



AUTOSEGMENTAL ANALYSIS OF TONE AS NEGATION MARKER IN ÌJÈṢÀ DIALECT OF YORÙBÁ

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Abstract

Negation is universal to all languages of the world but the means of marking negation are different from one language to another. This study examines tone as a negation marker in the Ìjèṣà dialect of Yoruba. The objectives of this study are to: examine the process of vowel lengthening and types of tone in Ìjèṣà; enumerate the functions of tone in Ìjèṣà and analyse the operation of tone as a negative marker in the dialect. Data for this study were collected through the Interview method, which is one of the elicitation techniques. Five Ìjèṣà native speakers were interviewed, of whom three were males, while two were females. The autosegmental theory propounded by Goldsmith (1976) is used for the analysis of this study. This study found that Ìjèṣà uses the three tones as the major means of changing positive statements to negative ones in the dialect. The study concludes that tone marks negation in Ìjèṣà through vowel lengthening.

Keywords: *Negation, negative marker, autosegmental, vowel lengthening and Ìjèṣà dialect.*

Introduction

Ìjèṣà is one of the varieties of the Yorùbá language classified under the Kwa subgroup of the Benue-Congo language family of Africa. The people speaking this variety of Yoruba language are also referred to as Ìjèṣà people of Yorùbá. Ìjèṣà is widely spoken in Osun State in the South-Western part of Nigeria. Ìjèṣà spoken communities include: Ìpetu-Ìjèṣà, Ìbòkun, Ìjèbú-Jèṣà, Èrìnjèṣà, Èṣàòkè, Ìlòkò, Ìpéríndó, Èrìnmò, Ìdómìnàsì, Ìwáràjà, Ìmò, Ètìòṅì among others. As a dialect of Yorùbá, Ìjèṣà shares specific features with the standard form. These include word order, segmental, and suprasegmental features. The realisation of negative constructions in Ìjèṣà is partially different from what obtains in its standard form. This difference is the central idea of this study.

The Yorùbá language has no inflexion, meaning it uses lexical items/ constituents to express different grammatical categories, such as tenses, aspects, numbers, and gender, among other uses of inflexion found in languages. For this reason, negations are always expressed with the use of distinct lexical items in Yorùbá sentences. In contrast to this notion, Ìjèṣà a variety of Yoruba has tones as the major means of expressing negation. This study, therefore, intends to analyse tone as a negation marker in Ìjèṣà negative constructions.

Every study of this nature must have its significance and its contribution to knowledge; hence, this study is not exempted from fulfilling this notion. It widens the scope of tone in Ìjèṣà; it contributes to the study of tone by revealing other functions of tone in the dialect which is different from the regular functions in its standard form and other varieties; it serves as a means of documenting an aspect of the phonology of Ìjèṣà; and it will serve as a reference source for further studies on dialectology, phonology and application of autosegmental theory.

Yorùbá, of which Ìjèṣà is a variety, attests to three types of tones. These are low, mid and high tones. These tones, apart from their lexical function in Standard Yorùbá and its varieties, also distinguish between positive and negative constructions of Ìjèṣà. Whereas, negation is expressed in the standard Yorùbá with the use of distinct lexical items such as kò/ò, kì í and má, Ìjèṣà marks negation with the use of ‘é’ and mó, by lengthening the final vowel of the noun subject or verb. Nevertheless, this study examines the use of tone as a negative marker in Ìjèṣà dialect within the framework of autosegmental.



2.1 Negation

Negation is a process in languages in which either a word or an entire sentence is negated, or some constituents of a sentence are negated. Crystal (1980), in Olumuyiwa (2012), defines negation as a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis that typically expresses the contradiction of some or the entire sentence's meaning. It is the process of converting the affirmative to the negative in a language. A word, part of a sentence or the whole sentence can be negated in a language.

Negation is universal to all languages of the world; Shakhzoda (2021) asserts this notion by saying that negation is found in all known languages. It should be noted that the means of marking negation are different from one language to another. According to Veselovska (2009, p. 54), negation can be analysed based on semantic, lexical, phrasal and clausal. Semantic negation covers antonymy relations with opposite meanings. That is, negation can be viewed in different levels of language, such as morphology, syntax and semantics.

The grammatical rules that bind negation are different from one language to another. Following Shakhzoda (2021), every language has its own syntactic, semantic and morphological devices expressing negation. A language can use a lexical constituent for marking negativity, while some languages use suprasegmental features such as tone to mark negations. Examples of languages that use a grammatical word in marking negations in sentences are Yoruba, English, and Hausa, among others. On the other hand, Ìjẹ̀sà dialect of Yoruba is an example of a language that makes use of the suprasegmental feature (tone) as a negative marker in its sentences.

Negation in every language has a function it performs to change an affirmative to a negative. Webber (2014) classifies these functions of *negation* into making distinctions, correcting assumptions, simply using formulaic structures, and expressing dissatisfaction, disagreement, cautious stance, unfulfilled expectations, and wholehearted agreement. Which means it gives opposite meanings in every context of expression in languages.

2.2 Vowel Lengthening

Vowel lengthening occurs exclusively in the final syllable of the word and not in the syllable's penultimate and antepenultimate position (Hajek, Stevens and Webster 2007). According to Odden (2011), vowel length is the perceived length of a vowel sound: the corresponding physical measurement is duration, which may often be traced to assimilation. That is, a lengthened vowel is pronounced as long as twice as a short vowel, which is peculiar to many natural languages.

Morrison (2011) asserts that vowel lengthening may be derived from phonological processes: vowel coalescence and compensatory lengthening, which can be conditioned by phonological features of the surrounding sounds. She mentions Bena as an example of a language where long vowels may arise through coalescence. This occurs when vowel adjacency is derived at a morpheme boundary. Going by Akinlabi (2004) and Morrison's description of vowel lengthening, Yorùbá attests to this phenomenon.

Morrison uses phonemic contrastive vowel length to explain why adjacent vowels should be analysed as long vowels. She also observes that phonemically long vowels are restricted to certain syllable positions that are language-specific. This means the conditions that trigger vowel lengthening are not universal; rather, they are different from one language to another.

Contexts are the major determinant of vowel lengthening. Let's take English, for instance; the environment is the major factor that determines the duration of producing some vowels in English words. i.e, when a vowel comes before a voiceless consonant, it produces the shortest duration; when a vowel comes before a voiced consonant, it is said a little bit longer; and when a vowel comes at the end of a syllable and is produced for the longest duration.

2.3 Ìjẹ̀sà Segmental System

Vowels are sounds of a language that are realised with no obstruction of airflow from the vocal tract. Ìjẹ̀sà dialect has eleven phonemic *vowel* sounds, which comprise seven oral vowels and



four nasal vowels. The seven oral vowels are [a, e, ε, i, o, ɔ, u] and four nasal vowels [ũ, ã, õ, ã̃]. All the oral vowels in this dialect can be found at the word-initial in Ìjẹ̀ṣà distribution. Consonant sounds are sounds produced with an obstruction or constriction of airflow from the vocal tract. They are the sounds produced with the complete or partial stoppage of air being breathed out. Ìjẹ̀ṣà consonants are eighteen as shown below:

[kp, b, t, d, k, g, f, s, ʃ, h, gb, dʒ, m, n, l, r, j, w]

2.4 Tones in Ìjẹ̀ṣà

The tone is one of the suprasegmental features which can perform lexical or grammatical functions (or both) in a language. Variations of tone can be used to distinguish the meaning of lexical items with the same form. When tone changes the meaning of a lexical item, it is said to have performed a lexical function. Tone performs grammatical function if it is used to give information such as tense, numbers, negation, etc in a language. Awwal (2010, p.13-19) in Awwal (2021) explains that every syllable in a tone language has its assigned pitch of voice or tone. That is, some syllables are produced on a high pitch, and others are produced on a low pitch. Considering Awwal's explanation, the mid tone was not mentioned, whereas some languages have mid tone as part of their tone system. However, the syllable produced on the high pitch of the voice is referred to as a high tone, while the syllable produced with a low pitch of the voice is referred to as a low tone.

Following Bamgbose (1967), Adewoyin (2014) and Adekunle and Ogunkunle (2020), there are three level tones in standard Yorùbá and its variants, of which Ìjẹ̀ṣà is not exempted. These are high(^), low(˘) and mid(-)tones. The high and low tones appear on every nucleus in the syllable of Ìjẹ̀ṣà, and the mid tone is unmarked in the dialect but appears on nasal syllabic consonants [m, n]. These tones mark out each syllable and disambiguate otherwise ambiguous words, i.e words with the same segments. Apart from the lexical function of tone in Ìjẹ̀ṣà, it has an additional function, which is grammatical. Variation of tone on a lexical form can mark different meanings in Ìjẹ̀ṣà. Let us consider the data below:

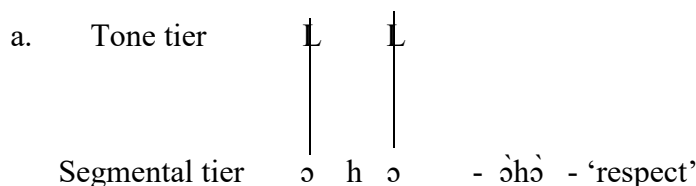
Data 1a

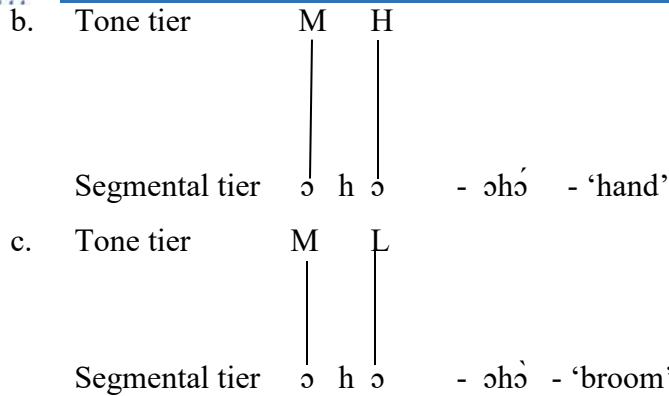
- i. ɔhó ‘hand’
- ii. ɔhò ‘respect’
- iii. ɔhò ‘broom’

Data 1b

- i. ùgbà ‘time’
- ii. ùgbá ‘garden egg’
- iii. ugbá ‘calabash’
- iv. ugba ‘two hundred’

Using the autosegmental framework, the above lexical function of tone can be formalised in a non-linear manner as follows:



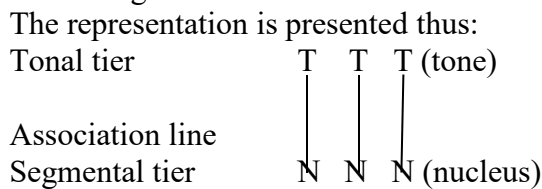


2.5 Theoretical Framework

The framework chosen for this study is Autosegmental Phonology. It is a framework of phonological analysis, proposed by Goldsmith (1976). Autosegmental is a non-linear approach to phonology that allows tone and vowel harmony to be independent and broaden beyond individual segments (consonants and vowels). According to Garba (2021), the autosegmental theory is generally attributed to certain fundamental constraints which postulate the association lines never cross; and in the same way, vowels link to vowels and consonants link to consonants directly, but no skeletal node can be linked to two different segments on different tiers.

Autosegmental phonology was initially developed to address the shortcomings of previous theories (generative phonology and metrical phonology). One of the shortcomings of the previous theories listed above is the challenge of developing an adequate theory for a tone which eventually gave birth to this particular theory. Its immediate source of inspiration was the work of Williams (1971) and Leben (1973); these were the first to introduce non-linear structures into generative phonology in their treatments of tone systems in West African languages. In the model proposed by these writers, underlying tones were represented on separate tiers from the feature matrices representing vowels and consonants; they were subsequently merged with these matrices by Tone Mapping Rules that apply in the course of derivation, creating single-tiered representations in surface structure.

The principal innovation of autosegmental phonology, as presented in Goldsmith (1976), was the idea that tone mapping rules do not merge tonal and segmental representations, but associate their elements utilising formal entities known as Association lines, which must not cross. In this framework, phonological representations consist of parallel tiers of phonological segments, both tonal and segmental.



This study, therefore, will explore the phenomenon of vowel lengthening and tone, which serves as negative markers in the Ìjèṣà dialect of Yorùbá under the autosegmental framework.

3.1 Research Methodology

Data for this study were collected through structured and unstructured interview methods, which are some of the elicitation techniques. The researcher also used the observation method when observing mere conversations of Ìjèṣà people in the field. Five Ìjèṣà native speakers were interviewed, of whom three were males while two were females. These interviews were conducted with the use of the Ibadan 400-word wordlist, SIL 1600 wordlist and different positive and negative statements. All the respondents’ responses were recorded on a sound recorder for proper transcription.



4.1 Data Presentation

The data for this study were grouped into three main categories, which comprise groups (A-C). Each category has a different sub-division as seen below:

Data group A

Context of ‘é’ and its Negative Marker

This section is divided into two: habitual negation and unhabitual negation.

A1. Habitual Negative Marker

A habitual marker is used to express an action that is carried out frequently and repeatedly. In marking the habitual negative constructions, Ìjẹ̀ṣà uses e/é in the positive position, with expressions such as:

Affirmative:

Ìjẹ̀ṣà

- a). é kàwé
3sg:hab read
‘he/she reads’
- b). é gbálè
3sg:hab sweep
‘he/she sweeps’
- c). é sire
3sg:hab play
‘he/she plays’
- d). é foṣo
3sg:hab wash
‘he/she washes clothes’
- e). é sùn
3sg:hab sleep
‘he/she sleeps’

A2. Negative Form:

Ìjẹ̀ṣà Dialect

- a). é e kàwè
3sg:Neg:hab read
he/she does not read
- b). é e gbálè
3sg:Neg:hab sweep
he/she does not sweep
- c). é e sire
3sg:Neg:hab play
‘he/she does not play’
- d). é e foṣo
3sg:Neg:hab wash clothes
‘he/she does not wash clothes’
- f). é e sùn
3sg:Neg:hab sleep
‘he/she does not sleep’

As seen in data A1 and A2 above, the vowel ‘é’ in the affirmative form represents both the subject pronoun and habitual marker. While the subject has a high tone, the habitual negative marker is mid tone pitch. The mid tone is a marker for negative construction in this context.



Data A3 (Un-habitual Negative Marker)

Affirmative:

Ìjèsà Dialect

- a). é mu
3sg. take
'he/she took it.'
- b). é ɔ
3sg. go
'he/she went.'
- c). é jà
3sg. fight
'he/she fought'
- d). é pé
3sg. complete
'It's completed'
- e). é ra ata
3sg. buy pepper
'he/she bought pepper'

Negative:

Ìjèsà Dialect

- a). é è mu
3sg Neg take
'he/she didn't take it.'
- b). é è ɔ
3sg Neg go
'she/he didn't go.'
- c). é è jà
3sg Neg fight
'he/she didn't fight'
- d). é è pé
3sg Neg complete
'It is not complete'
- e). é è ra ata
3sg Neg buy pepper
'he/she didn't buy pepper'

In data A3, the vowel 'é' serves as both the subject and the negative marker. In addition, the tone on the vowel is high with an additional low tone after the high tone.

Data Group B

Context of Final Tone in Subjects (Nouns) Negative Marker

When nouns occur as subjects of negative sentences, they are followed by kò or kì í in standard Yorùbá, while the final vowel of the subject is lengthened with a high tone in habitual construction tense in Ìjèsà Dialect.

Data B1 (Habitual)

Ìjèsà Dialect

- a). Kólá á sùsé.
Kólá Neg/hab work
Kólá doesn't work
- b). Bólú ú puró.
Bolú Neg/hab tell lies



- 'Bolu doesn't tell lies'
c). Kúnlé é pọ̀nmi
Kúnlé Neg/hab fetch water
'Kúnlé doesn't fetch water'
d). Bùkọ́lá á kàwé
Bùkọ́lá Neg/hab read
'Bùkọ́lá doesn't read'
e). Adé é sùn
Adé Neg/hab sleep
'Ade doesn't sleep'
f). Ureolúwa á jẹ̀ eja
Ureolúwa Neg/hab eat fish
'Ureolúwa doesn't eat fish'

Data B2 (Un-habitual)

- a). Sẹ̀yí ì mò
Sẹ̀yí Neg Know
'Sẹ̀yí didn't know'
b). Ùfẹ̀ è rà bàtà
Ùfẹ̀ Neg buy shoe
'Ùfẹ̀ did not buy shoe'
c). Bọ́lá à gbọ̀
Bọ́lá Neg hear
'Bọ́lá did not hear'
d). Adé è jẹ̀un
Adé Neg eat
'Adé did not eat'
e). Olú ù sùn
Olú Neg sleep
'Olú did not sleep'

The major difference between declarative and habitual negative construction in the above data is that the final vowel of the noun subject is lengthened with a falling tone, which serves as the negative marker in the dialect.

Data Group C

Context of 'Mó' as a Negative Marker

'mó' is used in the context of Ìjèsà imperative negative constructions.

Examples:

Ìjèsà Dialect

- a). mó wa
don't come
'don't come'
b). mó sùn
don't sleep
don't sleep'
c). mó gbe e don't carry it
'don't carry it'
d). mó lọ
don't go
'don't go'
e). mó rà á
don't buy it



f). 'don't buy it'
mó tà á

don't sell it

'don't sell it'

Studying the data group (C) carefully, it is clear that the dialect makes use of the grammatical word in marking negation in the context of imperative negative constructions.

4.1.2 Data Analysis

Negation in Ìjẹ̀sà dialect can be divided into two forms: the grammatical and the phonological. Following Awobuluyi (1978) and Bamgbose (2010), negative markers in Standard Yorùbá are five in the grammar of the language. These are 'kò', 'kì í', 'kó', 'kì í ẹ̀' and 'má'. 'kò' and 'kì í' occur in ordinary declarative statements, má occurs in imperative sentences, while kó' and 'kì í ẹ̀' are used as a negative marker in focus constructions. In Ìjẹ̀sà, the imperative form is 'mó', which is a variant of má in standard Yorùbá, and is widely used, but 'kò and kì í' are never used in the dialect. Instead, Ìjẹ̀sà uses the three tones to mark out negative constructions from positive ones in context.

The data obtainable for this research will be analysed under the framework of autosegmental analysis. The analysis will be in two ways: firstly, rules on negative marking in Ìjẹ̀sà and secondly, the analysis of Low Tone Negative Marker Insertion in Ijesa sentences.

1. Rules on Negative Marking in Ìjẹ̀sà.

The vowels of the first and the third person singular pronouns are usually changed to 'e' with a high tone; the surface vowels of the pronouns are lengthened with a low tone. This low tone marks the negative and is hereby referred to as the Low Tone Negative Marker (LTNM) henceforth. This tone is isolated because it is the only marker of the difference between positive and negative sentences in Ìjẹ̀sà.

Examples:

4. Declarative

a). M M
mo ga 'I am tall'

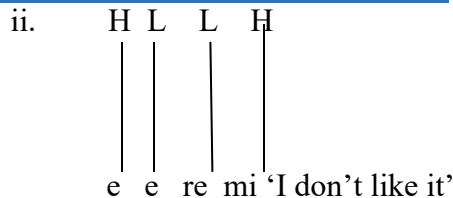
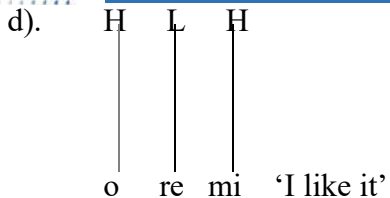
ii. H L M
me e ga 'I am not tall'

b). M L
mo gba 'I agree'

ii. H L L
me e gba 'I don't agree'

c). M H M M
mo mi fọfọ 'I'm washing cloth'

ii. H L MM
me e fọfọ 'I'm not washing cloth'



In these examples, the vowel of the subject in each positive sentence is realised as 'e' in a negative sentence. In addition, the mid tone on such subjects is changed to a high tone as in (4a), (4b) and (4c). The high tone of the positive sentences is retained in the negative ones in all cases of the negative sentences. The LTNM must be preceded by a high tone and may be followed by any tone.

In Ìjèṣà dialect, when the vowel of the subject pronoun in negative construction is /e/, the vowel of the verb must be /a/, /ɛ/ or /ɔ/. The rule of vowel harmony is observed in the choice of /e/ as a negative marker.

Examples:

Ìjèṣà Dialect

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 5 a. mé e ra bàtà | ‘I didn’t buy shoes’ |
| b. mé e pa eḍiye | ‘I didn’t kill a fowl’ |
| c. é è fẹ | ‘he/she doesn’t want it’ |
| d. é è sùn | ‘he/she didn’t sleep’ |
| e. mé è fọṣọ | ‘I didn’t wash clothes’ |
| f. mé e wọlé | ‘I didn’t enter’ |

In the above examples, the vowel /e/ of the subject is in harmony with the initial syllable of the verbs in Ìjèṣà. /a/ in (5a & b), /ɛ/ in (5c), /ũ / in (5d) and /ɔ/ in (5e & f). The last vowel is /u/, and it co-occurs with /e/ as shown below:

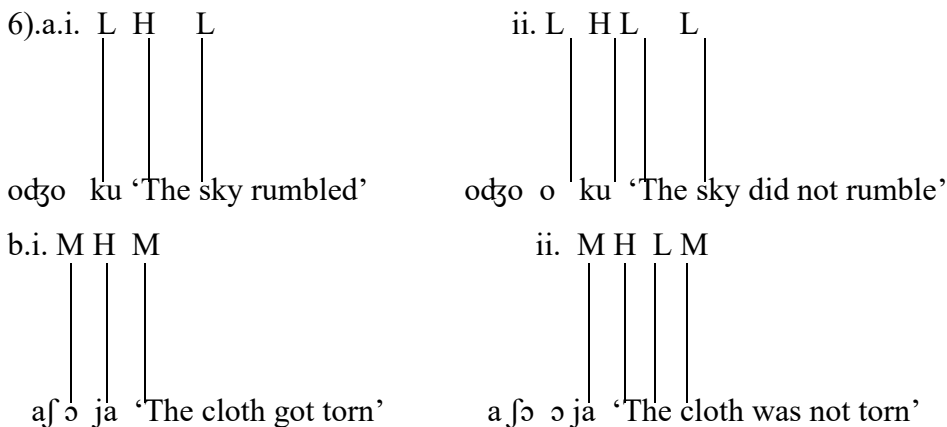
Ìjèṣà Dialect

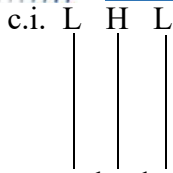
- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 6). a. i. é e puró | she didn’t tell lies |
| b. i. mé e bu | I didn’t abuse him |
| c.i. mé e lulù | I didn’t beat drums |

2. Low Tone Negative Marker (LTNM) Insertion

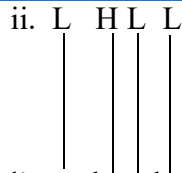
LTNM is inserted either after the high tone vowel of the subject or before the initial vowel of the verb. The final vowel of the noun subject is lengthened to have the LTNM.

Examples of LTNM insertion after the final vowel of the noun subject in Ìjèṣà:





ugba hu 'The garden egg germinated'



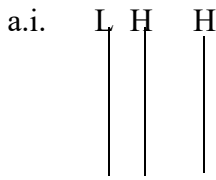
ugba a hu 'The garden egg didn't germinate'

From the examples above, we can conclude that the LTNM is adjoined to the final high tone vowel of the noun in the subject position in this context of Ìjẹ̀ṣà negative markings. We can formalise this rule:

∅ → L/H_# (That is, LTNM is inserted after the final vowel of the subject noun)

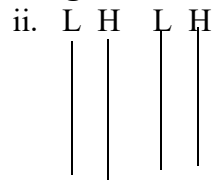
Examples of LTNM insertion before the initial vowel of the verb in Ìjẹ̀ṣà dialect:

8. Positive

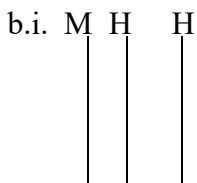


koko kpõ 'Cocoa is ripe'

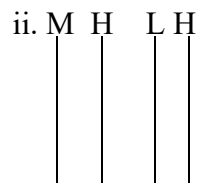
Negative



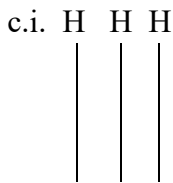
koko kpõ ò 'Cocoa is not ripe'



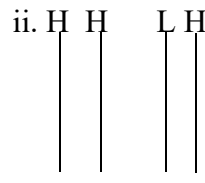
u l e wo 'The house collapsed'



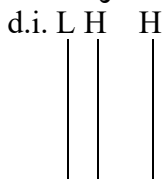
u l e wo o 'The house didn't collapse'



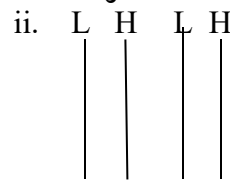
teḍḗ ku 'Téjú died'



teḍḗ ku u 'Téjú didn't die'



ufé wa 'Úfé came'



u f é wa a 'Úfé didn't come.'

From the examples above, we can have a general rule that the LTNM is inserted before the high vowel of the verb. This is formalised as follows:

∅ → L/_ H (That is, LTNM is inserted before the verb with high tone in.)

Ìjẹ̀ṣà lengthens the final vowel of the verb with the insertion of a low tone in the position of the high tone of the verb.

4.1.3 Findings

This study can come up with the following findings as the outcome of the autosegmental analysis of negation in Ìjẹ̀ṣà dialect of Yoruba:

- i. 'mó' is the only grammatical word that marks negation in Ìjẹ̀ṣà sentences, while the tone is used in other contexts of negative markings in Ìjẹ̀ṣà sentences
- ii. Ìjẹ̀ṣà uses 'e' to mark habitual negative constructions.



- iii. Ìjẹ̀sà uses 'è' to mark un-habitual negative constructions.
- iv. The LTNM is adjoined to the final high tone vowel of the noun in the subject position.
- v. The high tone of the positive sentences is retained in the negative ones in all cases of the negative sentences.
- vi. In Ìjẹ̀sà dialect, when the vowel of the subject pronoun in negative construction is /e/, the vowel of the verb must be /a/, /ɛ/ or /ɔ/. The rule of vowel harmony is observed in the choice of /e/ as a negative marker in the dialect.

5.1 Conclusion

This paper examines tone as a negation marker in the Ìjẹ̀sà dialect of Yorùbá. An attempt was made to review different related literature, such as negation, tone, vowel lengthening and the autosegmental framework, which are the central ideas of the paper. This paper also sheds light on the sound inventory of Ìjẹ̀sà. Ìjẹ̀sà dialect of Yorùbá has three-level tones as the major means of changing positive sentences to negative ones. This study concludes that the Low Tone Negative Marker is inserted after or before a high tone in the Ìjẹ̀sà dialect. However, the three tones in the dialect mark negation through vowel lengthening in Ìjẹ̀sà sentences.

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