TONE IN IGBO SYNTAX

(Studies in Igbo Linguistics Vol. 2)

by

P. AKUJUOOBI NWACHUKWU

University of Nigeria
Nsukka

CONTENTS

Preface

This monograph is long overdue; I know that my students, especially the sandwich ones, have been expecting it since I introduced them to the importance of tone in Igbo syntax in 1988. Being mature students and teachers themselves eager to improve their professional efficiency, they appreciate a course which offers them additional knowledge. This is the case with Descriptive Analysis of Igbo or Topics in Igbo Syntax. I am happy to offer them this pilot edition of the monograph in English, the Igbo translation will follow. It provides a back-up reading material for a number of Igbo and linguistic courses, including Ling 381 - Features of African Languages.

It is my hope that teachers of Igbo who have formed the habit of marking every syllable and tone in the language will change their mind after reading this monograph. The aim of this monograph is to make teachers and students more aware of the deep involvement of tone in Igbo grammar.

Department of Linguistics &
Nigerian Languages,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.   June, 1995.

1.0   Introduction:

This is a manual on tone, it demonstrates the significance of tone in Igbo Syntax. Our discussion will proceed from the general features of tone languages to the more specific issue of the role of tone in Igbo syntax. In this manual we introduce to our readers viable, alternative way of tone-marking that is different from the convention of Green and Igwe (1963).

Why do we need a tone-marking convention? We need a convention to help us reduce the number of strokes on our written or printed page. This is why Green and Igwe (1963) adopted a tone-marking convention.

1.1   The Green and Igwe Convention:

Who are Green and Igwe? M.M. Green and G.E. Igwe in 1963 wrote the first and still the most comprehensive grammar of Igbo in existence, the title of the book is 'A Descriptive Grammar of Igbo published jointly by Oxford University Press (OUP) London and Akademie Verlag, Berlin.

The Green and Igwe convention says:

(i) Leave all high-tone syllables unmarked;
(ii) Mark all low tone syllables;
(iii) Mark all downsteps (steps).

Example:

Osisi	H H H	(no marks)
àchìchà	L L L	(all marked)
egô	H S	(step marked)
Ebô	H S	(step marked)
Òlekā	L H S	(L and S marked)

There seems to be statistical evidence to the effect that high tones are more in number in Igbo words and phrases than low and step tones, so a lot is saved by leaving high's unmarked.

This convention in effect uses all the three tones in Igbo - high, step and low. Moreover it employs the horizontal stroke called macron to indicate the downstep or simply the step. Macron is never a simple symbol to write or print. Therefore we avoid using it in our own system which I am about to introduce to you.

1.2   The PAN Convention:

The writer of this manual is P. Akujuọobi Nwachukwu (PAN). The convention so-called is one that I have adapted from the publications of William and Beatrice Welmers[1] of UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles).

(i) In principle, we mark every syllable, high, step and low.
(ii) in practice we mark only contrasting pitches or tones, leaving sameness unmarked
(iii) in practice we use only two symbols - the high (´) and the low (`) to indicate the three tone contrasts; we do not use the obnoxious macron to indicate downstep. The reason is this: a downstep is a slightly lowered high tone, which is always preceded by a high and never by a low tone. Therefore any two consecutive high tones are always interpreted in our system as high followed by step.

Examples: egó   H S   money
           Ebó   H S   proper name
           alú   Ditto   abomination
           Òleká   L H S   proper name

Ònyebụchi   L H S Level   Proper name

The following are examples showing the two systems in contrast:

Green & Igwe		PAN		
Osisi	:	Osisi	H H H	tree
achicha	:	achicha	L L L	bread
ejije	:	ejije	H L H	drama
Òleka	:	Òleka	L H S	Proper name
Ebiringa	:	Ebiringa	H H H L L	Proper name
Dinwẹnu	:	Dinwẹnu	H S Level	Lord
Dinwẹnu	:	Dinwẹnú	H S S	Lord

Using this convention, one does not have to guess whether a particular word begins on a low or high pitch.

The Concept of Level:

We can use the term 'level' to describe any sequence of non-contrasting tones, but we must use it whenever a high tone immediately follows a downstep. The reason is simply that a downstep sets up a new pitch level for all high pitches immediately following it; in other words a high tone that immediately follows a downstep is of the same pitch level as that downstep. By the thoughtful decision not to mark high tones in Igbo Green and Igwe are re-inforcing the above principle

Thus, the tone pattern of a clause such as the following:

ndi bi n'ahya   PAN
ndi bi n'ahya   G&I

must be rendered as H H S Level level or
                   H H S same same.

It is not H S S S because the pitch is not terracing down, ie. it is not a case of two or more consecutive steps. It is not H S H H because to say so is to deny the fact that the high tone after the step does not contrast with it. In this tonal context, the use of level or same becomes mandatory because it is the only correct way of describing the pitch sequence. In the two systems under discussion, all high tones after a downstep are left unmarked.

More Examples:

	G&I	PAN	
1.	osisi	ósisi	H H H or H Level Level
			or H same same
2.	achicha	achicha	L Level Level or
			L same same
3.	ogbudimkpà	ogbúdimkpa	L H S L L ·
4.	Dinwenu	Dínwénu	H S Level or Same
5.	Dinwenu	Dínwénu	H S S
6.	Dinwenu anyi	Dínwénu anyi	H S Level Level
			Level
7.	Dinwenu anyi	Dínwénu anyi	H S Level S Level

What our system marks is contrasts, we leave sameness unmarked. Observe that in (5) above we have two consecutive downsteps which are marked because they are contrasting:

A Caveat for Teachers:

Some teachers have argued that they mark every syllable, and I have countered by arguing that the practice is not to be encouraged because it is bound to lead to one or two problems - that of giving double value to the same symbol within the same system or failing to make a necessary distinction. How could one tone-mark every syllable in the phrase 'Dinwenu anyi' without con-

tradicting himself or failing to make a necessary distinction. Let us see this in practice.

otu nwa, uche di, otu di

Dínwénu anyi	Find out what is wrong here and discuss it
Dínwénu anyi	There is also something wrong with this marking
Dinwénu anyi (G&I)	There is nothing wrong with this marking
Dínwénu anyi (PAN)	There is nothing wrong with this marking

The same problem of accurate tone-marking would confront a teacher arguing for marking every syllable in the following example:

uló anyi (G&I)

uló anyi (PAN)

H S S Level.

It is advisable and indeed better to adopt one of the two conventions discussed in this introduction. It is necessary to be familiar with both of them and to be consistent in using one of them in our writing. The question of marking every syllable in a piece of written Igbo is not defensible and the practice should be abandoned.

In the rest of this manual, we shall use the PAN convention. Nobody is being forced to use it, but we have no doubt that some people will prefer it to the Green and Igwe convention. I believe that it is a better convention for marking poetry because it shows us at a glance what the contour of a line of poetry or sentence looks like. In shorts, it shows the rhythm of the sentence or expression at a glance.

1.2 Introduction: Tone Languages

That Igbo is a tone language is known by virtually every secondary school student; it is also known that tone alone differentiates the meanings of words which are spelt the same way. Every student is likely to rattle off the now famous quartets

ákwa	H H	'cry'
àkwa	L L	'bed, bridge'
àkwá	L H	'egg'
ákwà	H L	'cloth'
óke	H H	'male'
òke	L L	'share'
òké	L H	'rat'
ókè	H L	'boundary'

Most students in tertiary institutions - Colleges of Education, Technology and Universities know that although there are three distinctive tones in Igbo, High, Downstep (step) and low tones, only two of them, high and low, are basic or fundamental; the third, the downstep, is a grammatical tone; we can tell where it is to be found - in other words its occurrence is predictable.

This chapter is not on the lexical functions of tone; rather its focus is on how tone is exploited by the Igbo people to make a good number of grammatical distinctions: tone is at the core of Igbo grammar; and any accurate account of so many syntactic phenomena in Igbo must take tone into account Before we go on to discuss the various syntactic functions of tone, let us generally characterise tone languages.

1.3 General Characteristics of Tone Languages

A tone language is 'a language having a lexically significant, contrastive but relative pitch on each syllable' (cf. Pike, 1982). Each syllable of a tone language is a tone-bearing unit, (tbu) that is, it carries its own tone, a significant pitch. In Igbo, each syllable has one pitch, for example:

| Chúkwu | H H |
| Ógù | H L |

However, a syllable may have more than one significant pitch or tone only when it is part of a word in construction, that is when in grammatical relation with another word or group of words. Examples:

1. Chúkwû di
   God is - God exists

2. Ònyéè ma échi?
   Who knows tomorrow?

3. Chíì di
   God is - God exists.

Thus, there is a one-to-one correspondence between syllable and pitch (tone) in Igbo lexical items.

Level Pitch Register Systems:

Languages are by no means all alike in the type of tonemes they use, nor in the function of these tonemes in their grammatical systems. One very important difference exists between languages which make use of level tonemes and those that make use of glides. A level toneme is one during whose production there is no perceptible change in pitch, resulting in a fall or rise. A gliding toneme on the other hand is one which shows a perceptible change of pitch during the production of the syllable such that there is a rise or fall, or a

combination of rise and fall such as rising-falling,
or falling rising. Igbo is a level pitch type of
tone language; glides occur only when words are in
construction, that is glide formation in Igbo is
evidence of grammatical function.
Example:

> Chúkwuù ma - Chúkwûma
>
> Ógù nwére ego: Ogu who has money...

As lexical items the words are Chúkwu (HH) and
Ógù (HL). In those examples we have instances of
both falling and rising glides. When a language
has a small number of pitch contrasts between level
tonemes, the contrastive levels are conveniently
called Registers. In other words, the high tone
is a register, so are the low tone and downstep.
Thus, Igbo is a Register type of tone language. It
is also described as a Terrace-type of tone langu-
age; this means that the pitch of the voice is
highest at the beginning of an utterance and gets
progressively lowered as one gets to the end of
the utterance. This phenomenon is related to
another phenomenon called downdrift which also has
to do with the lowering of pitch in a stretch of
utterance.

Most languages of Africa and certainly those
of Nigeria belong to the Register type of tone lan-
guages. In these languages the number of registers
or level tonemes is generally small, ranging from
two to three or four at most. Igbo, like Yoruba
has three tonemes, namely high, downstep and low;
for Yoruba it is high, mid and low. In each of
these two languages, only two out of the three to-
nemes are basic. In Igbo, the downstep is non-
basic, grammatical and predictable, so is the mid
tone in Yoruba. But this is where the analogy
ends, for there is a great difference between the
Yoruba mid-tone and Igbo downstep: whereas the mid-
tone in Yoruba is a lexical tone which occurs

freely like high and low tones, the downstep in
Igbo is very much restricted in its occurrence;
it can only co-occur with a preceding high tone
and is never found in a lexeme in syllable-initial
position. The midtone in Yoruba can be found in
all these positions - initial, middle or final.
Therefore the difference in name also correlates
with a difference of distribution, which is why
downstep and midtone must not be used synonymous-
ly nor confused.

Gliding-Pitch Contour Systems:

A pure contour tone language is one with
glides as basic tonemes, and which has no level
tonemes whatsoever. In such a system, each con-
trastive pitch unit is a glide. Contour systems
differ from register systems in a number of ways:

(1) The basic tonemic unit is a glide and not a
level pitch.

2.0 The Role of Tone in Igbo Syntax

In tonal complexity, Igbo is unique in Nigeria and Africa; there is no other African language where tone changes as much as it does in Igbo to indicate grammatical functions. The language has basic word order SVO, it has little by way of inflection, the only category that is inflected in Igbo is the verb. Consequently, grammatical statement about the language consist largely of the variation in the tone pattern of the same lexical items as they function in various construction types. Tone is very deeply involved in Igbo syntax, but Igbo scholars have not examined this deep involvement in any detail. What I am about to present here will be the first systematic analysis of the tonal factor in Igbo syntax: the main function of tone in Igbo is not lexical differentiation; in deed the major function seems to lie in the way Igbo speakers manipulate pitch to show grammatical relationship and functions.

2.1 Tone Classes:

Tone is so important in Igbo syntax that it has become necessary to begin our study with a tonal classification of the major lexical items, nouns and verbs. This tonal classification is necessary because if we are to describe change adequately, we must begin with the 'status quo' before change: if we are to characterise tone pattern change adequately, we must start with lexical or inherent tones and with this as basis describe tone pattern changes that arise from the specific grammatical functions, of the lexical items involved. These lexical classes are as follows:

Nouns:

Tone class 1   H   (monosyllables)

Examples: jí   (ijí in Oguta dialect)

dí, chí, nwá (in Mbaise but nnwá

Tone class 2   H H

Examples: ánụ, ényí, ányá, échí, áka

Tone class 3   H S

The above is dialect-restricted because there are dialects of Igbo where the same High-Step nouns are realised as High-High. Moreover, there are very few minimal pairs based on the contrast between high-high and high-step in a given dialect. Examples:

álụ   (a bite)   (Enu Onicha)

álụ́   (an abomination)   (Enu Onicha)

ágụ́   ágụ   elsewhere

ézé   éze   "

éró   éro   "

The above class is not a very significant one because its members are very small in number; secondly, they behave like members of tone class 2 when in second or genitival or associative relationship (see 2.2 for examples).

Tone class 4   L H

Examples: njó, òrí, ònyé, Àdá, ntú, ùdó

These four tonal classes make up what Green and Igwe (1963) refer to as Tone group 1 (TG1). As one can observe, there is something they have in common: each class ends on a high tone as the following arrangement clearly shows:

TCL 1   H
TCL 2   H H
TCL 3   H S
TCL 4   L H

Note that a downstep is a slightly lowered high tone, that is lowered in pitch in relation to the

immediately preceding high tone; that is why a downstep is possible in Igbo only after a high tone.

The remaining two classes end on a low tone:

Tone class 5   H L   *Óbì, ótù, égwù, úzọ̀*
                     Abìà (Àbyà) Udi

Tone class 6   L L   *àla, àgba, ùdu, èvi.*

Together these two tone classes make up what is known as Tone Group 2 (cf. Green and Igwe op.cit) As one can see, each class ends on a low tone.

In this classification there are six members, showing an additional class to Nwachukwu, 1983. The new class is the small set of monosyllabic nouns in Igbo, they are always on a high tone. The justification for setting up a class of monosyllables is shown in the following grammatical tone patterns which are peculiar to them.
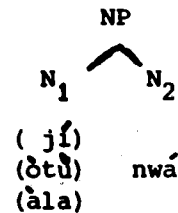
ji # chi -   (i) $jii\ chi$
H   H   HS Level

            (ii) $ji\ chi$
                 H   S
              yam of chi : Chi's yam.

$ótù$ # $nwá$ -   (i) $otúú\ nwá$
                   H LH   S

            (ii) $ótú\ nwá$
                 H S   S

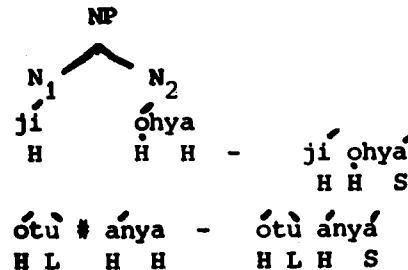$àla$ # $jí$ -   (i) $àlaá\ jí$
                 L LH   S

            (ii) $àlá\ jí$
                 L H   S

From these examples one can see the justification for setting up a separate class for monosyllables:

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the first alternative in each example is due to the fact that a monosyllable is in N_2 position - thus

NP
N_1 N_2
($jí$)
($ótù$)   nwá
($àla$)

If N_2 were a disyllabic noun, there would be no change in N_1. Examples:

NP
N_1 N_2
ji   ọhya
H   H H   -   ji ọhyá
                H H   S

ótù # ánya   -   ótù ányá
H L   H H   H L H   S

It is the monosyllabic nature of N_2 that induces a change of tone pattern in N_1.

For ease of reference we re-state the six nominal classes as follows:

Tone classes (Nouns)

1.	H	}
2.	H H	Tone Group 1
3.	H S	
4.	L H	}
5.	HL	} Tone Group 2
6.	LL	}

Verbs

The category verb is one of the two major lexical classes in any language, consequently verbs in the language are classified along tonal

12

13

lines just as nouns are. As we know, the verb is the only lexical class in Igbo that undergoes inflection. Inflection produces a number of verb-forms with specific grammatical functions, ie. verb-forms which express specific time (tense or aspect) meanings. Often the tone pattern of these different verb-forms differs from one form to another. This change, which is associated with different grammatical functions, provides a strong justification for classifying Igbo verbs along tonal lines.

Using the infinitive or citation form of a verb we determine its tonal class. On this basis, there are three tonal classes of verbs as follows:

Infinitive/ Citation Form		Root	
(a)	Iri	rí	eat
	igbú	gbú	kill
(b)	ida	da	fall
	ito	to	praise

The tonal contrast between (a) and (b) is clear; verbs in (a) are high tone verbs, while those in (b) are low tone verbs. These two tonal classes are found in all Igbo dialects.

But there is another class of verbs whose citation or infinitive tone pattern appears deceptive. Consider these following verbs:

Citation Form	Root	
ijé	jé	go
ikwú	kwú	talk
inyé	nyé	give
ití/iku	tí/kú	beat

14

Citation Form	Root	
ibe (akwa)	be akwa	cry
ife	fé	fly
iyi akwa	yí akwa	lay egg
ide	dé	write
ikwe	kwe	agree, consent
ita	ta	chew, eat
ilo	lo	swallow
ipo (ahyhya)	po	gather
ime	me	do
itu/ji	tu	plant yam
ivo/ibo ahyhya	vo/bo	weed.

From the tonal character of their citation forms, one would classify them as high tone verbs. This is what they are for those speakers of Igbo who belong to the Old Onicha Province, that is the present Anambra and Enugu States; for these speakers verbs are simply either high tone or low tone in both their citation form and root. For these speakers, there are two tone classes of verbs - high tone and low tone verbs. But the situation is not as simple as that for most other speakers found in Imo and Abia States and even parts of Anambra States that have a common boundary with Imo States. The Local Government Areas in question include Aguata - (Umuchu, Achina) and Orumba (Uga, Ajali, Umunze, Isulo, Oko, Ufuma). For these speakers there is in between high and low tone verbs a class of verbs which have the tonal features of high tone verbs in the infinitive form, but behave elsewhere like low tone verbs; we refer to them as High-Low tone (HL-) Tone Verbs Thus, the picture is as follows:

15

Tone class 1 (TCL1) High gbú, rí, ny̆
Tone class 2 (TCL2) High-Low je, lo, si
Tone class 3 (TCL3) Low dà, bà, zà.

The obnoxious TCL2 is sandwiched between TCL1 and TCL3 each of which can be shown to be stably high or stably low respectively. For purposes of illustration, I shall draw all my examples from the dialect group indicated above where high tone verbs are high in nearly all forms and low-tone verbs low in nearly all forms. My examples are drawn from Mbaise group of dialects for obvious reasons: I am a speaker of that dialect, and they are very close to standard Igbo. Four verb-forms - the imperative, the past, the perfective and the general subjunctive forms of each verb in the affirmative division are used here for illustration.

Typo

TCL	Imper.		Past	Perfective	Gen. Subjunctive
1.	rí	rie eat!	riri	èriéla	ríe
	gbú	gbúo kill!	gburu	ègbúola	gbúo
	gbá	gbáa run!	gbara	àgbáala	gbáa
2.	gá	gáa go!	gara	àgáala	gáa
	dé	dée write!	dère	èdéele	dée
	mé	mée do!	mère	èméena	mée
3.	dà	dáà fall!	dàra	ádàála	dàá
	tò	tóò praise!	tòrò	étòóla	tòó
	chè	chéè think!	chère	échèéla	chèé

It will be observed from the above examples that verbs of TCL1 maintain a consistent high tone on their root in the above four forms; verbs of TCL2 have low tone root in the imperative and past forms only, while reverting to a high-tone root in the perfective and general subjunctive

forms. On the other hand, verbs of TCL3 have a consistent low-tone route in all the forms. The obvious conclusion is that this group of dialects has two distinct high and low tone verb classes 1 and 3 with a second class which falls together with TCL1 in the perfective and general subjunctive forms, and with TCL3 in the imperative and past forms. This is why this second class of tonally unstable verbs is sandwiched between TCL1 and TCL3

The Place of Standard Igbo

As we all know, Standard Igbo advocates and maintains a uniform form for all verbs in the imperative and past forms affirmative, as the following examples show:

	Imp.	Past
TCL1	Rié ihé	Ógù riri ihe
TCL2	Jéé ozí	Ógù jere ózi
TCL3	Dàà n'àla	Ógù dara n'ala

Looking at the examples above, one would conclude that there is no need for a tonal classification of Igbo verbs. That, of cause, would be a wrong conclusion. What must have happened is that in the 1970s those who undertook to work towards the emergence of a literary standard had a number of disabilities:

(i)   they did not seem to know what happens in dialects other than their own, consequently they generalised what they knew to those dialects they did not know. One example of such generalisations is the tone pattern seen above in imperative and past verb-forms;

(ii)   they had no clear idea of what a standard aims at, that is the written rather than the spoken form;

(iii)   they did not know that the standard
        dialect in any language reflects the
        characters of a single dialect or of a
        group of very closely related dialects.
        The standard has to be so rooted so that
        it can draw sustenance from its roots for
        growth and development.

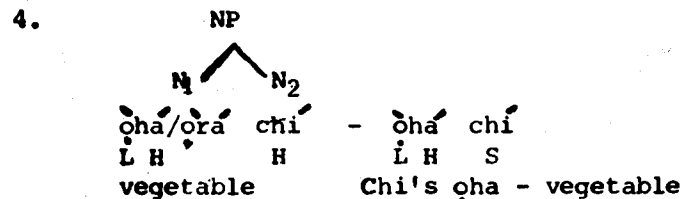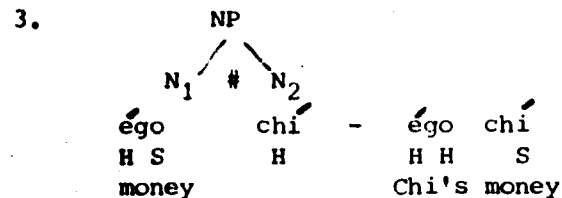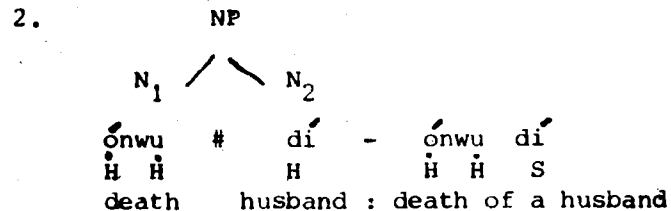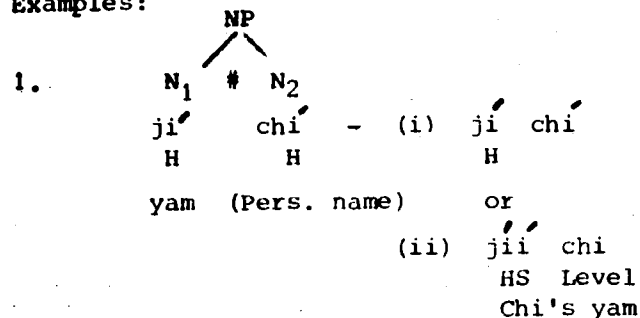## 2.2   Tone in Igbo Nominal Constructions (NPs):

Now that we have sketched the necessary
background to our subject, let us go into the heart
of the matter. The role of tone in Igbo syntax has
not been emphasized in any book that I know of. The
reason for this is not far to seek: the grammar of
tone changes in Igbo syntax is not everybody's cup
of tea. My aim is to begin to make it some people's
cup of tea until the subject gradually becomes every
body's cup of tea.

The proper place to begin is with the tone
patterns of nominal constructions ie. NP phrases
otherwise known as Genitival or Associative Const-
ructions. The tone rules that we shall come across
here are the same tone rules we see operating   in
other areas of Igbo syntax. In other words, **all**
the tone rules of Igbo syntax are summarised   in
the so-called associative or genitival tone rules.
The construction is an NP - a noun phrase consisting
of two nouns juxtaposed to each other as shown be-
low:

NP
N_1 N_2
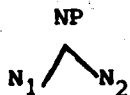
N_1 is the head of construction, while N_2 is the
associated or possessive noun as the case might be;
put in another way N_1 is the possessee while N_2 is
the possessor. Each member of our six nominal
classes will have the chance to function in either
N_1 or N_2 position.   18

Examples:

NP

1. N_1 # N_2
      ji   chi   - (i) ji chi
      H   H   H

      yam (Pers. name)   or

                       (ii) jii chi
                             HS Level
                             Chi's yam

2.   NP
      N_1 N_2
      onwu   #   di   -   onwu di
      H H   H   H H S
      death   husband : death of a husband

3.   NP
         N_1 # N_2
      ego   chi   -   ego chi
      H S   H   H H   S
      money   Chi's money

4.   NP
         N_1 N_2
      oha/ora chi   -   oha chi
      L H   H   L H   S
      vegetable   Chi's oha - vegetable

Discussion:

The noun in N_2 position is a Tone class 1
noun, while N_1 has featured all the four classes
of Tone group 1. Our observation is as follows:

(i)   the associative or genitival relation is
       marked by a tone change in N_2; the change
       is in the form of downstep on the final

19

syllable of N_2;

(ii)   in the case of example (1) where TCL1
nouns are in N_1 and N_2 position, there is an
optional change in N_1 such that its inherent
tone pattern changes from high to high-
step; in this case, the tone on N_2 is
level with the immediately preceding step.

Tone Rules 1 H # H ➔ H S or H S Level
               2 H H # H ➔ H H S
               3 H S # H ➔ H H S
               4 L H # H ➔ L H S

Examples with TG2, Nouns

5.

```
        NP
       /\
      /  \
    N₁  #  N₂
```

Ótù   dí   ➔ (i) Ótùú dí
H L   H   H LH S
One husband   or
                  (ii) Ótú dí
                       H S S
                     One husband

6.

```
        NP
       /\
      /  \
    N₁  #  N₂
```

àla   jí   ➔ (i) àlaá jí
L L   H   L LH S
                       or
                  (ii) àlá jí
                       L H   S

Discussion:

The noun in N_2 position remains a monosyl-
lable, while those in N_1 position each ends on a
low tone. As we now know from examples 1-4, N_2

expresses its ggenitival or associative function
by means of a downstep on its final syllable.
But an immediately preceding low tone does not
induce a downstep on the following high tone.
Therefore the preceding low tone has got to be
raised to provide the appropriate tonal environ-
ment for a downstep. Here the raising can take
one of two possible forms:

(a)   the addition of an extra high-tone sylla-
ble, giving rise to a rising glide as in
alternative (1); or

the raising of the final low tone of N_1;
a raised low tone cannot be as high as
the immediately preceding high, so it
becomes a downstepped high, as in (ii).
Thus, there are tonal changes on either
side of the word boundary between N_1 and
N_2.

Tone Rule

Tone Rule 5 $\begin{Bmatrix} H\ L \\ L\ L \end{Bmatrix}$ # H ➔ (i) $\begin{Bmatrix} HLH\ S \\ H\ S\ S \end{Bmatrix}$
                                   (ii)

TCL2   H H   Nouns as N_2

The diagram remains the same.

```
        NP
       /\
      /  \
    N₁    N₂
```

        H # HH ➔   jí ohyá
TCL1 jí   ohya   H H S
     yam   bush   wild yam
TCL2 as N_1 isi # ánya ➔ ísi anyá
               H H   H H   H H H S

Observe that the downstep occurs where we expect
it, that is in the final syllable of N_2. However,
if N_2 happens to be a proper noun, then the down-

step shifts from its final to the initial syllable
of the same N_2, thus:

```
                 NP
                 /\
               /    \
            N₁        N₂
        Isi      Anya    -    Isi  Anya
        H H      H  H          H H  S  Level
                              the eye of Mr. Anya.
```
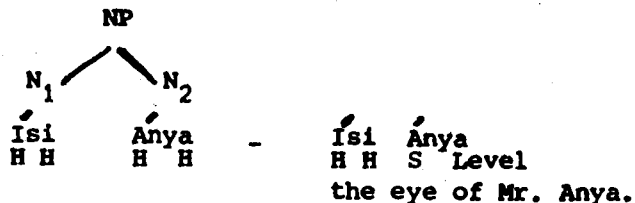
Other examples:

```
        nwa # anya  -   nwa  anya
         H    H  H        H  H  S
        small eye(s)    small eye(s)

        nwa #  Anya  -   nwa  Anya       .
                          H    S  Level
                         Mr. Anya's child.

        isi # Enyi   -   isi  Enyi
        H H   H  H        H H  S  Level
        nwa   enyi       small elephant

        nwa   Enyi       child of Mr. Enyi.
```

Focus on Proper/Common Noun Distinction:

The tone pattern contrast in the **above**
examples is very interesting, the difference **is**
semantically induced: in the NP nwa anya, 'nwa'
is functioning as a type of adjective specifying
the common noun 'anya', hence the surface **tone**
pattern HHS. By contrast, when the same noun nwa
- child/offspring is used in association with a
proper noun, the meaning of possession is realised
and there is a corresponding tone pattern change
to reflect the ownership, hence the surface tone
pattern HS Level.

(More) Examples:

```
        nwa  anya    -   a small eye

        nwa  Anya        Mr. Anya's child
```

```
        nkwu  uzo    -   road-side oil palm
        H  H  H L

        nkwu  Uzo        Mr. Uzo's oil palm
        H  H  L L

        ihu   uzo        the main road/track
        face  road       (as opposed to side track)

        ihu   Uzo        Mr. Uzo's face.

        anu   ndu        life or fresh meat

        anu   Ndu        Mr. Ndu's meat

        uzo   ndu        way to life/salvation
        road/way life

        uzo   Ndu        Mr. Ndu's road.

        ogu   ndu        war for life
        war of life

        ogu   Ndu        Mr. Ndu's war.
```

TCL3, H S as N_1

Nouns of Tone class 3 are dialect-specific
that is they occur in specific dialects.   For
example:

$$ego, \quad agu, \quad anwu, \quad eze, \quad ero$$

are realised in other dialects as TCL2 - HH. Their
lexical tone pattern HS in isolation becomes   HH
in construction; this being the case they behave
exactly like TCL2 nouns just discussed above. Only
one example will suffice to illustrate this point

```
        agu  #  Oka  -   agu  Oka
        H  S    H  H      H H  H S
                         Awka farm land.
```
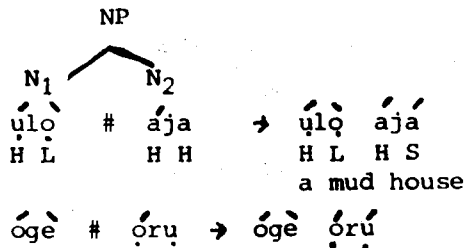
TCL4 LH as N₁

NP

N₁   N₂
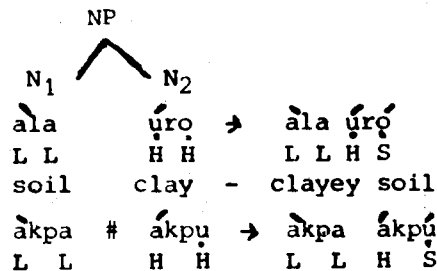òké̩   #   o̩hyá   -   òké̩ o̩hyá
L H   H H   L H H S
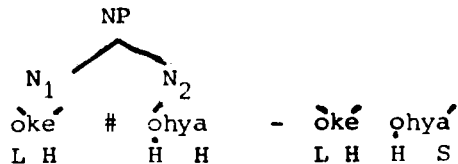
As with the other members of TG1, downstep occurs on the final syllable of N₂, there is no tone change in N₁.

TG2   Nouns as N₁

TCL5   HL

NP

N₁   N₂
úlo̩   #   ájá   →   úlo̩ ájá
H L   H H   H L H S
                     a mud house

ógè̩ # o̩rú̩ → ógè̩ o̩rú̩

TCL6 LL

NP

N₁   N₂
àla   ú̩ro̩   →   àla ú̩ró̩
L L   H H   L L H S
soil   clay   -   clayey soil

àkpa # ákpu̩ → àkpa ákpú̩
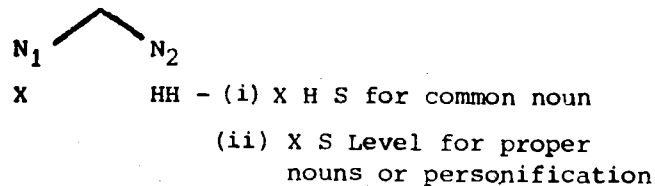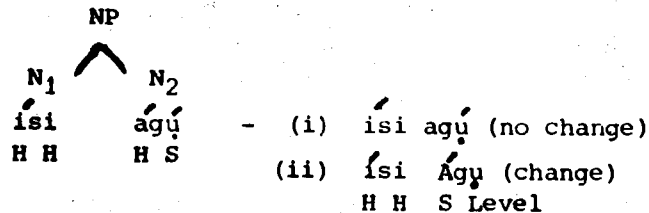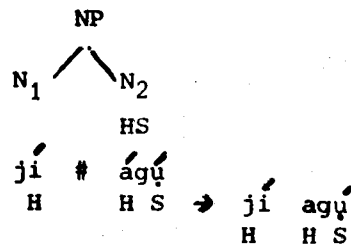L L   H H   L L H S

Like members of TG1, TG2 nouns in N₁ position produce the same effect on TCL2 HH in N₂ position; the result is a change from inherent HH tone pattern to a grammatical HS tone pattern in construction. The rules for these can be written as follows:

24

N₁   N₂
X   HH - (i) X H S for common noun

(ii) X S Level for proper nouns or personification

where X stands for each of the Tone classes 1-6. In other words, no change of tone pattern occurs in N₁, all the changes of tone pattern occur in N₂.

TCL3   H S as N₂

NP

N₁   N₂
         HS

jí # ágú̩
H   H S   →   jí agú̩
                 H   H S

NP

N₁   N₂
ísí   ágú̩   -   (i) ísí agú̩ (no change)
H H   H S   (ii) ísí Águ̩ (change)
                      H H S Level

Nouns of TCL3 behave like those of TCL2 in all contexts. Since TCL3 nouns inherently end on a downstep, we expect no further change in that pattern except when it is a proper noun see (ii); in that case the downstep is realised on its first syllable just as it is with TCL2 nouns. In other words there is no change of tone pattern in either N₁ or N₂ except when N₂ is a proper noun.

25

TCL4   Nouns, L H as N_2

NP
N_1 / \ N_2
LH
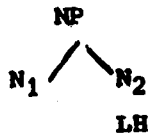
TCL1	ji # oke	→	jí óke
	H L H		H S Level
2.	isi # oke	→	isi oke
	H H L H		H H S Level
			head rat
3.	ézé # òké	→	éze óke
	H S . L H		H H S Level
4.	adá # Obí	→	adá Óbi
	daughter Obi		Obi's daughter

A look at the foregoing data reveals that in N_1 position, there is no tone change except that TCL3 HS changes to HH as one would expect from previous examples. But in N_2 position, there is always a change: the inherent LH of TCL3 nouns changes to step level. The rules are as follows:

(i)   X H # L H → XH S Level

(ii) H S # L H → HH S Level.

Explanation:

As we have come to understand, a TG1 noun in N_2 position express its associative or genitival relationship by means of tone change from a final H to a final downstep (S). With an inherent tone pattern of LH, this is not possible because the sequence LS is not possible in Igbo. To create the right context for this final downstep, the initial low tone of oke/Obi has got to be raised. But raising does not produce a high-tone as high in pitch as the preceding or following high. Therefore LH becomes step level, hence the output grammatical tone pattern of the construction

becomes X H S Level as shown above.

TG2   HL and LL Nouns as N_1

NP
N_1 / \ N_2
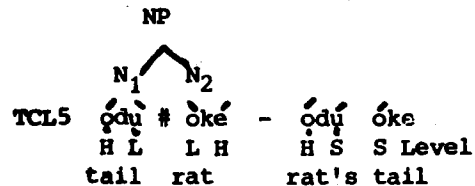
TCL5	ódù # òké	-	ódú óke
	H L L H		H S S Level
	tail rat		rat's tail
TCL6	àgba # òké	→	àgbá óke
	L L L H		L H S Level
	jaw rat		rat's jaw

As in all previous examples, N_2 is a TG1 noun; each member of the group expresses a grammatical relationship by means of tone lowering i.e. from high to downstep. The preceding low tone before this final high tone has got to be raised; when raised it becomes a downstepped high on the same pitch level as the final high. A downstep on the first syllable of oke will induce the final low tone of N_1 to be raised; the raising produces another downstep so that the output tone pattern is H S S Level.

For TCL6, exactly the same process is repeated with the same effect; the only difference being that when the final low tone of TCL6 noun is raised, it is just a high tone in relation to the preceding low tone.

Observe that we have two cases of tone change affecting both N_1 and N_2. The tonal context or environment which induces tone changes on both sides sides of the word boundary is this

| ódù | # | òké |
| L | | L H |

| ódù | # | òké | |
| H L | | L H | → H S S Level |
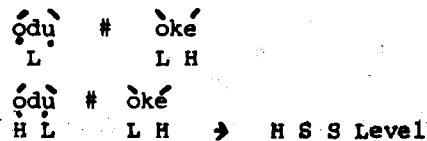
With these we conclude our exemplification of TG1 nouns in N_2 position.

TG2 in N_2 Position

NP

N_1 N_2

TCL1   ji # uzo   -   ji uzo
      H   HL   H H L
      yam   road   road-side yam

                -   ji Uzo
                  Uzo's yam

TCL2   nkwu # uzo - nkwu uzo
                  a palm by the road side
                  nkwu Uzo
                  Mr Uzo's palm tree

TCL3   ero # uzo → ero uzo
      mushroom road   road-side mushroom
                  ero Uzo
                  Mr Uzo's mushroom

TCL4   oke # ulo → oke ulo
      rat   home   home/domestic rat
                  oke Ulo
                  Mr. Ulo's rat.

It is clear from the above examples that in all cases the input (lexical) tone pattern equals the output (grammatical) tone pattern. In other words, there is no change except when N_2 is a proper noun. When this is the case, the tone rule is as follows

     N_1 N_2
     X   #   HL → X   L L

Condition: N_2 must be a proper name.

As in the previous examples the semantic relation of ownership is signalled by tone lowering in N_2.

TG2 as N_1 and N_2

NP

N_1 N_2

TCL5   oke #   uzo - oke uzo
      H L   H L   H L H L
      boundary road   road boundary

      ulo #   eze → ulo eze
      H L   H L   H S L L
      house   Eze   a royal house

                  ulo   Eze
                  house of Mr. Eze

NP

N_1 N_2

TCL6 LL   Igbo # uzo - Igbo uzo
              road   Igbo

      ala # Uzo - ala Uzo
      land Mr. Uzo   Mr. Uzo's piece of land

TCL6 as N_2

NP

TCL1   ji #   aga → ji aga
      H   L L
      yam   aga yam

TCL2   isi   ala → isi ala
      head   land   capital of a place
      H H   L L   H H L L

TCL3   eze   enwe - eze enwe
      H S   L L   H H L L

TCL4   azu #   enwe → azu enwe
      back   monkey   back of a monkey

TCL5 ódù # ènwè → ódù ènwè
      H L   L L   H S L L
      tail   monkey

TCL6 àla # ènwè → àlá ènwè
      L L   L L   L H L L
      land   monkeys land of monkeys

Observation

(1) When a TCL5 noun is in both N_1 and N_2
    positions, their input tone pattern
    equals the output tone pattern, except
    when N_2 is a proper noun. When this is
    the case a tone change occurs on either
    side of word boundary as follows:

     úkwa Ùzò̩   ụkwa Uzo
    H L # HL - Ụzọ's breadfruit tree
             [+proper N]

Explanation

We have come to know that the possessive marker in
Igbo is tone: ownership is marked by tone lowering,
hence HL becomes LL as in the above example. But
how do we explain the change from HL to HS in N_1?

In all previous examples involving tone lower-
ing in TG1 nouns (TCLs 1-4), we assumed that low
tones had to be raised to downstep so as to make
the final downstep in N_2 possible, (see, for exam-
ple, our rationalisation of ódù # óké becoming ódù
                                                H S
óke.
S Level.
A more plausible explanation is that every case of
tone lowering in N_2 requires a tone raising in the
final syllable of N_1 just in case N_1 does not end
on a hightone. Let us refresh our minds with the
following examples:

    ísi Ùzò̩ - ísi Uzo
    H H H L   H H L L
                 Ụzọ's head

Here N_1 is inherently on a H H tone pattern, so
no raising is N_1 is required. But in the example
that follows, N_1 is inherently on a HL tone pat-
tern, therefore this final low tone has got to
be raised so that tone lowering may occur in N_2
Examples

    àla # Ùzò̩ - àlá Uzo   Uzo's land
    L L   H L   L H L L

    úmù̩ # Ìbè - úmú Ibe   Ibe's children
    H L   L H   H S L L

Even when N_2 is inherently on a LL tone pattern,
the final low tone of N_1 has to be raised so that
all grammatical tone pattern in TG2.. Noun phrase
may be symmetrical thus:

    óke # àla → óké àla   land boundary
    H L   L L   H S L L

    àla # ènwè → àlá ènwè   land of monkeys
    L L   L L   L H L L

In these examples, the inherent tone pattern of
N_2 is the targetted grammatical tone pattern,
which therefore remains unchanged.

A very interesting parallel needs to be drawn
here, namely that what happens here is a repeat of
what happens in relative clauses in the language -
whether Subject Relative Clause (SRC) or Object
Relative Clause (ORC). Example

    Ógú/Ógù nwére egó ...   SRC
    H S H H   S Level S
    Ogu who has money   ...

    Àgwò̩ Ógú/Ógúù gbùru
    H H H S H LH   S Level

    Àgwò̩ Ógù/Ógùú gbùru ...
    H H H S H LH   L L
    The snake which Ogu killed ...

                                              31

From the foregoing, we can see that the noun phrase tone rules have a general application in Igbo syntax. To know them therefore is to know the tone rules of Igbo syntax.

3.0 Other Grammatical Functions of Tone

With a full discussion and exemplification of the function of tone in Igbo Noun Phrase Constructions completed, we have indicated the major function of tone in Igbo syntax. This chapter is therefore on the other important functions that have not so far been discussed. They include the following.

3.1 Tone in Questions and Statements.

That there is a transformational relation between statements and their question counterparts is an empirical assumption in transformational generative linguistics. In Igbo this relation is much more obvious. Whenever a statement has a pronoun as its subject, the only difference between it and its question counterpart lies in tone: the tone of the pronoun subject in statements is high or high low or low high as the case may be, whereas in the corresponding questions, the same pronoun subject is on Low or Low-Low tones. Examples: Yes/No Question Ajuju Ee/Mbaa

Statements		Questions
1a. M nuchara ihe o kwuru	(b)	M nuchara ihe o kwuru?
2a. I kwuru ya ekwu	(b)	I kwuru ya ekwu
3a. O no ya	(b)	O no ya?
4a. A luru ogu n'ahya	(b)	A luru ogu n'ahya?
5a. Anyi kwere ekwe	(b)	Anyi kwere ekwe?
6a. Unu ekwuole eziokwu	(b)	Unu ekwuole eziokwu?
7a. Ha byara abya	(b)	Ha byara abya?

However, when the subject of a statement is other than a pronoun, the difference between it and its corresponding question is twofold: (1) a

structural difference in addition to (ii) the tone pattern difference. **Examples**

Statement	Question
8a. Ógù nọ n'úlò	b. Ógù ọ nọ n'úlò?
Ogu is at home	Is Ogú at home?

9a. Díké nà nwúnyè bi ébe à. - Statement

b. Díké nà nwúnyè yá hà bi ébe à?

10a. Ńdị ebe ányị, unù anụna olú ha.

b. _____, ùnu anụna _____?
Our people, you have heard them.
Our people, have you heard them?

11a. Ányá nọkwa ébe à

b. Ànya ọ nọkwa ébe à?

12a. Òbí ékwuole yá.

b. Òbi o kwúole yá?

Examples 8-12 show that each NP subject **is** immediately followed by its pronoun copy, **thereby** changing the structure from

NP   VP   in Statements to
NP Pronoun VP in the questions.

In each case, the pronoun copy of the subject **is** on a low or low-low tone pattern. In (11) **and** (12) we notice that Anya has a HH tone **pattern in** statements, but a LL tone pattern in **questions;** this is in addition to its pronoun copy **which is** also a low tone. Similarly in (12a) Obi has **a** LH tone pattern in statements, but a LL **tone** pattern in the corresponding question.

It is thus clear that the low tone in Igbo is a very reliable index of questions; **this low** tone is always found on the pronoun **whether it** is the sole subject of the question or a **pronoun** copy of an NP subject. We refer to the **pronouns**

34

in 8-12 as pronoun copies because each of them **agrees with** its antecedent NP in number and person. This agreement in number and person is the norm in standard (literary) Igbo; in certain dialects, such as those of Ọlu (Orlu) there is a question prefix on a low tone, which therefore does not have any agreement with its antecedent NP, as 13 shows.

13a. Únu ọdi mma?

b. Ńdi be unù ọdi mma?

c. Ńdi be unù adi mma?

Whatever form this vowel prefix takes, a or o/ọ, it is never a pronoun copy of the subject but a low-tone question prefix. Questions such as those in 13 may exist in various dialects, but they must not be taken as the standard form of Igbo Yes/No questions.

3.2   Content Questions: Ajuju Njinjuajuju

The label yes/no questions translates very easily into Igbo as Ajuju Ee/Mbaa, but this is not so with wh- questions. Wh-questions are so called because every question morpheme in English except 'how' begins with wh-. Examples include who, what, when, where, why, et cetera.   Igbo question morphemes are not of a uniform phonemic shape, therefore there can be no umbrella label for all of them. The title Ajuju Njinjuajuju translates as questions with question morphemes and I find it a satisfying descriptive label for a language such as Igbo. What is interesting for our purposes is that both Yes/No (Ee/Mbaa)   and content (Njinjuajuju) have identical features as long as the question morphemes are in the predi-cate, thus:

14a. Ibe o bi n'ebéé?

b. Ụmụaká ahụ ha mere gini?

35

c. Ibe na Obi unu choro onye?

d. Mu na nwunye m anyi huru ole?

The following are the interrogative morphemes of Igbo.

15. i   onye   who

     ii   gini   what

     iii ebee   where

     iv   anaa/olia how

     v   ole   how many

Others include the following question phrases (not simple words like the above).

Kedu/Olee' {{ (mgbe) }   when
             { (oge) }
             { nke   }   which
             { etu   }   how

What is very evident from these question words/ phrases is that except gini (what) everyone of them begins with a low tone. The low tone is a very important factor in Igbo question formation. Observe that there is no simple word/phrase in Igbo corresponding to 'why' in English. Igbo equivalents of English why questions involve a complex construction such as are shown in 16.

16a. Maka gini ka i ji mee ya?

  b. N'ihi gini ka i ji mee ya?

  c. Gini kpatara i ji mee ya?

  d. I kworo gini mee ya?

3.3   Tone in Imperatives and Subjunctives:

The imperative construction in Igbo is a sentence the verb of which has a definite

phonemic shape and a definite tone pattern. In other words, the imperative verb form in Igbo is unique in shape and tone pattern. Examples:

17a. Gbuo   ya

  b. Mee   ngwa ngwa

  c. Daa   n'ala yoo ya

  d. Kwuru   oto

  e. Para   ya n'aka

  f. Byakwa   n'oge

  g. Buru   onyeisi anyi

Examples 17 a-c show that the phonemic shape of the imperative verb-form in Igbo is

CV-root + an Open Vowel Suffix which we symbolise as E.

The consistent tone pattern is LH, thus the representation is

[CV+E] Imp. Verb.
 L H

In 17 d-f, the suffixes are not the open vowel suffix: in (d) & (e) the suffix is rV and in (f) it is kwa a clitique. Nevertheless the tone on each and everyone of them is high, thereby confirming our claim that the imperative verb-form always ends on a high tone. The regular imperative morpheme is the open vowel suffix, symbolised as E, but there can be other types of suffixes depending on the type of verb and desired meaning. For example, a subset of stative verbs in the language form their imperative verb-forms by adding the rV; while any verb can take an extensional suffix instead of the open vowel suffix to express its desired meaning. Whatever may be the nature of the suffix its tone must be high.

The Subjunctive Verb-Form

The phonemic shape of Igbo subjunctive verb-forms in nearly all cases is identical with that of the imperative form. The only difference between them lies in their different tone patterns. Let us put them side by side so as to highlight the similarity of phonemic shape and difference of tone-pattern.

	Subjunctive	Imperative
18a.	Kà únu sie anú	Únu sié anú
	H H H S	H L LH H S
b.	Kà ányi chere yá	Ányi chere yá
c.	Kà m̀ daá n'àla	M̀ daá n'àla
	sékpúolu yá.	sékpúolu yá
d.	Kà há jee n'ogè	Há jee n'ogè

One striking difference is the presence of the conjunction kà in all the subjunctive expressions and its absence in their imperative counterparts. Secondly, the tone pattern of the verb in the imperatives is a uniform - LH for every class of verbs. By contrast, the same verb in the subjunctive has a HH tone pattern for Tone classes 1 & 2 verbs, but LH for Tone class 3 verbs. (Tone class 3 verbs are low tone verbs which are known for their tonal stability).

Conditional Constructions

The traditional distinction in English is between, open, improbable and unfulfilled conditions exemplified as follows does not obtain in Igbo.

Open Condition: If he comes, we shall see.
Improbable Condition: If I were you I would be happy.
Unfulfilled Condition: If he had begged, I would have pardoned him.

In Igbo, only two types can be formally distinguished, namely the open condition and the unfulfilled condition. It seems that both the improbable and the unfulfilled conditional sentences fall together in the language.

Our interest here is on the Open Conditional constructions in Igbo: in such sentences the verbs have the same HH tone pattern as in subjunctive sentences. Examples:

Ányi jee n'ogè, ányi alóta n'ogè
H   L

I nwee nnukwu egó, I góte ezigbo moto.

Ónye ruo, ò rie.

Únu maa úzo, únù azúta ezigbo ahya.

In both the antecedent (if) clause and the consequent (main) clause the verb has a H H tone pattern just as in subjunctive sentences. This is not surprising for both types of construction express an open or unrealised meaning.

From the foregoing, it seems to be the case that the subjunctive in Igbo should include open conditional constructions in addition to purpose constructions. (cf. Nwachukwu 1976, 1982).

3.3 Tone in Relative/Adverbial clauses:

A relative or adjectival clause is a construction that specifies, definitises or defines a noun; it performs the same function as adjectives, it is therefore a sentential adjective, ie. an adjective in the form of a sentence or clause. Examples:

1a. Men who are married to difficult women are never happy.
b. Women who are married to difficult men are never happy.

2a. Ńdí nwoké lúrụ nwaànyị ọ́jọ́ọ́ nọ̀ ná nsọ̀gbú

b. Ńdí nwaànyị lúrụ di ọjọọ́ nọ̀ ná nsọ̀gbu.

The above two examples contain a relative clause each. In 1(a&b) the relative clause is introduced by a wh- morpheme otherwise known as a relative clause marker; 2(a&b) are roughly Igbo working approximations of 1(a&b). In each of them there is no word/morpheme that can be described as a relative clause marker. What is it then that tells us that we have a relative clause construction in Igbo? It is tone. Let us examine these tonal features more closely.

The relative clauses in 2(a) & (b) are as follows:

(2a) ... lúrụ nwaànyị ọ́jọ́ọ́
       S Level L L H H S

(b)   lúrụ   di   ọjọọ́
       S Level-L-S

Each of the above is a verb phrase or a predicate phrase consisting of a finite verb and its object (complement). Therefore this type of relative clause has no head or marker; so much for its structural feature(s). Its tonal features are as follows:

(i)   the verb of the clause is always on a downstep; this means that the immediately preceding morpheme must end on a high tone because the only appropriate context for a downstep is a preceding high tone, thus,
     H S or
     S S (downstep is inherently a high tone)

If the immediately preceding morpheme ends on a low tone, the low tone must be raised or it acquires an extra high tone thereby resulting in a rising glide thus

40

2(b)   {nwáànyị́}   lúrụ di ọjọọ́
      {nwáànyị}
         H   S-Level   S

3.   Ógú nwére egó
    H S   S Level S

   Ógùú   _____
   H LH

One can tentatively say that for there to be a downstep on the root verb, the immediately preceding item must end on a high tone. The type of relative clause so far described is subject relative clause (SRC).

Object Relative Clause:

Igbo object relative clauses have very similar tonal features with subject relative clauses but a different structural feature from them, they are represented by the following examples:

3.   Mótò Ógù
    H LH   {gótere} bụ̀ volvo
          {gòtere}
   Ógú
   H S

The object relative clause above is as follows:

     Ógú/Ógù gótere/gòtere ...

Its tonal features are exactly what obtains in subject relative clause except for the fact that the verb of the clause is not mandatorily on a downstep. But whether or not the verb of the clause is on a downstep, the immediately preceding item must end on a high tone, that is an inherent low tone before such a verb must become high itself or have an extra high tagged on to it to form a rising glide.

The structural feature of the above clause is NP Verb ... ie. an NP subject followed by its transitive verb. This transitive verb that takes an object is without an object in the

41

logical position; the logical position of an object is immediately after its verb - that is the verb that assigns grammatical function (of object) to it. The object of the verb is mótò now moved to sentence-initial position where it acquires emphasis.

These tonal and structural features are what mark out relative clauses from other construction types in Igbo; we do not have any morpheme such as wh- words in English to tell us that what we are dealing with is a relative clause construction. Thus tone pattern is a key feature that distinguishes relative clauses in Igbo. It is therefore difficult to characterise the relative clause in Igbo without due regard to the tonal factor. As an additional piece of evidence, consider the following examples:

4a. Ógù̀ bi ébe à.
    H L   L H H L

 b. Ógú bí ebe à ...
    H S S Level L

The tone pattern of 4(a) forces us to put a full stop at the end of the construction because it can only be a complete sentence. By contrast the tone pattern of 4(b) forces us to the conclusion that the sentence is not complete since what we have is only a complex nominal construction - a relative clause. It is thus obvious that no grammarian can adequately characterise Igbo relative clauses without due reference to the centrality of tone in the construction.

3.4   Tone in Polarity Distinction:

The term polarity is due to Denis Winston (1973), he used it to reflect the fact that Igbo verb inflection involves two separate and distinct paradigms or divisions: the affirmative and the negative, each associated with a separate set of inflectional markers often accompanied with different tones pattern. There is no common negative marker in Igbo which can negate any verb-form regardless of its tense or aspect meaning; rather what we have is a situation where each affirmative verb has a corresponding negative form.

The polarity distinction is based on the fact that affirmative verbs are marked by a set of inflectional affixes which are different from those that mark negative verb-forms. In addition, there is also a difference of tone pattern between an affirmative verb and its corresponding negative form. Examples:

1. Imperatives:

Affirm.		Neg.
Há rị́é ihé	(TCL1 vb)	Há eríle ihe
Jèénù fáa/gbóo	(TCL2 vb)	Ejéla faa/gboo
Zàá ézi	(TCL3 vb)	Àzàla ezí

The tonal difference is clear: TCL1 & 2 verbs have their root/stem on a low tone in the affirmative, in the negative the same verbs have their roots on a high tone; verbs of TCL3 maintain the same low tone root in both the affirmative and negative divisions. In addition the negative verb forms have a high-tone, open-vowel prefix, which their affirmative counterparts do not have. The schema is as follows:

	Affirmative	Negative
TCL1&2	[CV+E] verb	[A+CV+la] verb
	L H	H S Level
TCL3	[CV+E] verb	[A+CV+La] verb
	L H	H L L

42
43

B. Present Stative in Factative Sentences:

1a. Ógù bi ébe à   Ógù ébíghí ebe à
         L   H S   S

                        ebìghi ebe a
                        H L   L

b. Íbè nwere égo   Ibè énwéghi   ego
        L L   H   S   Level

c. Ụ̀kwụ rụ̀rụ ya   Ụ̀kwụ arụ́ghi ya
         L L   H   S   Level

In the above examples only stative verbs are
used, that is why we can unequivocally talk of
the present time or the stative present. The
difference of tone pattern and phonemic shape
is very obvious as in the previous set of
examples, root verbs are on low tone(s) in the
affirmative, but on high tone in the negative,
and the open vowel prefix on a high tone is
there to emphasize the phonemic difference bet-
ween the two verb forms.

C. -rV Past Verb-Form:

1. Há gbùru éhi   Há egbúghi ehi
         L L   H   S   Level

2. Íbè kwuru ókwu   Ibè ékwúghi okwu
         L L   H   S   Level

3. Úchè zara ezí   Úchè (ázághị) ezí
         L L   (   )
                             (ázàghị)
                              L   L

Once again the difference of tone pattern and
morphemic shape is obvious, the tonally stable
verb in (3) belongs to Tone class 3. They are
the traditional low tone verbs which are the
most tonally stable verbs in Igbo. But in spite
of this stability, it can change from low tone
in the affirmative to high in the negative.

D. Perfective Verb-Forms

Úchè eríela ihé: Úchè eríbèghi íhe
     L H

Òbí ékwúola okwú: Òbí ekwúbèghi okwu
     S Level

Díké adáála úle: Díké adábèghi ule
     H L   H S

With this verb form Tone classes 1 & 2 root verbs
are on high tone in both the affirmative and nega-
tive forms, but the stable low tone verb is the
one that changes from low tone in the affirmative
to a high tone in the negative. The fact that a
vowel prefix appears in both divisions of the verb
can be misleading: the prefix in the affirmative
perfective has a low tone before high tone verbs,
but high tone before low tone verbs, in other
words it is not tonally stable. By contrast the
prefix in the negative verb-form is, consistently
on a high tone, it is therefore tonally stable.

By now the picture is clear; the formal dif-
ference between an affirmative verb-form and its
corresponding negative form can be stated   as
follows:

     [CV+Suffix Affirm]   [A+CV+Suffix Neg]

The tonal difference has also been pointed out
in previous examples, namely that root verbs
change often from a low tone in the affirmative
to a high one in the negative. These two feat-
ures constitute the peg on which we hang the po-
larity distinction in Igbo.

3.5 Tone Manipulation in Polar (Yes/No) Questions:

The use of tone to distinguish between
statements and corresponding questions has already
been illustrated in 3.1. Under the polarity dis-
tinction we need to revisit the subject of the

45

role of tone in yes/no or polar questions.
Consider the following sentences in both the
affirmatives and the negative.

Ọ́ byàra n'ógè   (Affirm. Statement)[2]
He   came in time.

Ọ̀ byara n'ógè?   (Affirm. Question)
Did he come in time?

Ọ̀ byághú   n'ogè   Ọ́ byaghu n'ogè
He did not came not in time Did he not come in time

Ányị̀ byara n'ógè   Ànyị byara   n'ógè?
We   came in time   Did we come in time?

Ànyị́ abyághị   n'ogè   Ànyị abyághị   n'ogè?
We did not come in time   Did we not come in time

Únù byara n'ógè.   Únu byara   n'ógè?
H L Low   H L   L O W   H L
You came in time   Did you come in time?

Únú abyághi   n'ogè   Únu   abyághi n'ogè
L H   S Level   L   H H   i gh s Level L

Observe how tone is manipulated in both the affir-
mative and negative divisions of the verb.

In the affirmative statement, subject pronouns
generally have high or high-low tone pattern; the
verb generally low-low tones pattern. In the cor-
responding question, tones change: the subject
pronoun changes to low or low-low pattern, while
the verb also changes from low-low to high step
tone pattern. In the Negative Division as in the
affirmative   the contrast of tone pattern   is
once more between the statement and its correspon-
ding question: in the statement, a pronoun subject
has high or low-high tone pattern, and the verb-
root is on a downstep; but in the corresponding
negative question, the same pronoun subject has a
high or high-high tone pattern, and there is no
change of tone in the root verb. Thus, the tonal
contrast being discussed here holds between   the

divisions and within the divisions: it hold bet-
ween affirmative sentences and their negative
counterparts; within the divisions it is between
statements and questions. In these examples the
carriers of tonal contrasts are pronouns and
verbs, and nouns of tone pattern HH or LH which
change to LL in affirmative polar questions (cf.
3.1). The essence of this section is to   once
more emphasize the use that Igbo speakers make
of pitch or tone contrasts to indicate different
sentence types. This tonal manipulation typifies
how Igbo speakers do things with pitch.

3.6 Tone in Igbo Purpose Clauses:

The traditional meaning of purpose clauses/cons-
tructions is assumed here, namely a construction
(generally a subordinate one) which expresses
purpose or plan or intention. In Igbo it is ge-
nerally introduced by the conjunction or comple-
mentizer kà or simply the infinitive of the verb
where the necessary conditions have been met*[3]
Examples:

1. Ányị̀ na-aryọ́ kà udó dị
   We are praying that peace be:
   We are pray for peace.

2. Gbàánụ̀ m̀bọ̀ ka ányị hụ echi
   Make effort that we see tomorrow:
   See that we meet (and discuss) tomorrow.

3. Nụọ́ ọgwụ̀ ka í gbakee
   Drink medicine so that you recover:
   Drink your medicine so as to recover.

4. Únù byara (ka únu hụ) yá
                (ịhụ   )
   You came   (so as) to see him

5. Chị̀bàtá akwà ka mmírí ghàrá ịmá ha
   Gather bring in clothes so that rain fail to
      beat them:
   Bring in the clothes lest they become wet
      with rain.

In the above examples the purpose clauses are those introduced by kà. The interesting example here is (5), which expresses fear or what we do not want to happen; for want of a bitter word, we describe it as a negative purpose clause. The above example (5) is but one way of expressing such a meaning in the language, there is an alternative and more popular way of doing the same as is shown in (6).

6. Chíbàtá akwà mmírí àmaa há
   Bring in the clothes lest they become wet
                              with rain.

Observe the structural difference between (5) & (6): in (5) the diagnostic conjunction is present, in (6) it is absent; in (5) there is the verb ghàrà - 'leave out', omit which acts as a negator and is followed by the infinitive of the verb - ímá (to drench/make wet). All these aspects of meaning are incapsulated in the verb and its low tones - àmaa - in (6). What an amazing economy of words! In other words, it is the verb with its unique low-tone pattern that express the meaning hitherto expressed by a conjunction and a finite verb. When the subject of this negative purpose clause is a pronoun, the tone pattern employed becomes even more interesting.

7. Mèchíe onú í nwùo
   Shut (your) mouth lest you die/or else you
       die.

8. Chúpù nkịtá ọ̀ tàgbuo éjéntị ányị
   Drive out the dog lest it should bite to
    death our (church) agent

9. Ányị rie ihé anyị àdachie ụ́zọ̀
   Let us eat lest we collapse on the way.

10. Kà ḿ zùrú iké mụ́ ànwụo
    Let me rest lest I die

11. Lèmáa anyá ha èmegbuo gị́
    Be careful lest they cheat you.

48

Let us examine the structure of each of these examples in addition to the peculiar tone pattern of the subject and verbs of these negative purpose clauses, (the second clause in each example). Each example consists of two clauses juxtaposed to each other without any conjunction; what provides a link is the tone pattern of the subject and verb of the second (following) clause; this subject always ends on a high tone, and the following verb always has a low-tone prefix that spreads this low tone to the root verb no matter the number of syllables it consists of. This fact explains why the pronoun subjects ányị in (9), mụ́ in (10) and há in (11) are all on high tone(s). By contrast the pronoun subjects í in (7) and ọ̀ in (8) all end on a low tone. Why is this so? Are these counter examples that prove our rule?

These pronoun subjects, like their counterparts in 9-11 are on high tone; the extra low tone is a reflex of the low tone prefix which we expect to find in the following verb and which spreads that low tone to the entire verb form. The reason why /í/ and /ọ/ behave this way should be well known by now from the following examples which contain perfective verb-forms.

12a. Ógù abyála

  b. Ibè abyála

  c. ọ́ byála

  d. í byála

The low-tone prefix present in the verb in (12) a-b is absent in c-d, because the immediately preceding pronoun subject is vocalic and monosyllabic. The conditioning factor is vocalicity - ie. the fact that the pronoun is simply a vowel; in (10) the pronoun is also monosyllabic, but the syllable is CV and not simply V. Consequently the following verb is ànwụo and not nwùọ as in (7). Thus the final low tone of the glide in (7) and (8) is

49

therefore a reflex of the low-tone prefix which rightly belongs to the verb. We are therefore correct when we assert that all pronoun subjects in the negative purpose clause are on high tone(s) and the verb always on low tones.

The above tonal feature is found even when the subject of the clause is a noun. Examples:

13a. Wèré nwayọ̀ọ nwátá ètete ((n)nwátà)
Take gentleness lest child wakes:
Be gentle or else the baby wakes up.

b. Yá mèchíe ọnụ́ àlá àkugbuo yá
He shut o mouth lest Ala goddess strike him down.

c. Adụ́la isi mkpu mmadụ́ ànwuo
Don't swear a false Oath so that person may not die:
Don't swear a false Oath so that nobody may die.

3.7 The Situation in Other Dialects:

The type of purpose construction reported here is not unique to the dialects found in old Imo State and adjoining parts of old Anambra State It is found in other parts of the Igbo-speaking areas in exactly the same form but with different tone pattern. Instead of verb forms with low tones, we have verb-forms with high tones as in the following examples 13 repeated here.

14a. Wèré nwayọ̀ọ nwátá ètete (13 repeated)
H S S Level

Adụ́la isi mkpu mmadụ́ ánwụọ (13c)
H H S S Level

As one can see the only difference lies in the tone pattern of the verb - it is either

[A+CV+(CV) Suffix] verb
L L L L

or
[A+CV+(CV)+Suffix]
S Level-

In other words the verb-form here is either on low or high tones beginning with a mandatory open vowel prefix. In each case the subject of this verb mandatorily ends on a high tone even if inherently it has a low tone ending.

Summarising Conclusion

This monograph has explored the function of tone in Igbo syntax to an extent that has never appeared in print before. This subject was first broached in a SPILC Seminar of 1978, since then it has formed the introductory section of my course - Topics in Igbo Syntax. From lecture notes, it has grown into a manual that students and staff can refer to.

The features of this monograph are as follows

(i) It gives a principled classification of Igbo nouns and verbs (six tonal classes of nouns and three tonal classes of verbs. The tonal classification of these major lexical items provides the base line from which we can pinpoint and describe tone changes;

(ii) it provides a brief exposition of the two tone-marking conventions in Igbo, arguing that nobody can mark every syllable and every tone without running into the problem of contradiction or underspecification;

(iii) It has been shown that tone is crucial to the characterisation of the following construction types

(1) the distinction between statements and questions, in the two divisions of verb inflection depends on tone;

(2) the distinction between imperative and subjunctive verb-forms depends on tone;

(3) It is not possible to characterise the relative clause construction without due reference to tone.

(4) The polarity distinction in Igbo is anchored on the differences of tone and inflectional affixes. It is within this polarity distinction that tonal contrasts are exploited to show the differences between statements and questions in the affirmative and between the same statements and questions in the negative division.

(5) In purpose clauses, tone is manipulated to express meanings which in other languages such as English are expressed by means of a clause containing an introductory conjunction and a finite verb.

(6) It has been pointed out that the subjunctive verb-form in Igbo is a form with a definite phonemic shape and tone pattern. This tone pattern constitutes the only difference between a subjunctive verb-form and an imperative one.

(7) In statements and questions, polarity distinction, subjunctive constructions, and purpose constructions the main carrier of these tonal differences is the pronoun. Thus, the pronoun is unique in Igbo in the sense that it is the peg on which we hang many grammatical distinctions in the language.

(8) Finally in Noun Phrase Constructions, that is the associative and genitival constructions

tone alone signals the following meaning distinctions - the difference between association and ownership, between common and proper nouns appearing in second or N_2 position in this construction.

What Igbo speakers do with tone is many and varied, and so far there is no other Nigerian/ African language in which speakers do things with tone as much as the Igbo people do. It is thus clear that no grammar of Igbo can be complete without due reference to tone and tonal changes found in various construction types.

4.0   The Low Tone in Igbo Questions

4.1   The reader of this monograph is no doubt struck by the role of the low tone in Igbo syntax generally and particularly in Igbo questions: we have come to regard the low tone as the unmistakable index of questions in the language (cf. Chapter 3)   because every question in standard Igbo must contain a pronoun subject on low tone(s) Let us extend our analysis of Igbo questions to Igbo question morphemes and phrases.

4.2   Igbo Question Words and Phrases

The following are Igbo question morphemes and phrases:

ònyé	who?
gịnị	what?
èbéé (òléé)	when?
ànáá/ọlịa	how?
òlé	how many?
Kèdú	(ogè/mgbe) what time/when?
	ebe } where?
	etu } how?
	ǹke which?
	---- why?

We note that with the exception of gịnị, every interrogative word in the above list begins with a low tone. Why is this so and what is the relevance of this initial low tone to question formation in the language? Let us go from the known to the unknown.

The two morphemes ònyé and ónye are obviously related in both meaning and form: one begins on a low tone, that is the question morpheme, and the other begins on a high tone, that is the non-question morpheme; they function in mutually exclusive contexts. Although they are both nouns, only one of them can take the definite article à/ àhụ.

ónye	à/ahụ	this/that person
ónye	ọma	a good person
ónye	ọjọọ	a bad person

By contrast, ònyé the question morpheme does not co-occur with any nominal modifier such as the definite article, adjectives and relative clauses; only ónye with a nominal modifier can function in statements, whereas ònyé is limited to question constructions. It is therefore reasonable to assume that what converts an ordinary common noun to an interrogative noun in Igbo is its initial low tone. For example, ebe is the common noun meaning 'place, or location, whereas èbéé is its question counterpart meaning where.' If we take the analysis right to fundamental details, we can assume it that the noun is bé or ébe; bé is the simple root, where ébe is a derivative consisting of a high-tone prefix and the root thus

Pref. + root

é + bé ⟶ ébe   noun
H   H

è + bé + é ⟶ èbéé question
L   H   S   morpheme.

So we can see that both the root, the common noun and the interrogative noun are related in meaning and form, that is semantically and morphologically related. Other analogous lexemes in Igbo are

òléé   and   àháá

The history of òléé proves the point. This is a lexeme derived from the verb lé—look.

Léé, a derivative from this root, is the common cry in a market in session in Mbaise for drawing the attention of buyers and sellers, léé is roughly equivalent to 'look (here)! in English. As one would expect, its question counterpart is òléé/èléé meaning where.

In Owere area, including Emekeukwu àríí with the same meaning as òléé has identical derivational history, coming from the root verb - rí

> írí   be - is/was etc.
>
> Ànyị rị mmá   (General Owere)
> We are fine

From Ọhafịa we have ọdíà - how? from Mbaise ndíí - where or how, all coming from another copula dị as in:

> Okwu a di mkpa
> This is an important talk.

Each of these question words has been shown to consist of a low-tone question prefix plus root plus suffix. Forms such as ndii (Mbaise)ndee (Udi) ndaa (Okigwe-Isuochi etc) are all derivatives from the copula dị, all showing how question morphemes can be derived from verbs.

4.3   The Case of Kèdú

Kèdú which can be translated as the direct equivalent of English wh- morphemes what, where, who, when, which etc. is not a question word but a question phrase. It can be analysed as follows

> kè + wh- morphemes
>
> dú - a copula verb and variant of
>
>   dí 'be'.

In other words, kè is a low-tone question prefix translating all wh- words in English which has

fused together with the copula dù that is still in use in many dialects of Igbo, especially in Nnewi, Ogidi etc. It is an older form of dì which is fast fading out of the language; names such as Odumegwu must be seen as:

> Ọ́ dù/di m égwù
> It is to me terrible/frightful

The tone pattern difference between the name and its sentential source is due to the process of deriving names from sentences, which is common in Igbo. Thus O dù m égwù becomes Òdumégwù as a proper name.

Kèdú is the only Igbo question word or phrase that functions only in sentence-initial position, Because of its composite nature - being wh- plus is - it is always followed by a noun as its complement. Examples:

> Kèdú   nnà   gị?
> Wh- is   your father: where is your father?
>
> Kèdú aha gị?
> What is your name?
>
> Kèdú aha gị ebe à?
> Where is your name here?
>
> Kèdú ogè í byàra?
> What is time you came: When did you come?
>
> Kèdú etu   ha dì?
> Wh- is way they are: How are they?
>
> Kèdú etu   ọ há n'ogologo?
> Wh- is manner he is in height:
> How tall is he?
>
> Kèdú ihe kpatara i jì mée ya
> Wh- is thing that   caused you do it:
> Why did you do it?

It can be seen from these examples that whether kè is translated as what, where, when or how etc depends on the complement noun. This explains why this category of questions in Igbo has two variants - a basic form and a non-basic or cleft form; the cleft form is an emphatic form, as the following examples show:

Ò kwuru gíní (Basic non-emphatic)

Kèdú ihe o kwuru? (Cleft and emphatic)
What is it that he said?

Úchè ọ hụrụ onyé? (Basic non-emphatic)

Kèdú onye Uché hụrụ? (Cleft and emphatic)

For every basic content (Njinjụajụjụ) question in Igbo there is a corresponding kèdú - version - a cleft and emphatic version.

From our analysis of Igbo question morphemes and phrase, it is clear that the low tone is an essential factor in Igbo questions.

Notes

1. The name is Igwe (iron) not Igwe (sky/heaven) personal communication from Rev. G. Egemba Igwe at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London).

2. William Welmers and Beatrice Welmers both staff of the University of California, Los Angeles in 1968 published a number of books; see references.

3. The condition is simple - the noun subject in the main clause must be co-referential with the noun subject of the purpose clause; secondly the verb of the main clause must be a verb of purpose, intention or plan. In other words the meaning it expresses must be an open or unrealised one. Examples:

(a) Ogu, choro ka ya, hu ggi

(b) • • ihụ gi

Both (a) & (b) above express the same meaning, and everyone of us must agree that the subject of the infinitive ihu in (b) is the same as ya in (a), which in turn refers to the same person as Ogu the main clause subject in both (a) & (b). Thus, Ogu, ya and the missing subject of the infinitive are all co-referential. The verb choro is a purposive verb.

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