

IDIOSYNCRATIC GRAMMAR: THE VERB PHRASE IN THE LANGUAGE OF CHIEF ZEBRUDAYA OF *THE MASQURADE*

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the peculiarities of the verb phrase in the non-standard English spoken by Chief Zebrudaya, a character in a Nigerian radio-television comedy series The Masquerade. It contrasts the morphological and syntactic features of the verb phrase used by this character with those of Standard English and arrives at some general observations peculiar to the grammar. Then it identifies some general features of the verb phrase and states 'rules' that are employed by the speaker such that enable any other individual to generate innumerable verb phrases of Zebrudaya's type. We employ the term 'idiosyncratic grammar' for the structures because of their uniqueness to the character. Our submission is that this is a peculiar grammar that has been evolved by the actor of this fictional role as a result of practice over time in the attempt to artistically parody the difficulties faced by learners of English as a second language in real-life situations.

Introduction

Chief Zebrudaya Okoroigwe Nwogbo, alias 4.30, is a popular character in the Nigerian television theatre, as the hero of the comedy series, *The Masquerade*². What endears him to viewers, more than any other thing, is his peculiar English.

While its tickling effects are readily appreciated, the language may at first seem to be too odd a subject to study. Indeed, little scholarly attention has been given to this language. Any references to it have been largely peripheral. For example, David Jowitt mentions it in his discussion of varieties of 'Nigerian English' as exemplifying about the lowest variety (1991: 37), explaining it in an endnote as 'severely sub-standard English' (1991: 51). Bamgbose also cites it as an extant instance of 'Broken English' (1995: 13). Even newspaper articles have not gone beyond such broad and vague labels as 'a peculiar language' (Ngim 1991:12) and 'a special form of Pidgin English which is so unique to the comedian' (Okoro 1992: B1). The only fairly scholarly discussion on Zebi's language in newspapers available to us is that by Nengi Ilagha (1985: 7). He suggests a nationalistic

impetus for Zebi's variety: 'Zebrudayans may merely be twisting the poor language so grotesquely so as to make us feel ashamed of it. Just so that in the end, we might decide to vote for an indigenous national language, possibly by the year 2,000.' Ilagha also associates 'the falling standard of education' in Nigeria with Zebrudaism which 'does violence to English grammar.' He observes that 'a terrible Zebrudaya plague has been footloose on the country.' However, he is unable to specify those features in the language that do 'violence to English grammar,' such as would enable the learner or audience to be on their guard.

Ayo Banjo (1979: 11) has made some useful remarks on Zebi's language in terms of its level of intelligibility, its aesthetic quality and its social realism. He has emphasized the need to study this language critically. He notes the significance of the language as a medium of literary creation since it is 'a deliberate parody of a particular variety of English for aesthetic purposes' (1979: 11). The 'particular variety of English' which Banjo is referring to is the non-standard Nigerian variety. Yet, the distinctive features of this language have been left to mere gossip and jest, neglected by linguists and stylisticians, probably because some regard this variety as 'aesthetically inferior' to standard English (Banjo 1979: 11),³ especially in the face of much concern with 'literary language.' Unfortunately, he gives no illustrations. Ben Ohi Elugbe and Augusta Phil Omamor (1991: 61-66, 126) and Elugbe (1995: 297) have also discussed it, especially citing it as an instance of 'deliberately and exaggeratedly incorrect English' as distinguished from 'Broken English.' Igboanusi cites Zebrudaya as exemplifying 'the best known form of 'special English' characterized by the mixing of 'his high sounding English with ungrammatical Broken English forms' (2002: 88). He cites a few extracts of this language and adds that 'Zebrudaya creates humour by manipulating the English lexical and grammatical rules, thereby resulting in unacceptable English structures.' But that is how far he goes: he says no more. While these scholars cite a few utterances from the texts, they stop short of engaging in any exercise that could be considered analytical, rigorous or systematic.

Such academic inattention to the innovative or imaginative use of non-native varieties of English has, of late, been observed by linguists. Thus, Kachru remarks that 'this aspect of non-native English has unfortunately not attracted much attention from linguists' (1983b 42). He adds:

The creative processes displayed in the literatures have been ignored in the linguistic studies, to the detriment of studies on stylistics,

contrastive discourse, and language acculturation. This neglect reflects the dichotomy of theories and methodologies which has traditionally existed between linguists and literary critics. (Kachru a: 9)

It is only recently that this area has 'been taken seriously by literary scholars' (Kachru b: 42). Thus, it is a fairly recent development that critics appear to have considered artistic expression in non-standard English, especially in second-language contexts, a worthy phenomenon for academic investigation. Hence, some literary works by Africans making use of nativized English (both as narrative language and as character language) have attracted scholarly attention. We recall the works of Chinua Achebe (all the novels), Amos Tutuola (*The Palm wine Drinkard*), Gabriel Okara (*The Voice*), Tunde Fatunde (*No More Oil Boom* and *No Food, No Country*) and Ken Saro-Wiwa (*Sozaboy*).⁴

That Zebi's language has remained unstudied for so long may be attributed to its essentially audio-visual medium of expression, as opposed to the print medium of the works. Nevertheless, Zebi's language, as much as the others, reveals a lot about the seemingly limitless potentials of the English language – especially the transplanted varieties – as an instrument of artistic or literary expression in societies that do not use English as a native language. Other linguistic features in the language of Zebi and of another similar chief character in yet another Nigerian media comedy employing similar non-standard English have been discussed elsewhere (Teilanyo 2003a, 2009, 2010)

Although Zebi's English is replete with other equally, or even more, conspicuous deviations, the verb phrase (henceforth VP) has been chosen for investigation here for some reasons. First a paper like this cannot but be limited to a specific area. Hence, other peculiar features at the different levels of linguistic organization such as phonology, grammar (except the VP), lexico-semantics and discourse are left out from the paper and discussed fairly comprehensively elsewhere (Teilanyo 2003b). Another reason is the VP's special markedness in Zebi's grammar, probably more than all other elements of clause structure. In addition, the VP is particularly significant in grammar: it is the most obligatory clause element and exercises tremendous influence on the other elements, especially the object, the complement and the obligatory adverbial. Hence, discussing the VP will inevitably throw some light on the other

sentence elements. The verb also deserves special attention because it is morphologically more complex than other word classes: even among the open class items, while nouns are inflected only for number and case and while adjectives and adverbs are inflected mainly for degree, verbs are marked for number (person), tense, aspect and mood, each with its peculiar morphological irregularities.

These morphological complexities contribute to the VP's deviance in this grammar, for the VP often lacks a one-to-one correspondence between inflectional form and systemic (grammatical) meaning (Muir 1972: 10, 89 ff). By this we mean that one form of the verb may be used for different grammatical and discourse functions. Thus, the base-infinitive form of the verb (except BE) is used for the first person singular and plural, second person singular and plural and third person plural subjects. The same base form is used for the imperative mood. This we illustrate with the verb GIVE:

I/We/You/They give him the book. = SV concord (finiteness)

I want to give you the book. = Infinitive

Give me the book. = imperative mood.

This suggests that the learner could be confused by these overlaps, these uses of the same form in different grammatical operations. Hence, most writers on ESL (Adekunle, Adetugbo, Akere, Jibril, Bokamba, Ufomata and Schmied, for example) have mentioned general deviations in verb usage. In addition, O'Donnell and Todd have recognized deviances in 'temporal and aspectual features' (54) of verb usage in non-native varieties. Traugott and Pratt (1980: 331-334) have also observed some uniqueness in the system of verbal auxiliaries in Black English.

In all, we consider the structure of Zebi's VPs as amounting to an 'idiosyncratic grammar'. It is a 'grammar' because of the regularity of the patterns found in it; it is 'idiosyncratic' because some of the features, while capitalizing on MT interference, have become uniquely individualistic and cannot readily be traced to the 'langue' (Corder 1981: 11) or any language variety of any language community. Linguistic idiosyncrasy is related to, but not identical with, the notion of 'idiolect'. The difference between the two is one

of degree rather than of kind. Although both are personal dialects, an idiolect is more of an individual's 'mixture of dialects' all of whose rules can be 'found somewhere in the set of rules of one or another dialect' (Corder 1981: 15). A bit differently, an idiosyncratic dialect is so peculiar or unique to an individual that some of the rules accounting for its structure cannot be traced to any recognizable language variety. While a poet, an aphasic or an infant learning his L₁ can also have a peculiar, idiosyncratic dialect (Corder 1981: 16-17), we consider Zebi's grammar as an L₂ learner's idiosyncrasy because it is the non-standard features of ESL that form the background for the producer's exploitation and contrivance for his fictional purpose. Thus, the limited variability of Zebi's VP is a feature of the Igbo VP inflection (Emenanjo 1978: 126-58; Williamson 1972: 1). An L₂ idiosyncratic dialect is an instance of what Corder has elsewhere called a 'transitional dialect' (Corder 1972). Larry Selinker (1974) calls it an 'Interlanguage' while W. Nemser (1974) uses the appellation 'Approximate System.'

AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this paper is to investigate the structure of the VP in the language of Zebi and to assess its aesthetic and communicative features. Prominence is given to the primary auxiliaries because of their spectacular deviance and their effect on the total structure of the VP. (The modals are not particularly deviant, except as they interact with the primary auxiliaries – see R7 below).

The texts studied here are the present writer's transcriptions of Zebi's speeches in two of the audio-recorded albums produced under the troupe's name James Iroha and the Masquerade. These are 'The Visit of Mr. Bankrovitch' and 'War against Indiscipline' (henceforth 'Visit' and 'War'). The use of two episodes should indicate that this special grammar cuts across episodes; the limitation to two episodes, out of the numerous available, aids easy handling of the statistics involved.

Audio-records are transcribed by this writer because the original scripts are not readily available: of course, they are not published in print.⁵

Conventional English orthography is adopted in the transcription. This is the type used in the scripts as observed in excerpts of some other episodes. Only cases of specially marked phonological deviation – such as ‘propoly’ (‘properly’), ‘vu/vuri’ (‘view’) – are reflected in the transcription, while other features which characterize the speech of most Nigerians – such as /di/ for ‘the’ – are written in the standard English form. In any case, phonology is not part of the study here, so phonological accuracy in the transcription is not essential.

There are 783 VPs (402 in ‘Visit’ and 381 in ‘War’) in the two episodes. There are 675 primary auxiliaries in the 783 VPs (341 in ‘Visit’ and 334 in ‘War’). The VPs cited as examples will be identified on the right by their serial numbers in the episodes, while each utterance is also numbered serially on the left.

It is observed that certain verbal structures are common while others are totally absent. Similarly, some verb constructions conform to standard usage while others are always deviant. These broad observations are stated as ‘Generalizations’ (‘G’) in sub-section (b). Beyond these broad statements, some generalizations of peculiar structural patterning can be specified with some mathematical formulae. In sub-section (c) these formulae are stated in the form of ‘Rules’ (‘R’), that is, a finite set or ‘system of rules that in some explicit and well-defined way assigns structural descriptions to [the VPs of] sentences’ and from which an infinite number of VPs in this grammar may be generated (Chomsky 1995: 8, 15-16). Thus, a statement that this grammar does not use the present participle form of the verb is a ‘generalization’, but an expression that the progressive is expressed in this grammar through the formula (BE + Base of Lexical Verb/V-base) is a rule.

A complex notion of correctness is adopted here in describing the structures. In English, the complex VP may be conceived as having degrees of correctness. The units involved are the Subject, the Auxiliary (or Auxiliaries) and the Lexical Verb – abbreviated here as S, Aux, and V, respectively. There must be concord among these three units before the VP could be said to be fully correct. While the auxiliary may function as operator, the kind or form of operator chosen also imposes some constraint on the form of the subsequent

verb element (the lexical verb or another auxiliary). For example, in declarative and interrogative sentences, when there is an auxiliary operator (other than DO), the lexical verb (not infinitive) used with the auxiliary is normally in the participle form – present participle (-ing) or past participle (ed). In imperative sentences, where the dummy DO functions as operator, the lexical verb is normally in the base form.² In other words, we expect not only S–Aux concord but also Aux–V concord. There is only partial correctness where we have S–Aux concord but no Aux–V concord in this section, full conformity ('correctness') is separated from partial conformity. For example, there is full 'correctness' in

1. You have come to look for trade fair. – 'Visit' 196
2. For what purpose are you singing? – 'Visit' 296
3. Do not talk it loudly. – 'War' 286³

In such expressions as

4. I am say that – 'Visit' 159/ 'War' 201
5. You have not hear – 'Visit' 146
6. Do not be catch napping. – 'War' 377

there is only partial correctness (S–Aux concord). To have full correctness, the phrases would read ' am saying/I say', 'have not heard' and 'Do not be caught', respectively. There is no correctness at all in

7. Why are he want to be saw me? – 'Visit' 10
8. That one are does not matters not. – 'Visit' 190
9. He are take what? – 'War' 33
10. You was talk it that ... - 'War' 142.

It seems that we can talk about S–V concord without S–Aux concord only when the (first)auxiliary is considered redundant, as in

11. The barber are does not know how... 'Visit' 367

- The barber does not know how

12. Nothing was happens. 'War' 156, 159

- Nothing happens.

The patterns of correctness and incorrectness in the verb phrases in the two episodes are presented statistically in Table 3.

Table 1: Correctness in Zebi's Verb Phrase

Episode	Correct		Partially Correct		Incorrect		Total
	Quantity (VP's)	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage	
'Visit'	81	10.344%	89	11.367%	232	29.630%	402
'War'	67	08.557%	87	11.111%	227	29.246%	381
Total	148	18.902%	176	21.306%	459	58.876%	783

The above table highlights the egregious nature of the VP in Zebi's grammar, with a whopping quantity of 81.354% (that is, 635 out of 783 VP's) being incorrect, either completely or partially. How the features of this incorrectness are systematic and constitute an idiosyncratic grammar is what follows.

(a) The Primary Auxiliaries

Basically, the primary auxiliaries are those closed class words which function sometimes as auxiliary verbs and at other times as main verbs. They are three – DO, HAVE and BE. Their statistical distribution is presented in a tabular form as follows:

Table 2: The Distribution of the Primary Auxiliaries in Zebi's Verb Phrase

Episode	DO		HAVE		BE		Total
	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage	
'Visit'	32	04.7407%	15	02.222%	294	43.55%	341
'War'	29	04.296%	06	0.888%	299	44.296%	334
Total	61	09.037%	21	03.11%	593	87.846%	675

(i) DO

In the texts investigated, DO has a total frequency of 61 – 32 in ‘Visit’ and 29 in ‘War’ (04.7 and 04.3% of the primary auxiliaries). Out of these, 29 (12 in ‘Visit’ and 17 in ‘War’) have either total or partial correctness (conformity to standard usage), while 32 (20 in ‘Visit’ and 12 in ‘War’) are totally deviant. Full correctness cuts across main and auxiliary uses: As a main (lexical) verb:

13. Do what I am ask you to be does. – ‘Visit’ 104

14. Do as Roman is does. – ‘Visit’ 109.

15. Let us, therefore, do everything in the turn by turn. – ‘War’ 222.

As an auxiliary dummy operator [DO – SUPPORT (Quirk *et al* Comprehensive 133)] in generally imperative clauses:

16. Ovularia, do not vex vex with me. – ‘Visit’ 03

17. Do not be calling my name. – ‘War’ 148

Partial correctness is observed mainly in auxiliary usage in negative imperative constructions. (See R4 below)

Do not be open it ... -- ‘War’ 12.

In general, there is the absence of

(a) the emphatic DO;

(b) the use of DO as operator in interrogative clauses, where it is supplanted by BE (See R9, R10 below);

(c) its use in inverted constructions with introductory negatives (Quirk *et al* Comprehensive 833).

(ii) HAVE

According to Bauer, ‘grammatical patterns with the verb HAVE are notoriously variable across varieties of English’ (69). This statement would explain, at least in part, the defective (deviant) use of HAVE which we observe in Zebi’s English.

In the two episodes analyzed, HAVE is found 21 times –15 in ‘Visit’ and 06 in ‘War’ (02.222% and 0.888% of the primary auxiliaries). Out of these 14 – 11 in ‘Visit’ and 03 in ‘War’ (i.e. 73.3% /50% of HAVE) – follow standard usage, while 07 (04 in ‘Visit’ and 03 in ‘War’) are totally abnormal in usage. This would suggest that of the three primary auxiliaries, Zebi’s grammar is closest to SE in the use of HAVE.

There are only 4 instances of full (S-Aux-V) correctness, all auxiliary in use:

18. 'I have come to look for Mr. Zebrudaya'. – 'Visit' 59.

19. You have come to look for trade fair. – 'Visit' 196

20. Twenty people of our village of Egbebu have been arrested – 'War' 123.

The correctness in (18) may be explained by the fact that it is a statement by Mr. Bankrovitch only being quoted by Zebi; hence, the correctness is Mr. Bankrovitch's not Zebi's [although that in (19) is identical with it]. Alternatively, the correctness in both can be considered accidental: COME has the same form both as base form and as ed₂ participle. There would have been little chance of full correctness had COME been a regular verb since Zebi would probably have preferred the base form (See G4, R8 below). Utterance 58 is more difficult to explain. It is 'internally deviant' (Leech and Short 55-56) for such a complex VP with two auxiliaries to be fully correct. The only (perfect) passive clauses in the corpus to compare with (20) are

21. The cold war which are fight among different different churches – 'War' 304.

22. Gringory and Clarus have do what finish? – 'Visit' 258

23. I have dead die. – 'War' 23

24. Which offend have I commute? – 'War' 42

There are 3 instances of S-V correctness in 'Visit' (where HAVE is lexical). The VP would be correct if the auxiliary (-ries) were either deleted or reconstructed:

25. It are mean that you are have bad things. – 'Visit' 236 – you have bad things.

26. So you are does not have tombo liquor – 'Visit' 372 – do not have – (se R5)

(iii) BE

BE is used 593 times – 294 in 'Visit' and 299 in 'War' (i.e. 43.55% and 44.296% of the primary auxiliaries). This intimidating proportion of BE in relation to the other primary auxiliaries – DO and HAVE – can be explained, at least in part, by the fact that BE

displaces DO 37 times (17 in 'Visit' and 20 in 'War'), and HAVE 06 times (02 in 'Visit' and 04 in 'War');

27. Are you hear? [Do you hear?] – 'Visit' 65, 224/'War' 99.

28. What are he mean? [What does he mean?] – 'Visit' 46.

29. Chineke God, where are you go that ... - 'Visit' 17

- have you gone –
- (?) are you going –

30. He are chop kolanut. – 'Visit' 25

- has eaten –
- (?) is eating –
- (?) ate –

Secondly, BE in its various forms could be seen as redundant in several uses. Or more appropriately, BE is used to perform more functions than are traditionally assigned to it (See R1 – R8, R10–11 below).

Out of the 593 instances of BE, only 100 – 44 in 'Visit' and 56 in 'War' (15%/18% of BE) – are in full or partial consonance with standard usage, while the overwhelming majority of 493 – 250 in 'Visit' and 243 in 'War' (85%/81% of BE) – are totally NS in use. This high frequency of deviant cases can be attributed mainly to the additional functions it performs in this grammar. It may also, remotely, be traced to the unique place of BE among all English verbs. Be is the only verb that has eight different forms (potentially helping to increase the bulk) as contrasted with the maximum five forms of other verbs – the base/infinitive, the third person singular (present), the past tense, the present participle and the past participle forms:

DO: Does, Did, Doing, Done

HAVE: Have, Has, Had, Having

GIVE: Give, Gives, Gave, Giving, Given

BE is also the only English verb that distinguishes the first person singular from (Am) from the first person plural, second person and third person plural form (Are). It is also the only verb that makes number distinction in the past tense (Was/Were).

Thus, we have

BE: Be, Am, Is, Are, Was, Were, Been, Being.

Consequently, the learner is likely to be confused by these subtleties and eccentricities.

Among the eight forms, two (were and Being) are not found in the corpus studied. Been is found only once (where it is 'correctly' used):

31. Twenty people of our village of Egbedu have been arrested [see HAVE above] – 'War' 123.

But for this internally deviant occurrence of Been, the forms used by Zebi would actually have been five. Were is replaced by Was on 03 occasions (01 in 'Visit' and 02 in 'War'):

32. Are you who was take hammer ... -- 'War' 45

- who were taking –
- (?) who took –

[Could Was have been used because the subject 'You' is singular?]

We may account for BE more precisely in its various forms:

3.1.3a Be: This base form is used 149 times in our texts – 76 in 'Visit' and 73 in 'War' (26%/24.4% of BE). Out of these, only 09 instances (04 in 'Visit' and 05 in 'War') unarguably follow standard usage.

3.1.3b Am: This first person singular (present) form is used 53 times – 36 in 'Visit' and 17 in 'War' (12.2%/05.7% of BE) There are 06 instances of full/partial correctness.

3.1.3c Are: This present plural form is the most frequent of all the forms of BE, a highly favoured form. It occurs 342 times – 167 in 'Visit' and 175 in 'War' (56.8%/58.5% of BE). Out of these 61 – 31 in 'Visit' and 30 in 'War' – conform either fully or partially to standard usage, while 281 instances (136 in 'Visit' and 145 in 'War') are totally defective or abnormal in use.

The overwhelming proportion of Are may be attributed partially to its normal use for concord with both singular and plural second person and third person plural subjects (in SE). Beyond this remote factor, an immediate cause is its substitution for several forms of BE, Do and HAVE illustrated above. An even more conspicuous booster is the extra special tense and aspectual functions it performs in this grammar (See R1, R2, R5, R10, R11 below).

3.1.3d Was: This singular past form is seen on 45 occasions – 13 in ‘Visit’ and 32 in ‘War’ (04.4%/10.7% of BE). There are only about 05 instances of incontrovertible correctness:

33. I was joking jokery. [auxiliary] – ‘Visit’ 358.

34. There was no water system. [main verb] – ‘Visit’ 160.

35. ‘ I, Chief Michael Etim Die-Weight, hereby declare that I was born in the year 1982 and not 1907 as previously declared at Mbitoli, alias Ikeduru; that during by that time, there was no birth register; so therefore, my birthday was not registered.’ – ‘War’ 320, 321, 322.

The SE uses of Was, as well as other native-like participial forms (see G3, G4), need special attention. In the passage, Zebi is quoting (reciting) the oath that age declarants swear to: hence, the correctness would be traced more to the original passage being quoted than to Zebi’s competence.

The majority of the uses of was are those of partial (S–Aux) correctness where Was functions as auxiliary. Example of these are the VPs in R3 below.

Prominent among the few cases of ‘no-correctness’ are those clauses in which Was displaces Were (both as auxiliary and as main verb) [See Utterance 32 above]:

36. Was you not in the president when ...? – ‘Visit’ 29 – Were you not present when...

37. Was you think it that? – ‘Visit’ 357

- (?) Were you thinking that

- Did you think that ...

Both are interrogatives in which Was functions as question operator. [A psycholinguistic interpretation may suggest that Zebi uses Was because both subjects are singular ‘You’].

The distribution of the different forms of BE is presented in Table 5:

Table3: The Distribution of the Forms of BE in Zebi’s Verb Phrase

Episodes	Be		Am		Is		Are		Was		Were		Being		Been	
	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%
‘Visit’	7	26	3	12.	0	0.8	1	56.	1	4.	0	0	0	0	0	00
	6		6	2	3	4	6	8	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	
							7									

'War'	7	24.	1	05.	0	0.1	1	58.	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1
	3	4	7	7	1	69	7	5	2	0.	0	0	0	0	1	69
							5			7						

(b) Generalizations

G1 Third Person Singular:

The grammar is generally deficient in the third person singular form of the verb. This accounts for the absence of Has and the rarity of Is in our corpus. Other deviant constructions (with the primary auxiliaries) are used to perform its function (See R1). A specific exception is the aberrant use of Does (see R5). Besides Does, and the 4 uses of Is (G13), there are only 8 instances of the third person singular – Knows (3x) Goes (1x), Matters (1x), Happens (2x) and Administers (1x). Zebi uses this – s form even where the presence of an auxiliary rules out this form; on other occasions, the –s form would fit in only if the auxiliary were deleted. Thus, these –s forms are always unconventionally used. While Goes is used even with the second person subject, the –s form of the other lexical verbs are always used with third person singular subjects, (albeit deviantly). Out of the 20 instances of KNOW, there are only 3 Knows (in 'War'); out of the 37 instances of GO, there is only one Goes (also in 'War'). The others occur only in this – s form.

38. The lawyer who are knows that ... -- 'War' 222

39. The Reverend Father who are does not knows_how – 'War' 216

40. If you are goes to purchase anythings ...-- 'War' 217

- If you are go to call police for me.

It is important to note that besides the lack of Has and Is and the unusual use of Does, there are at least 21 clear cases in which this –s form of lexical verbs is contextually required in standard usage, excluding those several other cases which have the possibility of taking this form (see R1 and Remarks 1 below).

41. He are grow annoyance like we. – 'Visit' 90

-- He grows annoyed like us.

42. It are mean that ... - 'Visit' 235, 360

-- it means that ...

43. Action are spoke louder than television. – 'War' 215

- Action speaks louder than television.

44. Any time he are like ... -- 'War' 263

- Any time he likes ...

G2 Past Tense

The past tense form of lexical verbs is never used correctly. Weak (regular) verbs are rarely in their ed_1 form, its function being performed by the 'BE + V-base' formula (see R1).

Most strong (irregular) verbs that form their past tense forms through vowel mutation are always in the past tense forms (although never used correctly). Some of these are TELL (6x), BREAK (3x), SPEAK (2x), WRITE (1x) and SIT (1x):

45. Let me told you. – 'Visit' 82.

46. Do not be told me again. – 'Visit' 220.

47. Go to be told that headmaster. – 'Visit' 305.

48. Who are told you? – 'Visit' 319.

49. Told me. -- 'War' 75.

50. The man would be took one *okute* to be broke him head. – 'Visit' 72.

51. Let me be broke it. – 'Visit' 152.

52. The total numeracity of tumbler have broke – 'Visit' 285.

53. He are spoke to me. – 'Visit' 58

54. He are spoke louder than television. – 'Visit' 215.

55. I am wrote him letter of invite? – 'Visit' 11.

56. Come to be sat down. – 'Visit' 98.

TAKE generally takes the past form (11x) except in a 'Are/Was + V-base' structure (2x):

57. Will you be took your careful. – 'Visit' 02

58. Took pepper. – 'Visit' 177

59. I am took the membership badge. – 'War' 197.

For BRING, the base form is used in the 'Are + V-base' structure and in monotransitive infinitives:

60. They are bring *katakata*. – 'War' 291

61. Go to be bring glass. – 'Visit' 254.

The ed_1 / ed_2 form is used in distransitive infinitives:

62. Go to be brought me kola. – 'Visit' 100.

63. Forward-march to be brought me kola. -- 'Visit' 112

A double-past form (mutation + inflection) is used for the simple present (or perfection):

64. He who are broughted kola are broughted life. – ‘Visit’ 153, 154.

- He who brings kola brings life.
- He who has brought kola has brought life.

The verbs SEE and UNDERSTAND are inconsistent in the forms used:

65. You will saw it. – ‘Visit’ 102

66. ‘I have come to see’. -- ‘Visit’ 59, 60.

67. I am see. – ‘War’ 120, 140

68. Let me see. – ‘Visit’ 320

The following strong verbs do not act like the above. In fact, they are never in their past tense forms (like the regular verbs): COME, GO, GIVE, KNOW, SELL, GET, LEAVE, MEAN, MAKE, SWEAR, DRINK, BEGIN.

G3 Present Participle:

The grammar also has limited use of the present (-ing) participle (used for the progressive aspect). Hence, the absence of Doing, Having and Being. Other structures with the primary auxiliaries are used to realize the progressive (See R2 below). Out of 783 VPs in the texts, only 17 VPs are in the progressive, although there are at least 32 other cases where this progressive is needed, excluding those numerous other cases which have the potential of being reconstructed as progressive (See R2 and Remarks 1 below):

69. When I was shave my morning *bea-bea*. – ‘Visit’ 45

- I was shaving –

70. In the Sunday of this week you will be go to church. – ‘Visit’ 300

- You will go to church –

71. Womens who are baf body. – ‘War’ 124

- Women who are bathing their bodies.

72. You are deceive yourself. -- ‘War’ 326

- You are deceiving yourself.

G4 Past Participle:

The grammar lacks the past (ed₂) participle (used for the passive voice and the perfective aspect). This explains the absence of Done, Had and the single internally deviant occurrence of Been. Out of the 783 VPs, only 07 have the ed participle. Even out of these, 05 are in

a passage quoted by Zebi, which we may not rightly attribute to the speaker (See 3.1.2. above):

73. 'I have come to see Mr. Zebrudaya.' – 'Visit' 59

74. Twenty people of our Village of Egbedu have been arrested – 'War' 123

75. 'I was born in the year 1982 and not 1907 as previously declared ... my birthday was not registered.' – 'War' 320, 321, 322.

There are at least 23 other cases which demand the ed₂ participle, among which are

76. That Gringory and Clarus have do what finish? – 'Visit' 258 [done]

77. You have saw it today. – 'Visit' 380 [seen]

78. I am tire of run. – 'War' 38 [tired of running]

79. The cold war which are fight among different different churches.--'War' 304 [fought].

The lack of the form discussed above makes them negatively foregrounded in quantity (Leech and Short 48-49).

G5 DO:

Only the base forms Do conforms, fully or partially, to standard usage (3.1.1 above).

G6 HAVE:

The grammar has only the base form Have and substitutes this for Has, resulting in S-Aux discord. [All the 07 instances of such substitution observed – 04 in 'Visit' and 03 in 'War' – are auxiliary in use]:

80. The man who have come to my house. – 'Visit' 27

81. Kola have arrival. – 'Visit' 175

82. The carpenter who was build that door have dead die. – 'War' 18, 29.

83. The criminal have paid him money. – 'War' 174

Hence, Has, Had Having are absent in the grammar.

G7 Be: Be is always deviant when it is auxiliary in use.

G8 Be: Be is used as in SE mainly when it is a main verb, (is preceded by a modal) and is immediately followed by an adjective:

84. Two bads cannot be, can never, and will not be equal to one good. – ‘Visit’ 85, 86, 87

85. Africa are begin to be nice. -- ‘Visit’ 150

86. Missism should be able to cover me with intelligent. -- ‘Visit’ 286

G9 Be: Be is also used correctly in ‘modal + semi-auxiliary constructions’ when it occupies a clause-final position in the idiomatic expressions with ‘may’, suggesting possibilities:

87. whoever it may be are. – ‘War’ 13 [Are redundant].

88. You are by-force your wife to be born twenty-seven childrens in sake of one or two or three as case may be. – ‘War’ 236

G10 Am: Am is used as in SE mainly when it is a main verb. Three of the 04 instances of full conformity have Am as a main verb:

89. If you are does not know what I am yan ... -- ‘Visit’ 62

90. I am not in any way against the War Against Indiscipline. – ‘War’ 115

91. I am palmwine consumator. -- ‘War’ 200

The only single instance of full S-Aux-V correctness with Am as auxiliary is

92. When I am calling you calling. – ‘Visit’ 04

This is internally deviant, for we expect Zebi to say ‘when I am call you’.

G11 Am: There is always S-Aux partial correctness whenever Am is auxiliary in use. There is hardly s-a-l correctness with Am except (130) above.

93. I am say that ... -- ‘Visit’ 103, 159

94. That are what I am chopulate. – ‘Visit’ 239

95. I am tire of run. – ‘War’ 38

96. What I am talk are true. – ‘War’ 331

G12 Are: Are is used in full conformity with standard usage mainly when it has the second person ‘You’ as subject. Most of these have Are as the main verb; those auxiliary uses with full

conformity are exceptions (See Utterances 138-141 below).

Examples are

97. Oyibo, are you 'Mister' or 'Mallam'? – 'Visit' 115

98. Oyibo, are you with me? -- 'Visit'

99. Jegede, you are very very stupid. – 'War' 193

100. (?) Are you thinking ... -- 'War' 208 [auxiliary].

Even most of the instances of partial conformity (S-Aux concord), with Are as auxiliary, have 'You' as subject:

101. What are you talk? -- 'Visit' 212

102. Are you give me all that? – 'Visit' 389

103. It are not all those who are call me 'father', 'father' ... -- 'War' 205

104. Are you include? -- 'War' 254

Other instances of correctness with subjects other than 'You' are (Are as a main verb):

105. How are your family? – 'Visit' 16 ['family' as collective plural]

106. Oyibo chop and drink are *brekete*. -- 'Visit' 282

107. ... the people village of Egbebu are *nwaturu* Chineke ... -- 'War' 73

G13 Is: The grammar has limited use of Is (see G1 above). It is found only 4 times (03 in 'Visit' and 01 in 'War'):

108. What it is? – 'Visit' 14/'War' 35

109. Do as Roman is does. – 'Visit' 109

110. That's is all. – 'Visit' 218

Besides these, its primary function as a third person singular present tense form of BE is usurped by Are, resulting in S-Aux discord:

111. If this visit are bad one ... -- 'Visit' 171

112. It are not your fault. – 'Visit' 38

113. Why are it always that when civilia are do something, it are offend, but when government officer was do it, it are alleluia and increment of salary. – 'War' 51, 52, 53, 56

The appearance of the different morphological forms of lexical verbs is presented quantitatively in the following table.

Table 4: Distribution of the Morphological Forms of Lexical Verbs in Zebi's Verb Phrase

Episode	Base/Infinitive		3 rd Person Singular (-s/-es)		Present Participle (-ing)		Past Tense (ed ₁)		Past Participle (ed ₂)		Total	
	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
'Visit'	164	40.59%	088	1.98%	107	2.48%	229	5.45%	015	0.25%	205	50.74%
'War'	158	39.11%	099	2.21%	073	1.73%	190	4.70%	069	1.49%	199	49.30%
Total	322	79.70%	177	4.21%	177	4.21%	411	10.15%	072	1.73%	404	100%

(c) Rules

The following are eleven idiosyncratic 'rules' which derive from and beyond the above generalizations. They specify Zebi's idiosyncratic structure for the VP. A mastery of these rules would enable one to generate an infinite number of VPs in Zebi's English.

R1 Tense

Where the simple present [eg 'I give/He gives'] or the simple past [eg. 'I/He gave'] is to be expressed, BE is inserted as auxiliary (as opposed to standard English which requires no auxiliary) and is combined with the base form of the lexical verb to perform both functions in the tense system [eg 'I am give/He are give'; 'I/He was give']. The equation, then, is

[Zebi]: BE + V-base = V-base/-s/ed₁ [SE].

The different forms of the borrowed BE are used to make tense distinctions.

PRESENT: [Zebi]: Am /Are + V-base = Present Simple (V-base/-s)[SE].

Thus, whenever the first person singular pronoun 'I' functions as the subject of a clause, it is followed by Am, even where Am is not required in SE.

114. I am see ['I see' – Not 'I am seeing']. – 'Visit' 120, 140

115. I am want business.

116. I am 'gree. ['I agree']

117. I am know what I am talk.

The only exception in the two texts is the 'I say' introductory clause in 'War' 60, 62, 64, 150 and 161, although we still have 'I am say' in 'Visit' 103, 159, 303, 306, and 'War' 116, 133, 201. Where the subject is anything other than 'I', the auxiliary is Are:

118. It are mean that you are have bad things. – 'Visit' 234, 235

a) - It means

b) - you have

119. If you are come to 'im house. – 'Visit' 73

- If you come to his house

120. You are want cockroach and rat. – 'Visit' 338

PAST: [SE] Was + V-base = Simple Past (V-ed₁)

121. Why have you not drop the kola I was give you to chop. – 'Visit' 226

- I gave you to eat.

122. Government officer was capture the daughter. – 'War' 76
.... captured ...

123. Sixteen childrens which *Chineke* was give him. -- 'War' 110 ... gave him.

R2 The Progressive Aspect⁴

The grammar is partially similar to SE in that both require BE as an auxiliary. However, while SE requires s-a concord and demands the present participle form of the lexical verb [eg. 'I am giving/He is giving/They are giving', 'I/He was giving/They were giving'], Zebi's grammar disregards concord (except for Am) and uses the base form of the lexical verb [eg. 'I am give/he are give/They are give'; 'I/He was give/They was give']. Thus, the formula for R1 above serves for the progressive:

[Zebi]: Am/Are + V-base = Am /Are + V-ing (Present Progressive)
[SE].

[Zebi]: Was + V-base = Was + V-ing (Past Progressive) [SE].

124. He are bring business to me. – ‘Visit’ 55
125. He are take what? – ‘War’ 33
126. What we are talk are true. – ‘War’ 98
127. What are he do? – ‘War’ 270, 277
128. You are deceive yourself. – ‘War’ 321
129. When I was shave my morning bea-bea. – ‘Visit’ 41

Are bring – is bringing

Are talk – is talking

Are do – is doing

Are deceive- are deceiving

Was shave – was shaving.

R3 The Passive Voice

SE requires BE and the ed₂ participle to express this ⁵ [eg. ‘I am given/He is given/They are given’; ‘I/He was given/They were given’]. Zebi equally uses BE but prefers the base form of the lexical verb [eg. ‘I am give; He/They are give’; ‘I /He/They was give’]. Consequently, the formula is

[Zebi]: BE + V-base = BE + V-ed₂ [SE].

130. The Second World War of Burma which was fight with automatic weapon. – ‘War’ 304

131. Then the akpu was service him ... -- ‘War’ 354

Was fight - was fought

Was service - was served

The pattern above is ‘Was + V-base’. The ‘Am / Are + V-base’ pattern is likely to be used for the present passive but there is no clear example to illustrate this.

Remarks (1)

The deduction we must make from the above three rules is that there is little or no distinction in form among the grammatical processes in

(a) the simple present (base and 3rd person singular), the present progressive and the present passive;

(b) the simple past, the past progressive and the past passive.

The appropriate one may be determined from the context, as we have attempted above. Thus, utterances 115, 116, 120 and 121 are restricted to the base form because the verbs SEE, WANT, KNOW and HAVE are stative and so would not take present participle form both because of concord and because the idea expressed is considered timeless by the speaker. Utterances 122-124 are limited to the simple past because the context does not suggest that the action is considered to be in progression. Utterances 125 through 130 are also limited to the progressive instead of the simple past, using contextual clues. The perfect is equally ruled out from 122 through 130 because Zebi has a different formula for the perfect [See R8 below].

However, there are several cases of anacolouthon⁶ where the same structure may be reconstructed in two or more ways, all permitted by the context. Thus, 'Am/ Are + V-base' may be recast in one or the other of three ways, depending on whether the action is considered as habitual (or an instantaneous or timeless happening), as an on-going process or as having a passive subject. In like manner, 'Was + V-base' may be past simple, past progressive or past passive. Thus, we have

132. The 'Mister' which he was call me ...? – 'Visit' 41
 133. She was wear gown. – 'War' 77
 134. Even King Solomon of Wiseness was urinate in the public – 'War' 158
 135. I was run indisciplinable run. – 'War' 188
- | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------------------|
| was call | - | called/was calling |
| was wear | - | wore/was wearing |
| was urinate | - | urinate/was urinating |
| was run | - | ran/was running |

In the following utterance, the vagueness of the number (singular or plural) of the NP 'civilia' permits four different reconstructions. It is a good instance of anacolouthon:

136. When civilia are do something – 'War' 53
- When civilians do
 - When civilians are doing ...
 - When a civilian does
 - When a civilian is doing.....

The above rules also further illustrate our earlier generalizations [G1, G2, G3, and G4 above) that lexical verbs hardly inflect for number, tense and aspect in this grammar.

There are 154 finite clauses of the 'Are + V-base' formula (87 in 'Visit' and 67 in 'War'). Of these there are only 17 exceptions to the 'Are + V-base' structure (14 in 'Visit' and 03 in 'War'), examples of which are

137. For what purpose are you singing? – 'Visit' 296

138. So you are preparing prepare. – 'Visit' 297

139. Are you madding madness? – 'War' 149

140. What are sweating you to laugh? – 'War' 184

where Are is followed by the progressive rather than the base form, as in the rule. Native Igbo speakers, of which Zebi is one, claims that the 'deviant' uses of the progressive and reduplication in 'preparing prepare' or 'madding madness' and 'are sweating' are features of transference or literal translation from the MT (Igbo). An inference that may be drawn from this is that grammatical transference from one's MT to a TL may result in accidental correctness in the TL (See Corder Error 30).

R4 Imperative Negation

For negative imperatives, Zebi has the fixed formula

Do +Not +Be + V-base

141. Do not be mind my wife. – 'Visit' 269

142. Do not be catch napping. -- 'War' 377

In contrast, three possible formulae obtain in SE, determined by context and intention:

(a) Simple Negative – where the Be is absent while the lexical verb remains in the base form [eg. 'Do not mind my wife'];

(b) Progressive Negative – where the Be remains but the lexical verb is in the present participle [eg. 'Do not be calling my wife'];

(c) Passive Negative – where the Be is retained but the lexical verb is in the ed₂(past) participle [eg. 'Do not be caught napping'].

Only formula (a) fits utterance 179 above since the verb MIND is stative, not dynamic like calling in (b).

R5 Declarative Negation

When a declarative is to be negated, SE uses the formula

Subject + DO (aux) + Not + V-base

where there is S-Aux concord in the present or Did is used in the past e.g.:

I/We/You/They do not give

He does not give

I/We/He/You/They do not give.

Zebi has a different formula. There is always BE as auxiliary in addition to DO which is always in the 3rd person singular form:

BE (aux) + Does (aux) + Not + Base of Lexical Verb.

143. I am does not want to cause angry. – ‘Visit’ 40

144. I am does not consumate rum. -- ‘Visit’ 353

145. So, you are does not have tombo liquor. – ‘Visit’ 373

146. You are does not do it in the turn by turn. – ‘War’ 220

147. You are does not know who are listen. – ‘War’ 288

Such constructions occur 24 times (17 in ‘Visit’ and 07 in ‘War’) all faithful to the formula. We suggest that in such negated statements, ‘BE + Does’ is equivalent to the simple periphrastic auxiliary DO in SE.

[Zebi]: BE (aux) + Does (aux) = Do/Does/Did [SE]

1 am does not want to cause angry

I do not want ...

The construction could result in anacolouthia where the number of the subject is imprecise:

148. Germ are does not have authority ... -- ‘Visit’ 265

- Germs do not have authority ...

- A germ does not have authority ...

R6 Phased Predicators (Infinitival Constructions)⁷

Here the base form Be is used to split the infinitive (whether it be the full to-infinitive or the bare infinitive).

The formula is

[Zebi] (To) +Be + V-base = Infinitive [SE] except in mutation (strong) verbs like BRING, TELL and TAKE which are almost always in their past tense forms in this grammar (G2 above).

(i) For the full infinitive we have

149. You can go ahead to be deal with him. – ‘Visit’ 20
150. Go to be brought me kola. – ‘Visit’ 100
151. Don’t come to my house to be took cover. – ‘War’ 107
152. You are go to be urinate in the public. – ‘War’ 225

Note that the infinitive here is basically the simple infinitive, hardly the complex progressive infinitive as in ‘Go ahead to be dealing with him’.

We suggest that basically To and Be function together as the (single) infinitival marker, equivalent to the simple To in SE.

The full infinitive is used 154 times (68 in ‘Visit’/76 in ‘War’) out of which 78 – 35 in ‘Visit’ / 43 in ‘War’ (51.6%/56.6%) follow this pattern. This majority is significant since such a construction has little probability of occurring in standard usage.

Nevertheless, we concede that the grammar is irregular here since we cannot find enough motivation for the exceptions [other than (iii) below]. Some of the exceptions are

153. If you are goes to purchase ...-- ‘War’ 218
154. If you are to to call police for me. – ‘War’ 171
155. What I am to do -- ‘War’ 02
156. Of What I am to be do now? – ‘War’ 16

(ii) For the bare infinitive, which is normally preceded by the verb LET in this grammar

[LET takes the bare infinitive even in SE], Be is inserted before the bare infinitive.

157. Let him be settle him with *Chineke* God. -- ‘Visit’ 325
158. Let me be pocket it first of all. – ‘Visit’ 390
159. Let us be prayer prayer. – ‘War’ 24, 25.
160. Let me be ask you ...-- ‘War’ 162

Out of the 28 instances of this ‘LET + infinitive’ construction (18 in ‘Visit’/10 in ‘War’). 19 (10 in ‘Visit’/09 in ‘War’) follow this formula.

The 09 exceptions include

161. Let monkey chop; let baboon chop. -- ‘Visit’ 157
162. Let us, therefore, do it in the turn-by turn. – ‘War’ 222.

(iii) When the full infinitive is preceded by the predicator WANT, there is no insertion of Be (that is, the pattern conforms to standard usage). This 'WANT + Bare Infinitive' construction occurs 07 times (05 in 'Visit'/02 in 'War') all in the conventional English pattern.

163. ... who are want to knock down the foundation. -- 'Visit'
09
164. Ekwensu are want to rub me hair-dye. -- 'Visit' 19
165. The farmer who was wanted to commute suicide. -- 'War'
82
166. I am does not want to run indiscipline run. -- 'War' 192

R7 Modal Constructions

Whenever a VP consists of a modal auxiliary followed by a lexical verb, the base form Be is inserted between the two, the sub-formula being.

[Zebi]: Modal + Be + V-base = Modal + V-base [SE].

167. I should be get up to three tumbler. -- 'Visit' 293
168. How many money can you be pay? -- 'Visit' 337
169. I can be give cockroach one naira thirty kobo each one.
-- 'Visit' 340
170. If you cannot be run stupid -- 'War' 03
171. I shall be call Jehovah wickedness for you. -- 'War' 175

This could be anacolouthic as two reconstructions may fit in:

Simple - I shall be call Jehovah wickedness for you.

Progressive - I shall be calling Jehovah wickedness for you.

We suggest that in this grammar Be is a part of the modal: the two function as a single entity, just like 'To + Base' in the SE full infinitive [See R6 above].

Out of the 53 occurrences of the modals (39 in 'Visit'/14 in 'War'), 50 instances – 37 in 'Visit'/13 in 'War' (95%/99%) obey this rule. The 3 exceptions are

172. You can go ahead to be deal with him. -- 'Visit' 49
173. He shall judge the case for we. -- 'Visit' 94
174. He will stop over in Nigeria -- 'War' 379

Remarks (2)

All the seven 'rules' above have the common structure 'BE + V-base'. The deviance lies either in the presence of the BE (or the use of an unexpected form of it) – as in R1, R5, R6, R7 and some utterances in R4; or that the lexical verb is in a form different from that expected in SE – as in R2, R3 and some contexts in R4.

The implication is that 'BE + V-base' is used in this grammar to express all such verbal systems (processes) as the simple present, simple past, the progressive, the passive, the infinitive and in the structure of the imperative.

R8 The Perfective Aspect

In SE, this is expressed with two associated formulae:

HAVE + V-ed₂ (Active Clauses)

HAVE + Been + V-ed₂ (Passive Clauses)

In both formulae, the HAVE marks concord and tense.

Examples:

I/We/You/They have given/have been given.

He has given/has been given.

I/We/You/They had given/had been given.

Zebi's grammar also uses HAVE. However, both the HAVE and the lexical verb are in the base forms. Hence, there is Aux-V discord as well as S-Aux discord if the tense is present and the subject is the third person singular. The general formula is

[Zebi]: Have + V-base = HAVE + V-ed₂ (Perfect)[SE].

175. Jegede and Okoro Maduekwe have not disappoint me before.
– 'Visit' 193

176. I have do ['I have done so']. – 'Visit' 202

177. My ears have close. – 'Visit' 221

178. Which offend have I commute. – 'War' 42

Exceptions to this formula are of three kinds. First, we have utterances with those mutative lexical verbs that are always in their past tense forms [see G2 above]. These give the equally deviant structure 'Have + V-ed₁'

179. The tumbler ... have broke finish. – 'Visit' 285

180. You have saw it today. – 'Visit' 380

Secondly, there are those VPs which have the ed_2 participles but lack concord:

181. ...the man who have come to my house. – ‘Visit’ 27

182. The criminal have paid him money. – ‘War’ 274

The rest are the 4 sentences of full S-Aux-V concord outlined and discussed above (Utterances 18-20).

R9 Operator in Question (I)

Whenever Am or Is functions as an operator in a wh- or polar (Yes-No) question, the declarative question formula obtains. This is in contrast with the unmarked forms in SE where there is inversion, the operator coming between the wh- word and the complement (in the wh-questions) or before the subject (in polar questions) (Quirk *et al* 1985: 817). In the (marked) declarative question, the operator retains its post-subject or post-complement position in the sentence (as in a statement); it is only the normal intonation – ending in a rising intonation – that marks the sentence as interrogative (i.e. the Yes-No question). Zebi’s formulae could be contrasted with the SE formulae as follows:

Wh- Question –

SE = Wh- + Operator + Complement

Zebi = Wh- + Complement + BE Operator.

183. What it is? [i.e. What is it?] -- ‘Visit’ 14

184. My friend, what it is? -- ‘War’ 35

Polar Question

SE = Operator + Subject + etc.

Zebi = Subject + Operator + etc.

185. I am your old? [Am I your age-mate?] – ‘Visit’ 53

186. I am not gentleman? [Am I not a gentleman?] – ‘Visit’ 69, 79

We notice that the auxiliaries which, as function words, are normally unstressed phonologically – except for special emphasis – are stressed in Zebi’s Yes-No questions to help in realizing the interrogative.

There are a few cases in which the above combines with a substitution of Am for should and DO:

187. Why I am not abandon him? – ‘Visit’ 66

- Why should I not abandon him?
- 188. I am give you letter of invite? – ‘War’ 37
- Did I give you a letter of invitation?
- 189. I am own the house with you? – ‘War’ 41
- Do I own the house with you?

The normal inversion is done with Are and Have:

- 190. What are you talk? -- ‘Visit’ 212
- 191. Which offend have I commute? – ‘War’ 42
- 192. Are you talk the true? – ‘War’ 90

No reason is found for this. Zebi could have used his declarative formula even for Are and have, eg.

- What you are talk?
- Which offend I have commute?
- You are talk the true?

The conventional formula is also used when the operator is a modal auxiliary.

- 193. What will you be do? – ‘Visit’ 166

R10 Operator in Question (II)

Where the syntax in a wh- or polar question is conventional, but DO would function in SE as the required dummy auxiliary–operator for the interrogative construction, the DO is supplanted by BE: Are (if the construction is in the present tense and would have used Do or Does) or Was (if the construction is in the past and would use the past form Did in SE):

- (a) SE = Wh- + Do/Does + etc.
- Zebi = Wh- + Are + etc.
- 194. Why are he want to be saw me? – ‘Visit’ 10
- Why does he want to see me?
- 195. What are he mean? – ‘Visit’ 46
- What does he mean?
- 196. Are you hear me? – ‘Visit’ 51, 65/‘War’ 181
- Do you hear me?
- 197. Are you not see my old age? – ‘War’ 107
- Do you not see my old age?
- ? Are you not seeing my old age?
- (b) SE = Wh- + Did + etc.

Zebi = Wh- + Was + etc.

198. Was you think it that ...? -- 'Visit' 357

- Did you think that ...

- ? Were you thinking that

199. How many money was government donate? – 'War' 88

- How much money did government donate?

- [?]... was government donating?

All the 03 occasions requiring did for this purpose – 02 in 'Visit'/ 01 in 'War' – follow this formula. Although the instances are few, the rule still obtains since only the 03 occasions invite the formula. We assume that the same pattern would obtain if more utterances of the sort were called for.

R11 Operator as Last Obligatory Element

When Is or Are is to function – as in standard usage – as a main verb and as the last obligatory element in a clause structure (followed by an optional prepositional phase), Are is used (even for Is) and is duplicated, such that one Are functions as auxiliary to the other. This is observed 05 times – 03 in 'Visit'/02 in 'War' – all conforming to the rule, which may be represented by the formula
[Zebi]: Are (Aux) + Are (V) = Are/Is [SE] – [Condition: Are/ Is is last obligatory element].

200. So it are are with other et cetram, et cetram trader associate. – 'War' 346

- So it is with several other trader associations.

201. Your behaviourally attitude in the public are the advertize of what you are are in your own house. – 'War' 371

There is a case that suggests similar duplication for Am in the same last-obligatory-clause-element position; but here the duplicated Am is deformed to be an un-English word:

202. If you are does not know who I am yan, try to be ask other peoples. -- 'Visit' 62.

As no other instance of Am in a similar position is found, one cannot be sure if Am also necessarily has this property.

No similar case is found with Was which is the other BE form commonly used by Zebi, probably because it is not used anywhere as the last obligatory element of clause structure.

NOTES

¹We are not familiar with any studies on specific idiosyncratic grammars. Nor are we conversant with particular idiosyncratic grammars, either of real-life individuals or of fictional characters. However, reference may be made to the language of Benji, the idiot-narrator in William Faulkner's novel, *The Sound and the Fury* (1931).

²The programme started on radio in the former East Central Broadcasting Service in Nigeria with the title, *In the Lighter Mood* in 1970. In an unpublished interview with this writer at his residence in Enugu on February 1, 1993, Chief Chika Okpala, the man who has been playing the part of Chief Zebrudaya since 1973, puts the date as 1972; but 1970 which is mentioned by Mr. James Iroha, the original creator and producer of the programme, in an interview with *Climax Magazine*, August 25, 1988, is likely to be more authentic.

³Even newspaper articles discussing *The Masquerade* have hardly gone beyond such broad and vague remarks as 'a peculiar language' (Ngim 1990:12), 'the thrill of his programme' (Nicol 1989: 15), 'a special form of pidgin English which is so unique to the comedian' (Okoro 1992: B1). The only fairly scholarly discussion on the language found by this writer is that by Ilagha. Chief Okpara confirmed this dearth of linguistic study on the programme in the interview referred to in Note (2) above.

⁴We are familiar with the criticism of the works of Achebe, Tutuola and Okara. The others have also been attended to. For instance, Schmied (1991: 119-137) has discussed the unconventional language used by the authors mentioned above, and more. A complete book of essays, most of them linguistic, *Critical Essays on Sozaboy* (edited by Charles Nnolim), has also been published. O'Donnell and Todd (1991) have gone further to discuss Aig-Imokhue's writings in Nigerian Pidgin.

⁵Chief Okpala in the interview referred to in Note (2) above, says that the records were produced long ago (in the 1970's and early 1980's) and that the scripts can no longer be found.

⁶Strictly, the heart, core or free-morpheme of a word which is left after all the bound morphemes (or affixes) have been removed is not the base. Quirk et al call it the 'stem'. The 'base' is the word – with or without (a) bound morpheme (s) – unto which another affix is added. For example, *unfriendly*, *friendly* is the base unto which the prefix *-un* is added. However, Tomori prefers the term 'root' for Quirk et al's 'stem', and uses 'stem' for Quirk et al's 'base' (See Quirk et al, 1985: 1518; Tomori 1977: 32). The term 'base' is used here to stand for Quirk et al's 'stem' and Tomori's 'root' both to avoid the terminological confusion and because many people are familiar with 'base'. For the verb, it refers to the form

used for the infinitive and with the first person (singular and plural except BE), the second person (singular and plural) and the third person plural, in the present tense.

⁷This last sentence is not faultless in terms of selectional restriction. In such an imperative utterance, the lexical verb is most usually say (transitive) – ‘Do not say it loudly’ – instead of talk which, when transitive, is more normal in such idiomatic expressions as ‘talk business’, ‘talk shop’ shop’, etc. Yet, the sentence is considered ‘correct’ because the discussion here is restricted to how its form concurs with the auxiliary.

⁸For the choice of ‘progressive’ in preference to ‘continuous’ see Ofuani (1982: 229), Leech (1987: 18) and Comrie (1976: 12).

⁹BE + ed₂ of Lexical Verb’ is only the most common and suits the discussion here. An alternative is ‘GET + ed₂ of Lexical Verb’ as in ‘It got broken’.

¹⁰We are using the term ‘anacolouthon’ only in an approximate sense here. The *OED*, *American Heritage Dictionary* (1969), *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (, Shaw (1972), and Pey and Gaynor (1975) have all defined and discussed this term. Basically, it refers to some syntactic incoherence, inconsistency, in which there is a want of grammatical sequence, some interruption, a speaker passing from one sentence construction to another construction, the latter inconsistent with the former; an abrupt change within a sentence such that two incoherent constructions are muddled up. Examples are

a. You really ought – well, do it your own way.

b. I suppose you – anyway, it’s no use.

Anacolouthon could result from ignorance, carelessness or intra-sentential change of thought. But it could also be a rhetorical figure (see Shaw).

In Zebi’s language, the case is more subtle in that the two or more constructions occur in the same phrase without any intonation break (as in the example cited above}. An example is the imperative question

Will you take care?

which could be reconstructed either as

Will you be careful?

or as

Will you take care?

Thus, it is for want of a more precise term that ‘anacolouthon’ is adopted to approximate the phenomenon.

¹¹Muir uses the term ‘phased predicators’ to refer to structures with more than one predicator, lexical verb or verbal group in one clause (60-63), Thus infinitives functioning as verb complements constitute phased predicators with the VPs they complement.

¹²For choosing the term ‘perfect’ in preference to ‘perfective’, see Cromrie, (12, 62-64).

¹³Chief Okpala (1992) confirmed this in his interview with this writer, saying the programme was contrived mainly to keep the Igbos ‘in a lighter mood to lessen the tension’ of the Nigerian Civil War.

¹⁴Ilagha (1985: 7) has observed that Chief Okpala has transferred this speech to real-life communication. In addition, we sometimes observe the use of 'Zebrudaisms' by Nigerians. But this is done mainly to produce mirth in informal settings rather than for serious interactions.

¹⁵Neither is this grammar likely to evolve into an 'artificial language.' (The latter is more of communal property than an idiosyncratic one). Of course, hardly any artificial language has come to fruition. Perhaps the most probable legacy of 'Zebrudaism' is that it will continue to corrupt the English of its audience, for the grammar could be highly infectious.

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