to be ready (cooked food)'
vī 'to be, is'
vē 'to come'
vā 'to marry'
va 'to break dry wood'
vā 'to pour'
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vọ</td>
<td>'to be left, part of something'</td>
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<tr>
<td>vọ</td>
<td>'to cut meat in large pieces'</td>
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<tr>
<td>vọ</td>
<td>'to make flour meal'</td>
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<tr>
<td>vụ</td>
<td>'to put on trousers/pants or skirt'</td>
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<td>vụ</td>
<td>'to be rotten'</td>
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<td>vụ</td>
<td>'to be lost'</td>
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<td>sị</td>
<td>'to pay'</td>
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<tr>
<td>sị</td>
<td>'to look for, to want'</td>
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<td>sị</td>
<td>'to take'</td>
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<td>s'ẹ</td>
<td>'to initiate something'</td>
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<td>s'ẹ</td>
<td>'to chop off grass'</td>
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<td>s'ẹ</td>
<td>'to come true (predictions or prophecy)'</td>
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<td>s'ẹ</td>
<td>'to bargain, to market'</td>
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<td>s'ẹ</td>
<td>'to be smooth'</td>
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<td>s'ẹ</td>
<td>'to be bland, to lose taste'</td>
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<td>s'ẹ</td>
<td>'to die'</td>
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<td>zị</td>
<td>'to lie in wait for someone'</td>
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<td>zị</td>
<td>'to sieve'</td>
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<td>zị</td>
<td>'to wander'</td>
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<td>'to be enough'</td>
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<td>zẹ</td>
<td>'to run'</td>
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<td>zẹ</td>
<td>'to agree to'</td>
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<td>zẹ</td>
<td>'to catch'</td>
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<td>zẹ</td>
<td>'to be scarce'</td>
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<tr>
<td>zẹ</td>
<td>'can, able'</td>
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zhú 'to fall (rain)'
zhù 'to tie up an animal to a tree'
hf 'to be full'
hí 'to string (beads)'
hǐ 'to sweep'
hì 'to call'
hì 'to buy'
hè 'to excrete body waste'
hě 'to be in possession of something by finding it'
hè 'to be retarded in growth'
há 'to split wood with an axe'
hà 'to wake up'
hà 'to bark (a dog)'
họ 'to drive, to pilot'
họ 'to ask'
họ 'to boil'
hụ 'to grow'
hụ 'to open'
hű 'to drink'
hu 'to uproot'
hư 'to roast (in fire)'
cī 'to get a load down off head'
cī 'to press down in order to level'
cǐ 'to germinate (seeds)'
cē 'to break'
ji  'to separate two people from fighting'
ji  'to jump'
ji  'to cut off a leaf or twig'
jê  'to be happy'
jê  'to wait'
mî  'to put out light or fire'
mê  'to do'
mâ  'to fell (a tree)'
ma  'to give birth'
mô  'to measure (grains) with measuring cup'
nî  'to be clean'
nê  'to trigger off (trap)'
ne  'to throw'
nê  'to prepare (gravy)'
nâ  'to sell'
na  'to open'
nâ  'to tear'
nâ  'to leave'
nô  'to go'
nô  'to make announcement with a special gong'
nô  'to knead'
nu  'to leak'
nî  'to laugh'
nî  'to cut a tooth'
'to have'
'choom to choose'
'wip to wipe'
'hinit with hand'
'crack nuts with stones
to get the seeds out'
'spin wool or cotton'
'loosen, to untie'
'enter'
'eat'
'see'
'lick the fingers'
'be sharp (knife)'
'inhabit (a place)'
'pour liquid through
a funnel'
'be easy'
'think'
'make a hole through
a wall'
'sharpen a hunting stick'
'carve a pointed stick'
'dig in the sand'
'steal'
'refuse'
'give, this is'
'understand'
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<td>yāa</td>
<td>'to be in a place'</td>
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<td>yō</td>
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APPENDIX 3.

Presented here are sample spectrograms of my pronunciation showing words of contrastive vowel harmony sets.
èhè 'faeces'

ehè 'world'


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