

The Tense System of Ìyàgbà

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Abstract

Tense is the linguistic representation of time. Extant studies on tense in Yorùbá linguistics fail to differentiate tense from aspect while some other linguists deny the existence of tense as a grammatical category. Another prominent position is that high tone syllable (HTS) marks non-future tense. This study therefore, investigates tense system in Ìyàgbà dialect of Yorùbá with a view at placing the grammatical category in proper perspective by describing its notion, identifying the tense markers, accounting for their variants and describing the derivation of Tense Phrase (TP) in both negative and affirmative constructions. The theoretical framework adopted is Minimalist Program. Data comprised structured interview guided by the 400 Ìbàdàn wordlist and Ìbàdàn syntactic checklist with 5 competent speakers of Ìsánlú variety of Ìyàgbà community. The data were subjected to interlinear glossing, syntactic and qualitative analyses. In Ìyàgbà dialect, the basic forms of tense markers are: *á* for future tense in affirmative construction; *à* for future tense in negative clause and abstract or covert marker for non-future tense in both negative and affirmative clauses. Tense Phrase projects from Tense head and acts as probe that triggers the subject Determiner Phrase to its (TP) specifier for the valuation of the phi-features of the Determiner Phrase. The high tone syllable is proposed as markers of agreement, third person short pronouns, and encoder of negative features on short pronouns as opposed to the non-future tense-marking claim. The investigation supports the modification of the hierarchical order of the infinitival layer as: Negative Phrase>Tense Phrase>light verb Phrase >lexical Verb Phrase.

Keywords: *Ìyàgbà, negative, affirmative, phi-features, high tone syllable (HTS)*

Introduction

Tense (T)¹ - the head of Tense Phrase (TP), is the locus of the tense properties of a finite clause. T is affixal, implying that it has Person and Number features. It must also contain DP at its subject position (Spec, TP). It is therefore a probe that minimally searches for a matching subordinate goal that can host its features.

Tense has been described in literature as the linguistic representation of time and as a deictic category indicating the location of an event, state or process of action vis-à-

¹ Abbreviations and notations used: *E: Event time; S: Speech time, R: Reference time; [+FUT]: Future tense; [-FUT]: Non-future tense; [+NEG]: Negator/Negative expression; [-NEG]: Affirmative clause; TVO: Tense Verb Object ; T:Tense; TP: Tense Phrase; vP: light verb Phrase; VP: lexical Verb Phrase; Neg⁰: Neg head; NegP: Negative Phrase; HTS: High Tone Syllable; MTS: Mid tone syllable; HT: High tone; ISG/2SG/3SG: 1st/2nd/3rd/ person short pronoun; 1PL/2PL/3PL: 1st/2nd/3rd person short pronoun; UG: Universal Grammar; MP: Minimalist Program; Spec, TP: Subject of a clause; DP: Determiner Phrase.*

vis a fixed point of view. The point of view refers to the time that the sentence is uttered while the speech time is also known as the moment of speech. Reichenbach, (1947), Comrie (1985) as echoed by Hamm and Bott, (2018) describe tense and aspect with three basic parameters:

- (1a) Speech time (S): This refers to the time or moment an utterance is made.
- (b) Event time (E): This refers to the time that the event indicated in the utterance takes place.
- (c) Reference time (R): This refers to the time against which E is measured. This is more apt for the analysis of aspect.

Tense has dimensions that are realised as absolute tense, past tense, present tense, and future tense. The simplified analysis is demonstrated as shown: T is past when S comes after E; T is present when S and E overlap and T is future when the S precedes E as the data below exemplify:

- (2a) Dàda θ ʒolè lánà
Dada [-FUT] steal of yesterday ‘Dada stole yesterday’
- (b) Olú á ré lóla
Olú FUT go of tomorrow ‘Olú will go tomorrow’

In (2a), E takes place earlier than S implying that the utterance is past. The dialect has no verbal morphology or inflection that denotes T hence, [-FUT] is abstract or covert- θ. The presence of ‘temporal adverb’ *lánà* ‘yesterday’ does not overtly express tense but indicates time location (Schmidtke, 2006). In the case of (2b) however, the E comes after S, the utterance is therefore indicating future tense as indicated by *á* ‘will’.

Three forms of absolute tense have been recognised for languages that demonstrate tense system. They are: present, past and future. The morphologically rich languages may have inflections to mark all the forms while less rich ones may have singular form for two or more tense markers. For instance, a language can combine past and present tense. Such a language will have [+FUT] versus [-FUT] typology. In the same vein, the language that combines present and future tense will be typified as a past and non-past language. A tenseless language is the language that represents the three tenses with one form. We exemplify with Mao Naga and Kannada²:

- Mao Naga:
- (3a) ai izo ocu vuta le
I today home go IRR ‘I will go home today’
 - (b) Pfo zhu-e
he good PRED ‘He is good/He was good’
- Kannada:
- (4a) avanu manege ho:-d-a
he home go-PAST-3SG.msc ‘He went home’

² Mao Naga language belongs to Angani-Pochuri group of Tibeto-Burman language family and it is spoken by Mao Naga tribe of Manipur in India (Kapesa, 2017) Kanara otherwise known as Kanarese or Canarese is the Southern branch of the Dravidian language family, spoken by the Kanara people of Southern India (Thompson, 2016).

- (b) avanu manege ho:gu-tt-a:ne
 he home go-NONPAST-3SG.MSC
 ‘He goes home habitually’/ ‘He will go home’ (Bhat, 1999:67-8).

In (3a), Mao Naga marks [+FUT] by a lexical item *le* while it has a uniform form *-e* for its past and present tenses (see 3b). This is an example of [+FUT] versus [-FUT] system. In (4a) and (b), Kannada language collapses present and future tense with a singular form *ho* thereby typifying its tense system as non-past versus past. Looking at the data above cross linguistically, Ìyàgbà dialect shares similarity in tense characterisation with Mao Naga. It is therefore assumed to operate [+FUT] versus [-FUT] system

The position advanced above differs from the viewpoint of Dòsùmú, (2010) who identifies *á* or *à* ‘will’ as markers of [+FUT] and abstract or covert morpheme (\emptyset) for [-FUT] in affirmative or positive (-NEG) constructions; *é* or *ùn* ‘will’ as [+FUT] markers in [-NEG] and *é* or high tone as [-FUT] markers in negative (+NEG) clauses. This implies that Ìyàgbà dialect collapses the [+FUT] and [-FUT] marking in [+NEG] into *é* (one marker) as exemplified below:

- (5a) Olú á re oja
 Olú FUT go market ‘Olu will go to the market’
- (b) Oba é è ra aṣo
 King NEG FUT buy cloth ‘The king will not buy cloth’
- (c) À yún/re oja
 IPL go market ‘We will go to the market’
- (d) É hùn
 3SG+NEG sleep ‘He/she did not sleep’

A cursory examination of Dòsùmú’s, (2010) proposal reveals misinterpretation of data and the non-recognition of the interplay of the phonological processes of cliticisation, contraction and assimilation when tense markers interact with DP nominal, short pronouns and NEG. The interaction changes the basic forms of the tense markers and the short pronouns resulting in multiple allomorphs for both of them. For not taking the observation above into cognizance, Dòsùmú, (2010) erroneously identifies *à* ‘will’ as [+FUT] marker in [-NEG] expression (as in 5c), *é* HT ‘will’ in (5d) as [-FUT] marker in [+NEG].

This study therefore investigates the tense system of Ìyàgbà dialect by giving adequate consideration of the interplay of the phonological processes as nominal, short pronouns and NEG elements interact with the tense markers as basis for determining the basic forms of the tense markers, and for accounting for their (tense markers’) allomorphs in both [+NEG] and [-NEG] constructions.

Ìyàgbà Dialect

Ìyàgbà dialect is predominantly spoken in three local government areas (Mòpà-Mùrò, Yàgbà East and Yàgbà West) in the southern axis of Lókója of Kogi state (Arókoyò, 2005). There are also pockets of the speakers of the dialect in Kóro, Erùkú and Agboro (of Kwara state), and by the people of Ìpaò, Òkè Àkò and Irele (of Èkiti state). They are

claimed to have migrated to these locations from Ìyàgbà settlements of Kogi state (Òtítójà, 2002: 17-18).

Ìyàgbà dialect is classified as North Eastern Yorùbá in conjunction with other Okun sub-group (Ajónḡólò, 2005:301 and Awóbùlúyì, 1998). The speakers of the dialect share high degree of mutual intelligibility with themselves (Akíntóyè, 2010; Arókoyò, 2005 and Òtítójà, 2002:17-18).

This study draws data from the Ìsánlú variety of the dialect using structured interview guided by the 400 Ìbàdàn wordlist and the Ìbàdàn syntactic checklist with 5 competent speakers whose ages range between 25 and 75. The data were subjected to interlinear glossing, syntactic and qualitative analyses. Like her standard Yorùbá, Ìyàgbà does not mark tense with verbal morphology but conveys its tense system with morpheme.

Other similar syntactic features that Ìyàgbà share with the SY include: head first parameter, Tense Verb Object (TVO) word order, and mid tone syllable (HTS) phenomena as exemplified with the data below:

- (6a) gbẹ́ ‘dig’ gbẹ́ ‘dry’ gbẹ́ ‘plant’
- (b) Oko kékeré
 farm small ‘small farm’
- (c) ile e kékere
 house MTS kékeré ‘Kekere’s house’
- (d) Oyè kó re oja
 Oyè FOC+HTS go market ‘Oyè went to the market’

As can be observed from above, the various tonal features of the dialect in (6) demonstrate the lexical tones of three levels namely: high (/), mid (-), and low (\) which account for the contrast in the meanings of the lexical items as in (6a); (6b) illustrates the head first parameter of the dialect as the nominal head – *oko* ‘farm’ precedes its adjective – *kékeré* ‘small’; the MTS – *e* intervenes between the nominal head and the nominal qualifier in (6c). The MTS has been variously referred to as associative marker (Adéwólé, 1986:83), genitive or possessive morpheme (Ajíbóyè, 2004 and Bámgbóşé, 1990:119-123); or as prosthetic vowel affixed to noncanonic nouns (Awóbùlúyì, 2013). The HTS illustrated as in (6d) has been referred to as agreement or concord marker (Ajónḡólò, 2005, and Bámgbóşé (1986) and as [-FUT] marker by Awóbùlúyì, (1978:49, 78; 2013:145-7) and Dòsùmú, (2010). Another syntactic feature is the TVO word-order of the TP as attested by (6d).

The study explores the basic forms of the tense markers and their variants in both [-NEG] and [+NEG] constructions to determine the status of HTS in the tense system of Ìyàgbà among others.

Statement of the Problem

Tense is a feature of Universal Grammar (UG) and a core functional constituent of a clause. Its conceptualisation is therefore imperative for understanding not only the temporal information of an event, process or state of things but also to the understanding of the displacement of categories for feature interpretability.

Yorùbá linguists could be grouped into two broad schools of thought in accordance with their views as to the recognition and non-recognition of tense as a grammatical category. Awóyalé, (1986:3) for instance, claims that SY does not inflect to reflect reference to the time of speaking prompting him to conclude with Oyèláràn, (1982:36) that tense is not a grammatical category in the language.

The second school of thought posits that tense is attestable in Yorùbá despite the absence of the morphological indication of the opposition of present-past. The proponents of this school include: Omamor, (1982:17), Bámgbóṣé, (1986:31, 1990:67); Awóbùlúyì, (1978:49, 2013:145-7), Fábùnmi, (1998:35-38; 2006:92-105, and 2009:260) and Yusuff, (2006:84). These linguists however expressed divergent opinions about the tense markers. Awóbùlúyì, (1978:49, 2013:145), Bámgbóṣé, (1986:26-8, 1990:167-9) and Yusuff, (2006:84) agree that *á*, *yòò*, *máa* ‘will’ mark [+FUT] in positive sentence while Bámgbóṣé (1978:31) and Yusuff, (2006:84) claim that *níí* ‘will’ marks [+FUT] in [+NEG] expressions. To Awóbùlúyì, (1978:49, 2013:143) *á* ‘will’ marks “future or habitual action”. The marker of [-FUT] is abstract (Bámgbóṣé, 1978:167-9) and Yusuff, (2006:84); and HTS³ (Awóbùlúyì, 1978:49, 2013:145-7 and Dòsùmú, 2010). The data below in SY buttress the positions above.

(7a)	Olú	á/yòò/má a	lọ oko	
	Olú	FUT/FUT/FUT	go farm	‘Olu will go to the farm’
(b)	Olú	kò níí	lọ oko	
	Olú	NEG FUT	go farm	‘Olú will not go to the farm’
(c)	Ayò	ó	lọ oko	
	Ayò	-FUT	go farm	‘Ayo did not go to the farm’

From the data above, the [+FUT] conveyer are: *á*, *yòò*, *máa* ‘will’ in [-NEG] while *níí* is [+FUT] marker in [+NEG] (see 7a-b), while HTS is purported to mark [-FUT] in [-NEG] as in (7c) (by Awóbùlúyì, 1978:49-50)

Another confusing issue is the mix-up of aspect with tense systems. Awóbùlúyì (1978:49) for instance, refers to *á* as the marker of “habitual or future action” while Bámgbóṣé, (1986:31) also demonstrates the mix-up by identifying future tense, conditional past tense, continuous tense, habitual tense and unmarked tense as types of simple tenses in the positive expressions.

The study draws data from the affirmative and negative constructions to clarify the above positions and to explicate tense system in Ìyàgbà vis-à-vis basic tense markers, their allomorphs and the derivation of TP.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study is aimed at investigating the tense system of Ìyàgbà within the general purview of MP. Specifically, the objectives of the study include:

- (8i) To describe the tense system of Ìyàgbà
- (ii) To identify her tense markers and account for the differing forms of its basic form.
- (iii) To explain the derivation of TP within the clausal structure.

³ See the positions of Adéwólé, (1986:83), Ajóńgólò, (2005), Bámgbóṣé, (1986) and Oyèláràn (1982) disputing HTS as [-FUT] marker.

Following from the above, the investigation is poised to probe: what the typology of Ìyàgbà tense system is; what the basic forms of Ìyàgbà tense markers are; how to account for their differing forms and how TP is derived and projected in the clausal structure.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical orientation adopted in this study is Minimalist Program (MP) as developed from the work of Chomsky, (1993 and 1995). MP is a “research agenda” that is still in its “embryonic stage”. The perennial problem of how kids acquire grammatical competence despite the impoverished primary linguistic data that serve as input to the process of language acquisition is traceable to the innate biological endowment of the children with a set of principles of grammar construction otherwise known as Universal Grammar (UG).

Specific grammars are derived by specifying the parameter values on the principles of the UG. MP seeks to explicate the language acquisition of children with grammar that simplifies and makes the process easy. The economy considerations employed include: methodological economy, substantive economy and representational economy (Hornstein, et al 2005).

To MP, language is a perfect system of optimal design that generates structures that interface perfectly with speech and thought. The components of the grammar are: lexicon, syntactic or computational component, Logical Form (LF) and Phonetic Form (PF). The syntactic structures are formed by picking a lexical item from the lexicon by operation Select, combining the constituent with another constituent by operation Merge in a pairwise fashion until the numeration is exhausted. The constituents of the syntactic structure that have unvalued phi-features like Case, Neg, Person, Number are attracted to the Spec of their appropriate functional heads by operation Move that copies and deletes the moved constituent. The resultant structure serves as input into the LF and PF components (Radford, 2009:14).

MP is apt for this study as it accounts for the displacement of DP subject of various types from their insitus or across Spec, TP and Spec, NegP to exhibit the varying forms of tense forms in both positive and negative constructions. Furthermore, the specific grammar of Ìyàgbà dialect could be derived from the general principles by fixing values on the open parameters of the Universal Grammar.

Non-future tense in affirmative clause with DP nominal and short pronoun subjects

This section examines the interaction between [-FUT] marker and nominal and short pronoun constituents at the Spec, TP position with a view at identifying the basic form of the [-FUT] marker and its allomorphs in [-NEG] constructions. [-FUT] denotes present or past tense as exemplified with the following data:

- | | | | | |
|-------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|---|
| (10a) | Olú
Olú | rí
see | ewó
money | ‘Olú found money’ |
| (b) | Ọbá
King | dé
wear | áde
crown | ‘The king wore a crown’ |
| (c) | Gómìnà
Governor | dẹka
pour | hilẹ.
on ground | ‘The governor poured maize on the ground’ |

In all the examples in (10a) – (c), the verbs are dynamic or action types. It is assumed that E precedes S. The sentences are therefore assumed to be abstractly or covertly marked as past tense. The HTS identifiable in (10b) does not evidently mark tense as sentences with or without HTS similarly express past tense. The sentences consisting adjectivisable or the stative verbs can either be interpreted as past or present tense depending on the context (Awóbùlúyì, 1978:71) as the data below further buttress:

- (11a) Ọmọ nká ga
Child the tall ‘The child is tall’
- (b) Ilé mọ dára
House this good ‘This house is/was good’

We further explore the interaction of tense with short pronoun. The pronoun of Ìyàgbà dialect like (SY and many languages) is a functional category lacking lexical semantic content of its own. Instead, it takes its lexical semantic content from its antecedent (Radford, 2009:4). The pronouns of the Ìyàgbà dialect that can assume Spec, TP position are as shown below:

(12)

Person	Sg.	Pl.
1st	Mò ‘I’	À ‘We’
2nd	Ọ ‘You’	È ‘You’
3rd	Ó ‘He/she/It’	Ọn ‘They’

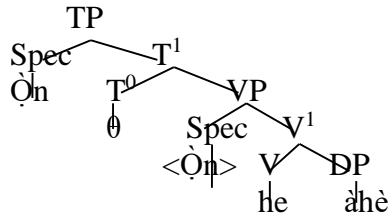
The above pronouns are expressed in sentences as exemplified below:

- (13a) Mò rí ewóo
1SG see money ‘I found money’
- (b) À rí ewóo
1PL see money ‘We found money’
- (c) Ọ he àhè
2SG cook feast ‘You made a feast’
- (d) È pa ẹran
2PL kill meat ‘You killed meat’
- (e) Ó he àhè
3SG cook feast ‘He made feast’
- (f) Ọn⁴ pa ẹran
3PL kill meat ‘They killed an animal’

The data above are assumed to be [-FUT] in [-NEG] clauses. With the exception of Ó 3SG as in (13e), all the other short pronouns occupying Spec, TP in (13) bear low tone. All the above examples with or without HTS, are assumed to be captured in past tense thus implying that the ‘time of event’ precedes the ‘moment of speech’. This being the case, [-FUT] is marked covertly or abstractly.

We pick (13f) as a representative sample to validate the claim that tense is an attestable grammatical category in Ìyàgbà. Leaving aside the detail of the VP structure, the external DP-*Ọ̀n* 3PL is specified for Per, Num and unvalued Case. It assumes a suitable goal to a c-commanding T functional head hence, the DP moves to the Spec, TP so that its Nominative Case could be licensed by T⁰. The checking procedure “makes it possible to account for the relevant facts by means of filter conditions at LF” (Hornstein, et al, 2005:288). After the checking relation had ensued, the interpretable features of the Pronoun DP are deleted so that the derivation does not crash at the LF. The tree diagram below further clarifies:

(14)



The Extended Projection Principle (EPP) of the GB model obligatorily makes a demand on all finite clauses to have a subject. In MP point of view, the EPP has been further reviewed in the recent phase-based framework to obligatorily demand that heads must have their specifiers filled. This clausal requirement is fulfilled as the specifier of functional T⁰ is filled by *ọ̀n* ‘3PL’.

Further proof to demonstrate that the finite clause above has tense is proved by examining the tense feature of non-finite clause as the sentences below exemplify.

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|--------|------|------|----------------------------|
| (15) | *Ọ̀n | láti | se | isé | |
| | 3PL | to | do | work | *They to do work |
| (16) | Ọ̀n | gbà | láti | se | isé |
| | 3PL | accept | to | do | work ‘They agreed to work’ |

In (15a) the DP – *ọ̀n* ‘they’ assumes the Spec, TP of an infinitival clause whose non-finite tense cannot match the formal features of its DP specifier against its own weak Case features hence, the derivation crashes as the Nominative Case of the Spec, TP could not be valued. Conversely in (16), the DP – *ọ̀n* ‘3PL’ could not be valued by the weak tense feature of the infinitival clause. It moves to the Spec, TP of the matrix clause where its Nominative Case is matched with the appropriate feature of the functional T⁰. The derivation converges at the interface. It could be therefore pointed out that the reason why (15) crashes and (16) converges is because the tense features of the non-finite clause cannot license the formal features of its Spec, TP whereas the tense features the finite clause values and licenses the phi-features of its Spec, TP.

The non-future tense in negative clause with DP nominal and short pronoun subjects

The DP nominal and short pronoun in the Spec, TP interact with [-FUT] and [+NEG] markers to bring about varying forms of the NEG element which if not properly analysed may lead to misrepresentation [-FUT] marker in [+NEG] constructions.

Negation is a feature of UG with varying parametric realisations across languages (Ìlòrí and Oyèbádé, 2012:25). In some languages, negation is marked by morphology of verbs. (Stump, 2001:28-29 cited in Ìlòrí, 2012:25). There are also languages that express negation with the aid of morphemes (Yorùbá inclusive). The lists of the negative morphemes vary from one scholar to the other. According to Awóbùlúyì (1978:125-129, 2008:117-119, 2013:151-153), negative morphemes include: *Kò\ò* ‘not’, *máà/má* ‘do not’, *kì/i, tì* ‘impossible’. In the same vein, Bámgbóşé, (1986:20, 1990:216-217) identifies *kò/ò, kì, máà/má* as negators.

Ìyàgbà dialect expresses NEG in [-FUT] with negative morpheme as exemplified below.

- (17a) Fálàná é gbó tira re
Fálàná NEG hear of body 2SG ‘Fálàná did not mind his own business’
- (b) Ayé é gùn ti òpá ibon
Life NEG straight like pole gun ‘Life is full of ups and downs’
- (c) Ìgbà é ló ti òréré
Time NEG go like endless ‘No condition is permanent’
- (18a) Èmi é yó
1SG LONG PRN NEG full ‘I am not satisfied’
- (b) Ìgha í yó
1PL LONG PRN NEG full ‘We are not satisfied’
- (c) Ìwọ ó yó
2PL LONG PRN NEG full ‘You are not satisfied’.
- (d) Èghin é yún ilé isin
2PL LONG PRN NEG go house worship
‘You did not go to the place of worship’
- (e) Òun é pókiki
3SG LONG PRN NEG make noise ‘He did not make noise’
- (f) Ìghan ón pókiki
3PL LONG PRN NEG make noise ‘They did not make noise’.

From the data above, the basic form of NEG is *é-* as buttressed by examples-(17b-c) and (18a) and (e). NEG in [-FUT] construction displays varying forms as *é* in (18a) and (e); *í* in (18b) *ó* in (18c); *é* in (18d) and *ón* in (18c). These variants are allomorphs that could be accounted for by the vowel harmony system (VHS) of [+/- ATR] pattern. Assuming the correctness of the above, *é*-NEG or its variants purported to be HTS does not mark [-FUT]; its marker is covert.

The exemplification of the various forms that NEG can assume when it co-occurs with pronouns is shown with the aid of the following data.

- (19a) Mé rí ewó
1SG+ NEG see money ‘I did not see money’

(b) \acute{A} $d\grave{e}$ $\acute{a}de$
 1PL+ NEG wear crown ‘We did not wear crowns’

(20a) \acute{O} $g\grave{u}n$ $\acute{y}an$
 2SG+NEG pound yam meal ‘You did not pound yam’

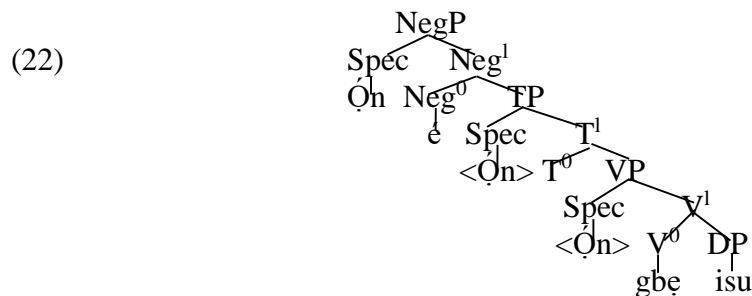
(b) \acute{E} $k\grave{o}$ $\acute{i}le$
 2PL+ NEG build house

(21a) \acute{E} $h\grave{u}n$
 3SG+NEG sleep ‘He/she/it did not sleep’

(b) $\acute{O}n$ $gb\grave{e}$ isu
 3PL+NEG plant yam
 ‘They did not plant yam’

The data above are the convergent negative constructions of *Ìyàgbà* dialect. In all the examples, the pronouns are the external arguments while the vowel *é* is assumed to be the basic form of NEG as earlier indicated. *M*-1SG (in 19a), *Á*-1PL (in 19b) *Ó* – 2SG (in 20a) *É*- 2PL (in 20b) *é*- 1SG (in 21a) *ón*- 3PL encliticise or fuse with *é* NEG resulting in the conflation of the two elements into the form of each of the pronouns. The high tone feature of the negative form consistently displaces the low tone on each of the pronouns. The distinguishing feature between the affirmative and negative constructions in *Ìyàgbà* dialect is that while the pronouns of the affirmative sentences bear low tone, their negative counterparts bear the displaced high tone of the NEG with the exception of the 3SG (as in 21b) that consistently bears high tone.

The high tone is that of the conflated NEG by encliticisation and it encodes the Neg features on the short pronouns. Encliticisation can be described as a process whereby a word is attached to another in a leech-like fashion (Radford, 2009:99). The pronouns in (19a) to (21) are contiguous to the NEG thereby making the fusion of the two elements to be void of barriers as the tree diagram below further illustrates:



A cursory examination of the tree diagram shows that *ón* – 3PL at the Spec, TP position is contiguous to *é*-NEG, its adjacent ‘neighbour’ to the left without any barrier thus fulfilling the condition for encliticisation. As the diagram above further shows, the VP shell derives *ón gbẹ isu* ‘they plant yam’. The DP – *ón* specifies for Per, Num, unvalued Neg and Case features. The T as a probe attracts *ón* ‘3PL’ to its specifier position thereby checking the formal features of *ón* ‘3PL’ for Nominative Case. The Neg feature of the DP is also valued by the Neg⁰ in order to license it for negativity. Assuming the correctness of the above analysis, and in outright contrast to the view of Dòsùmú, (2010) the HTS is

ruled out as the [-FUT] marker in [+NEG]. For the avoidance of doubt, the marker of [-FUT] in [+NEG] is abstract or covert.

Another observation about the above tree diagram is that NegP is higher in the clausal structure than the TP. This calls for the modification of the hierarchy of projection of clausal constituents from the *TP>NegP>vP>VP* of Adger, (2003) to *NegP>TP>vP>VP*. This observation is in consonance with the modification of clausal structure proposed in Ọdúntán, (2000:183) and Ajónǵòlò, (2005:309).

Future tense in affirmative construction with nominal and short pronouns as subject

The interaction between the nominal and short pronouns in the Spec, TP position is undertaken so as to account for the variants of [+FUT] in [-NEG] clause. The [+FUT] denotes time-reference of which S precedes E thus having the implication that the E takes place in the future. The data below further exemplify.

- (23) Olú á ré/yún oja
 Olú FUT go market ‘Olu will go to the market’
- (24) Èmi á ré oja
 1SG LONG PRN FUT go market ‘I will go to the market’

As can be observed in examples (23) and (24) above, the marker of [FUT] in [-NEG] clause where the external argument is either nominal or long pronoun DP is *á* ‘will’.

The [+FUT] marker displays variant forms when the short pronouns occupy the Spec, TP position of an affirmative clause as the following data exemplify:

- (25a) Mǎ⁴ re oja
 1SG+FUT go market ‘I will go to the market’
- (b) À yún/ré oja
 1PL+FUT go market ‘We will go to the market’
- (c) Wǎ ré oja
 2SG+FUT go market ‘You will go to the market’
- (d) È ré oja
 2PL+FUT go market ‘You will go to the market’
- (e) Ó á yún
 He/she FUT go ‘He/she/it will go’
- (f) Ọn yún
 3PL+FUT go ‘They will go’

⁴ The [+FUT] is proposed as *á* ‘will’ as evident in (23-25). The fusion of *á* ‘FUT’ with ISG in (23a) results in *mǎ* ‘1SG+FUT’ with the vocalic feature *a* of [+FUT] being retained. Its short pronoun in [-FUT] is as shown

Mò re oja
 1SG go market ‘I went to the market’.

The short pronouns in (25b), (d), and (f) are similar with those of their counterparts that are [-FUT] in [-NEG] clauses in (13b, d and f). This creates temporal ambiguity.

In all the examples in (25a-f), *á* ‘will’ is the basic marker of [+FUT]. The allomorphs of [+FUT] are the byproduct of the fused morphological properties of the NEG with pronouns. The following variations are noticeable:

- (26i) The tone of the short pronouns is low (tone) with the exception of 3SG in (25e) that is consistently high.
 (ii) The [+FUT] marker fuses or encliticises with the pronoun.
 (iii) It is further assumed that the form of the [+FUT] *á* ‘will’ loses its HT by conflation to the short pronouns. This is assumed to be linguistic device of eliminating ambiguity between the high-tone bearing pronouns of [+FUT] in [+NEG] expressions

The future tense system in negative sentences with DP nominal and short pronouns as subjects

The marker of [+FUT] interacts with NEG, DP nominal and short pronouns in Spec, TP position to yield basic form as *á* ‘will’ and multiple allomorphs in short pronouns as exemplified below:

- (27a) *Ọba* *é* *è* *ra* *asọ*
 King NEG FUT buy cloth ‘The king will not buy cloth’
- (b) *Mẹ* *ẹ̀n* *ra* *asọ*
 1SG LP+NEG FUT buy cloth ‘I will not buy cloth’

In considering the data above, the basic form of [+FUT] in [+NEG] construction is proposed as *à* ‘will’. The differing form of the FUT functor in (27b) could be accounted for by the phonological process of progressive assimilation triggered by the NEG with the [+FUT] marker being the target.

The interplay of the short pronouns with FUT and NEG elements is further examined with the following data:

- (28a) *Mẹ* *ẹ̀n* *ra* *asọ*
 1SG+NEG FUT buy cloth ‘I will not buy cloth’
- (b) *Á* *à* *ra* *asọ*
 1PL+NEG FUT buy cloth ‘We will buy cloth’
- (c) *Ọ* *ò* *ra* *asọ*
 1SG+NEG FUT buy cloth ‘You will not buy cloth’
- (d) *Ẹ* *è* *ra* *asọ*
 2PL+NEG FUT buy cloth ‘You will not buy cloth’
- (e) *É* *è* *ra* *asọ*
 3SG+NEG FUT buy cloth ‘He/she will not buy cloth’
- (f) *Ọn ọ̀n* *ra* *asọ*
 3PL+NEG FUT buy cloth
 ‘They will not buy cloth’

From (28a) - (f) the forms of the [+FUT] are: *èn*, *à*, *ò*, *è*, *è*, and *òn* all indicating futurity. It is proposed that the basic form of the [+FUT] in [+NEG] is *-à* 'will'. The variants could be accounted for by the phonological process of assimilation of the conflated or fused short pronouns and the NEG elements with the FUT *à* 'will'.

Conclusion

The work describes the tense system of Ìyàgbà dialect with particular focus on the basic forms of [+FUT] and [-FUT] markers, their allomorphs in [+NEG] and [-NEG] clauses as well as the derivation of TP using MP as the theoretical orientation. Data comprise structured interview with competent speakers of Ìsánlú variety of the dialect. The analysis of the data reveals the following:

- Ìyàgbà operates [+FUT] versus [-FUT] system.
- The marker of [-FUT] in both [+NEG] and [-NEG] is covert or abstract (\emptyset).
- The basic forms of the [+FUT] markers are: *à* in [+NEG] and *á* in [-NEG]. The NEG is encoded on short DP pronouns as high tone in [+NEG] and as low tone in [-NEG].
- There are variations in the forms of the markers of [+FUT] in SY and Ìyàgbà. Ìyàgbà basically marks [+FUT] with *à* in [+NEG] and *á* in [-NEG] constructions while SY marks [+FUT] with *yóò/óò/á/máa* in [-NEG] and *ní í* in [+NEG].
- There is observed temporal ambiguity in the tense system of [+FUT] in [-NEG] as in (25b, d, f) and [-FUT] and [-NEG] clauses (as in 13b, d, f) when *À* '1PL', *È* '2PL' and *Òn* '3PL' occupy Spec, TP.
- Contrary to the view of Oyèláràn (1982:36), and Awóyalé (1986), tense is an attested grammatical category in Ìyàgbà and by extension, in the SY.
- Tense system either abstract (as in the [-FUT]) or overt, shares the same features with the tense system of many morphologically rich languages. The following features are attestable:
 - Tense is a probe that attracts DP to its Spec, TP for phi-features' checking.
 - Tense is required for the fulfilment of the EPP (i.e. each finite clause must have its Spec, TP filled by DP)
 - It has P(erson), N(umber) and Case features.

The study upholds the modification of I-layer as proposed in Ajónḡólò, (2005), Oḡúntán, (2000) and Ìlòrí and Oyèbádé, (2012) to the effect that hierarchy of projection of the [+NEG] construction should be: NegP>TP>vP>VP as against the proposed clausal structure of TP>NegP>vP>VP of Adger, (2003).

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