



GRAMMATICAL TONE- H TOMORPH, A MARKER OF ATTRIBUTION IN IKHIN, AN EDOID LANGUAGE

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Abstract:

The typology of Ikhin tone system is 'two tones plus a downstep', that is, the lowering of the pitch level of the second high tone in a high [H], low [L], high [H] tone sequence. This paper, therefore, examines the behavior of these tones in the attributive constructions in Ikhin, an Edoid language in South-South, Nigeria. The study observes that in Ikhin, the attribute of a noun (N) is indicated by post posing a modifier (M) after the noun. The normal order between a noun (N) and its modifier is therefore that the noun precedes its modifier. On the one hand, there is a construction marker *ísè* [ɪ]. At morpheme boundary in noun- noun construction, the high toned initial vowel of *ísè* is deleted but its tone remains to perform a grammatical function. On the other hand, other kind of the construction in which the modifying element is not a noun, only a H tomorph is used as the construction marker. This H tomorph marks the relationship between a noun and its modifier. The paper also describes the role of L tomorph in the dynamics of downstep in the language.

Keywords: Ikhin, Edoid language, attributive construction, noun-noun construction, tomorph

1. Introduction

Ikhin is a southern Nigerian language. It is a member of the Edoid language family. According to Oladimeji (2013), it is a daughter language of the Edoid North-Central group, previously known as Eastern Kwa. Oladimeji (2010) claims categorically that the Ikhin language is spoken in Ikhin in Edo State's Owan East Local Government Area. However, the Edoid languages are mostly classified into four categories. They are North Central (NC), Northwestern (NW), Southwestern (SW), and Delta (D) Lewis (2013:160). Additionally, Elugbe (1989) noted that the Edoid languages migrated from the eastern Niger Delta's Rivers and Bayelsa States into sections of Ondo and Kogi States through Delta and Edo States. (<http://www.ling.mq.edu.au>).

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This paper examines tone alternation in the attributive constructions in Ikhin. It establishes that, except for noun-numeral construction, all low tones on the first nouns in the attributive constructions alternate with high tones. The paper argues that a H tomorph which is not segmentally visible is responsible for this alternation and is therefore a marker of attribution in Ikhin.

2. Methodology

This work employs a descriptive and analytical approach. This research relied on data from native Ikhin speakers. Data were gathered using wordlists and tape recorders. Audio recordings were utilised to gather additional information from traditional tales, discussions and descriptions as well as unexplained utterances (Oladimeji 2013). The computerised speech laboratory's speech file system was used to analyse the data.

3. Related Works

Ikhin's attributive construction has not been referenced in the discussion of tone in any of Edoid language studies. Folarin (1982) was the only linguist to examine this language prior to this. The focus then was mostly on phonetics.

4. The Typological Classification of Ikhin Tone System

Ikhin¹ is a terraced level tone system. The typology of Ikhin tone system is 'two basic tones plus a downstep'. These two basic tones are High (H) and Low (L). We shall describe downstep with the abbreviation DS and symbolize it with a floating L (`) in underlying forms, and with a raised exclamation mark (!) in surface forms. Since synchronic evidence exists showing that DS derives from low tones, every case of DS is assumed to have arisen from underlying L.

Ikhin also has downdrift (DD): lows (i.e. L and L) are realized on a successively lowered level. In Ikhin, unlike in Edo (Bini) and Hausa, H does not have a DD effect on L. Besides, a H does not cause a following low tone to downdrift unless that low is in word final position, in which case, it downglides².

5. Downstep and Downdrift

Downdrift occurs in tone sequences involving alternating high (H) and low (L) tones. This was initially assumed to be a predictable matter of phonetic realization. In languages with downdrift, any H preceded by L is realized at a lower pitch level than an earlier H, in this sense, downdrift was distinguished from downstep in which one H tone is realized at a lower pitch level than a preceding H tone without any apparent conditioning factor e.g

Example 1:

Efik,

- a. ɔ̀bɔ̀ŋ mosquito
- b. ɔ̀b!ɔ̀ŋ chief
- c. ɔ̀bɔ̀ŋ care

It is now widely accepted that downdrift and downstep in these limited meanings are symptoms of fundamentally the same event. e.g. Stewart's phrase (1983) "*automatic downstep*" (for surface HLH sequences) and "*non-automatic downstep*" (where no conditioning factor is present in the surface tonal string). At the surface structure in Edoid languages, the low tone that has reduced a high tone is lost. The absence of the conditioning low tone results in a variety of surface representations in which a high tone is followed immediately by a decreased high tone.

6. Downstep in Morphemes and Sentences

When a low-toned vowel before a high-toned vowel elides after full reduplication, a downstepped high tone is formed in Ikhin morphemes.

Example 2:

input	by reduplication	by vowel elision \
a. óγò day	óγòóγò dayday	→ óγ!óγò everyday
b. ǎsò night	ǎsòǎsò	→ ǎs!ǎsò everynight
c. éγè time	éγèéγè timetime	→ éγ!éγè everytime

In Ikhin, downstep also occurs in sentences and is as a result of vowel elision. A high tone may be downstepped when a low-toned vowel preceding a high-toned vowel across a morpheme boundary is desyllabified:

Example 3:

- a. ɔ̀ǰǎ éte → ɔ̀ŋ!éte
 she/he climb mountain she/e climbs mountain
- b. ɔ̀dèelà → ɔ̀d!elà
 she/he buy a cow she/he buys a cow
- c. ɔ̀gbè áki → ɔ̀gb!áki
 she/he kill toad she/he kills toad

Each of the verbs above has a low tone, which has brought down the subsequent high tone in the underlying structure. The surface structure obliterates this same low tone. Numerous experts, notably Steward (1981), have proposed that the primary etiology of DS is a floating low tone, thus it is not out of place to postulate a floating low tone, that is, L tomorph, for the downstepped high tone.

7. Tone in the Attributive Constructions

The typology of the tone system of Ikhin is very well demonstrated by the behaviour of tones in the attributive constructions. The main purpose of this section is to explore the tonal behaviour in attributive constructions in Ikhin and in doing so we provide a systematic description and explanation of instances where high and low tones alternate. We also examine instances where the conditioning tone is not physically present but its effect remains on the low tone.

In Ikhin, when a noun has another noun as its modifier, the morpheme ‘ísè’ occurs in between them. This morpheme is called a construction marker.

Example 4:

òè	ísè	òbù	→	@óésòbù
leg	cm	doctor		leg of doctor

This construction marker has a prefix high tone which performs a grammatical function. This tone has been identified in almost every Edoid language. Indeed, in Ikhin, it is not just in a noun-noun construction but also in demonstrative, possessive and relative clause constructions. In Ikhin and perhaps in most Edoid languages, the normal arrangement between a noun (N) and its modifier (M) is for a noun to precede its modifier. Therefore, the attribute of a noun (N) is indicated by post posing a modifier (M) after a noun (N). The modifier can be any of the following:

Example 5:

	N+Modifier	Examples		
a.	N+ N	òè ísè òbù leg cm doctor	→	óésòbù leg of doctor
b.	N+Possessive	ibàtà mè shoe my	→	ibátàmè my shoe
c.	N+demonstrative	òmò ònà child this	→	’òmònà this child
d.	N+ numeral	’abò ’evà hand two	→	’abòv’ two hands

- e. N+relative clause èkpà nì ̀ògbò → èkpán`ògbò
 bag cm be new a bag which is new

It appears that the associative marker is a VCV with the prefix vowel on a high tone. Elugbe (1985) claims "in proto-Edoid, an agreement marker existed between a noun and its modifier. This agreement marker carried a H which, in most Edoid languages, is the only available evidence of the marker". According to him, an associative or genitive agreement marker still exists segmentally in Oloma and it carries a high tone. Urhobo has a marker r₀e which also carries a high tone.

8. Alternation Between High and Low Tones in The Attributive Constructions

In Ikhin, all low tones on the first noun alternate with high tones. The construction marker /ise/ has its initial and final vowels dropped while the vowels of the nouns being fused together are retained.

The following paradigms exemplify the tonal behaviour in N1 + N2 construction:

Example 6:

	N +	CM	+ N		
	LL	+	LL		
a.	èxùà cheek	ísè cm	òkpè palmfruit	→	éxwásòkpè cheek of palmfruit harvester
b.	ètò hair	ísè cm	òkpè palmfruit	→	étósòkpè hair of palmfruit harvester
	LL	+	HL		
c.	èkpà 'skin'	ísè cm	égbè body	→	ékpás!égbè skin of body
d.	èkpà skin	ísè cm	ékè stomach	→	ékpás!ékè skin of stomach
e.	òè leg	ise cm	⊙elà cow	→	ó⊙eselà leg of cow
	LL	+	HH		
f.	ètò hair	ísè cm	úsó head	→	étós!úsó hair of head
g.	èkpà skin	ísè cm	úsó head		ékpás!úsó skin of head
	HL	+	LL		

h.	èlà cow	ísè cm	ɔ̀bò doctor	→	éìásɔ̀bò cow of doctor
i.	èlà cow	ísè cm	okpè palmwine	→	éìásòkpè harvestercow of palmwine harvester
j.	úgbò bush	ísè cm	èḽo town	→	úgbóseḽò bush of town
k.	ódi wall	ísè of	èḽo town	→	ódísèḽò wall of town
l.	úkò container	ísè cm	ámé water	→	úkósámé container of water
m.	HL ɔ̀ugbò ísè bush	+ cm	HL èlà com	→	úgbósèlà bush of cow
n.	ákà basket	ísè cm	elà cow	→	ákásèlà basket of cow
o.	HL ɔ̀kpà cock	+ cm	HH úsó head	→	ókpás!úsó cock of head(of the family)
p.	èlà cow	ísè cm	úsó head	→	éìás!úsó cow of head' (of family)

Contrary to what was observed in the noun plus noun construction discussed above where the conditioning high tone was visible and segmentally grounded, the demonstrative, possessive and relative clause constructions have no overt high tone but a tomorph that conditions the alternation as shown in the following paradigms:

Example 7:

	N +	✱	+ DEM		
	LL +	✱	+ LL		
a. LL:	òè:	òè ɔ̀	̀onà	→	óènà
	leg		this		this leg
b.	àè:	àè ɔ̀	ènà	→	áɔ̀enà
	legs		these		these legs

c.	ɔ̀bò:	ɔ̀bò ②	òní	→	ɔ̀bòoní
	doctor		that		that doctor
d.	èbò:	èbò´	èni	→	éboni
	doctors		these		these doctors
	HL	+ ✱	+LL		
e.	ákà:	ákà ②	`onà	→	ákánà
	basket		this		this basket
f.	ákà:	ákà´	ènà	→	ákénà
	basket		these		these baskets
g.	ódì:	ódì ②	`onà	→	ódínà
	wall		this		this wall

Example 8:

	N +	✱	+ Poss		
	LL	+	+ LL		
a. LL:	òbò`	òbò ②	sò`	→	óbòsò`
	hand	his			his hand
b.	àbò:	àbò´	è!è	→	ábò!è
	hand		their		their hands
	HL +	✱	+LL		
c. HL:	ákà:	ákà´	sò`	→	ákásò`
	basket	his/her	his/her basket'		
d.	ákà:	ákà´	è!è	→	áká!è
	basket	their	'their basket'		

In the noun plus numeral construction however, the low tones on the noun do not alternate as in the various constructions discussed earlier but remain low at the surface level. We can postulate therefore that the noun plus numeral construction has a low tone as its own tomorph.

Example 9:

	N	+	+	NUM		
	LL +	`+	LL			
a.	àbò`	`	èvà	→	àbòvà	
	hand		two		two hands	

- | | | | | | |
|----|------|---|-------|---|------------|
| b. | ùsò | ´ | èvà | → | usòvà |
| | head | | two | | two heads |
| c. | òè | ´ | èhà | → | òèhà |
| | leg | | three | | three legs |

In Ikhin, the marker of a relative clause ‘nì’ is with a low tone. This relative marker precedes the clause and is itself immediately preceded by the head noun.

Example 10:

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|--------|----|---|------------|-------|--------|--------------|-----------|------|-------|----|---|----|
| | N | + | ✱ | + | Rel Marker | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | LL | + | ✱ | + | L | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| a. | èwè | ⊙ | nì | mé | dé | ó | hù | → | éwé | nì | mé | dé | ó | hù | | | | |
| | goat | cm | I | buy | die | | | | the | goat | which | I | bought | died | | | | |
| b. | èrù | ⊙ | nì | mé | kò | ò | zè | → | érùnì | mé | kò | ò | zè | | | | | |
| | yam | cm | I | plant | grow | | | | the | yam | which | I | planted | has | grown | | | |
| | LHL | + | ✱ | + | L | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| c. | omòhè | ⊙ | nì | và | rè | ó | dé | ó | hù | → | ómòhé | nì | và | rè | ó | dé | ó | hù |
| | man | cm | come | die | yesterday | | | | the | man | that | came | yesterday | is | dead | | | |
| | LLL | + | ✱ | + | L | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| d. | òkpòsò | ´ | nì | mé | gbèkù | à | rè | | òkpòsónimé | gbèkù | wà | rè | | | | | | |
| | woman | cm | I | beat | leave | | | | the | woman | that | I | beat | left | | | | |
| | LLLL | + | ✱ | + | L | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| e. | òmòkpòsò | ´ | nì | dé | è | wè | mé | ⊙ | ò | sè | → | ómòkpòsónidé | wè | mò | sè | | | |
| | girl | cm | buy | goat | my | friend | | | my | girl | friend | bought | a | goat | | | | |

The above examples constitute a further illustration of the alternation between lows and highs in Ikhin.

9. Conclusion

Tone alternation is a grammatical phenomenon. The study established that, except for noun- numeral construction, an associative H tomorph is a marker of attribution in Ikhin even when it is not segmentally visible. The happenings in Ikhin and other Edoid languages mentioned here, with respect to this phenomenon, imply that even in Proto-Edoid, there is a tonal morpheme (tomorph).

Amayo (1976) accounts for similar changes in Edo (Bini) by postulating floating tones (in the phonological representation) for each noun phrase type identified. Such

floating tones were sometimes derived historically as remnants of a deleted construction in Edo (Egbokhare,1990). Based on the above, it is evident that the H tomorph postulated is responsible for the tonal changes presented in this paper.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

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