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 ísêí. At morpheme boundary in noun- noun construction, the high toned initial vowel of ísêí 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).
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

Ikhin\(^1\) 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 downglides\(^2\).

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. ọbọ́n mosquito
b. ọbọ́n chief
c. ọbọ́n 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>by reduplication</th>
<th>by vowel elision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>input</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. ógò</td>
<td>ógòógò</td>
<td>ógò!ógò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day</td>
<td>dayday</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. àsò</td>
<td>àsòàsò</td>
<td>àsìàsò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>night</td>
<td>everynight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. égè</td>
<td>égèégè</td>
<td>égè!égè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>timetime</td>
<td>everytime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. ọjá étè</td>
<td></td>
<td>ọj!éte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she/he climb mountain</td>
<td>she/e climbs mountain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. ódéélà</td>
<td></td>
<td>ód!élà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she/he buy a cow</td>
<td>she/he buys a cow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. ógbè áki</td>
<td></td>
<td>ógb!áki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she/he kill toad</td>
<td>she/he kills toad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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        ́bù        →        ̀òè́sò̀bù
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N+Modifier</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a. N+ N             | `òè        ísè        ́bù        →        ̀òè́sò̀bù

  leg        cm        doctor        leg of doctor |
| b. N+Possessive     | ibàtà        mè        →        ibàtànémè

  shoe        my        my shoe |
| c. N+demonstrative | ̀òmò        ̀nà        →        ̀òmò̀nà

  child        this        this child |
| d. N+ numeral      | `ábò        ̀eva        →        ́abò̀vá

  hand        two        two hands |
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 rœ 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N + relative clause</th>
<th>CM</th>
<th>+ N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>LL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>ëxùà</td>
<td>îsè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheek</td>
<td>cm</td>
<td>òkpè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a bag which is new</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>ékwásòkpè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>ëtò</td>
<td>îsè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair</td>
<td>cm</td>
<td>òkpè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a hair of palmfruit harvester</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>étósòkpè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>ëkpà</td>
<td>îsè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'skin'</td>
<td>cm</td>
<td>ëkgè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a skin of body</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>ëkpáslégbè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>ëkpà</td>
<td>îsè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skin</td>
<td>cm</td>
<td>ëkè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a skin of stomach</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>ëkpáslékgè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. õè</td>
<td>ise</td>
<td>òèlè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leg</td>
<td>cm</td>
<td>òèselè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>ëtò</td>
<td>îsè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair</td>
<td>cm</td>
<td>ûsò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a hair of head</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>étósùsò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>ëkpà</td>
<td>îsè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skin</td>
<td>cm</td>
<td>ûsò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a skin of head</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>ëkpáslùsò</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

European Journal of Applied Linguistics Studies - Volume 5 | Issue 1 | 2022
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N +</th>
<th>+ DEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LL +</td>
<td>+ LL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### a. LL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>òè</th>
<th>òè Ø</th>
<th>'ònà</th>
<th>òèna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>leg</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>this leg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### b. àè:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>àè</th>
<th>àè Ø</th>
<th>ènà</th>
<th>àènà</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>legs</td>
<td>these</td>
<td>these legs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c. ọbò: ọbò ṭò ọnì → ọbọ̀nì
   doctor that that doctor

  d. èbò: èbò̀ ènì → èbónì
doctors these doctors

  HL + + LL

  e. ákà: ákà ṭònà → ákànà
basket this this basket

  f. ákà: ákà̀ ènà → ákènà
  basket these these baskets

  g. ódì: ódì ṭònà → ódìnà
   wall this this wall

Example 8:

   N + + Poss
   LL + + LL

  a. LL: ọbò̀ ọbò̀ ṭò sò → ọbọ̀sò
      hand his his hand

  b. ábò̀: ábò̀̀ èfè̀ → ábolè
      hand their their hands

  HL + + LL

  c. HL: ákà: ákà̀ sò → ákàsò
      basket his/her his/her basket'

  d. ákà: ákà̀ èfè̀ → ákàlè
      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. ábò̀̀ èvà → ábàvà
      hand two two hands
In Ikhin, the marker of a relative clause ‘ni’ is with a low tone. This relative marker precedes the clause and is itself immediately preceded by the head noun.

Example 10:

\[ N + \text{Rel Marker} \]

\[ LL + \text{Rel Marker} + L \]

a. \( \text{éwè ni mè dè s'hù} \) \( \rightarrow \) \( \text{éwè nì mè dè s'hù} \)
   goat cm I buy die
   the goat which I bought died

b. \( \text{èrù ni mè kò àṣé} \) \( \rightarrow \) \( \text{érù nì mè kò àṣé} \)
   yam cm I plant grow
   the yam which I planted has grown

c. \( \text{ömòhè vèrèòdè s'hù} \) \( \rightarrow \) \( \text{ömòhè nì vèrèòdè s'hù} \)
   man cm come die yesterday
   the man that came yesterday is dead

d. \( \text{ọkpọsò nì mè gbèkùàrè} \)
   woman cm I beat leave
   \( \text{ọkpọsόnímè gbèkwàrè} \)
   the woman that I beat left

e. \( \text{ömòkpọsò nì dèèwèmè sè} \)
   girl cm buy goat my friend
   \( \text{ömòkpọsόnídèwèmọsè} \)
   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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