

Negative Morphemes in Nenwe Dialect of Igbo

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Abstract

One putative view in literature on Igbo negation is that the widest distributed negative marker *-ghI* (*-ghi/-ghi*) is attached to the root of lexical or auxiliary verbs. This paper aims at examining the basic characteristics of negation in Nenwe with respect to the position of the negative morphemes. The paper adopts descriptive analysis and data for the study were gathered from primary sources. Findings show that contrary to what obtains in Standard Igbo, the widest distributed negative morpheme in Nenwe *-hU* (*-hu/hu*) is attached to the root of the lexical verbs only and not on the auxiliaries. The implication of this is that Nenwe dialect has not witnessed any negative shift unlike dialects like Echie that had witnessed total negative shift from the lexical verbs to the auxiliary verbs. The paper also observes that in Nenwe dialect, negation marking exhibits rich morpho-syntactic and phono-syntactic processes; for instance, the difference between the affirmative simple future tense construction and the progressive aspect type lies in the tone of the verb to which the future and progressive marker *là-* is attached. However, their negative counterparts have similar tones thereby having their meanings deduced from the contexts of use. The paper equally shows that tense, aspect and mood markers are neutralized when negated in the dialect in a manner similar to what obtains in Standard Swahili, Lamnso and Standard Igbo.

Keywords: *Negation; Morpheme; Nenwe dialect; Igbo; Negative shift.*

Introduction

The investigation on negation has attracted attention from scholars from various disciplines. Hence, negation has been defined in various ways by different scholars. Lyons (1977:768) for instance, defines negation as a “denial of an assertive proposition or a predication that a proposition is untrue”. Dahl (1979:80) defines negation in terms of the truth value of two sentences by the application of a negative morpheme to deny the truth value of a proposition. In his view, “a negation marker is such that in converting one sentence (S_1) into another sentence (S_2), it brings about a state where S_1 is true if S_2 is false, or S_2 is true if S_1 is false”. Payne (1992:75) states that the primary function of negation is “to negate the positive declarative main clauses of the language” However, Lobner (2002:193) is of the view that ‘negation is best captured with the term polarization, which means a partition of everything into two opposed alternatives, yes or no and true or false’. Lobner adds that polarization is not restricted to declarative sentences. It also applies to other types of sentences such as interrogative and imperative sentences. Crystal (2008:323) defines negation as “a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence’s meaning”. This implies that the negative morpheme may either negate part of the sentence or the whole of the sentence. These scholars are saying the same thing in various ways.

In Igbo, negation marking exhibits rich morpho-syntactic and phono-syntactic processes. Igbo is one of the three major languages in Nigeria. The other two are Hausa and Yoruba. Igbo is classified as a New Benue-Congo Language (Williamson and Blench 2000), spoken in South Eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The different dialects of Igbo have different ways of expressing negation because negation is a universal grammatical phenomenon that is parametrically realized cross-linguistically. The Igbo dialect under study here is Nenwe. Nenwe dialect is spoken in Aninri Local Government Area of Enugu State. It is one of the dialects of Igbo that are highly under described compared to other dialects like Onicha, Owere, Ngwa, Ohuhu, Igbouzo, Echie, and so on. To the best of my knowledge, no scholarly work has been done on this dialect. The purpose of the study is to examine the basic characteristics of negation in Nenwe, with respect to the position of the negative morphemes. The motivation for the study is based on the observation that in Nenwe dialect, the widest distributed negative morpheme is attached to the root of the lexical verb. This is contrary to the popular view in the literature that negation is marked in Igbo by the attachment of the negative morpheme to the root of the lexical or auxiliary verbs (Emenanjo, 1987; Oluikpe, 1979; Uba-Mgbemena, 1981; Ndimele, 1995, 2004; Uwalaka, 1997; Obiamalu, 2014).

The study is purely a descriptive one. Data were collected from primary sources. Primary data were obtained from four informants through interview method. Interviews were conducted with prominent native speakers of Nenwe. They are Chief Gabriel Ejim, a retired accountant general of Enugu State, who is about 70 years old and retired Air Commodore Ben Ugwueke, who is 54 years old. These informants were born

and bred in Nenwe and visit Nenwe regularly while working in Enugu and Lagos respectively. The other two informants were Mrs. Theresa Ogbonna and Mrs. Helen Nwabueze, who are 60 and 50 years old respectively. These women were born, grew up and equally married in Nenwe, where the dialect is spoken. In addition, the author's intuitive knowledge as a native speaker of Nenwe dialect as well as a scholar in Igbo linguistics was used to corroborate the interview results.

The tone marking convention adopted in this study is the convention propounded by Igwe and Green (1967), Williamson (1979) and Emenanjo (1987). This convention recommends that all syllables with high tones should be unmarked, while all syllables with low and down-step tones should be marked. The paper is organized in three sections. Section one is the introduction. Section two is the use of negative morphemes to mark negation in Nenwe dialect. However, reference will be made to the Standard Igbo and other dialects, where necessary, for comparative reasons. Section three is the conclusion of the study.

Negative marking strategies in Nenwe

There are many ways of expressing negation in languages. Dahl (1979) illustrates different languages based on three strategies: the use of negative particles (affixation), independent lexical item and prosodic melody (tonal change). Similarly, Ndimele (2004) exemplifies some Igbo dialects with four strategies: negative inflectional affixes, inherently negative auxiliary verbs, tonal alternation and contrastive focus; while Obiamalu (2014) claims that Igbo employs only two negative marking strategies: affixation and tonal melody. Every human language, therefore, possesses some systematic means of polar contrast of a sentence (Lobner, 2002). In other words, though the generated meaning and functions of negation are relatively uniform or universal, the formal tools employed exhibit a considerable degree of variation cross-linguistically. Based on the motivation of this paper as mentioned in section (1) above, the paper is not going to discuss all the strategies of marking negation in Nenwe dialect, such as the use of independent negative lexical items, tonal alternation and the scope of negation. This paper focuses only on the use of negative morphemes, which Dahl (1979) and Ndimele (2004) termed use of negative particles and use of negative inflectional affixes respectively.

The use of negative morphemes in Nenwe

The morpheme is the grammatical segment employed in the study of the structure or form of the word. This study sees a morpheme as the minimal, meaningful, indivisible segment of grammatical description used in the analysis of words, and negation as already mentioned in section (1) above, as the contradiction of some or all of a sentence's meaning (Crystal, 2008). Negative morpheme, therefore, is any morpheme that is used to convert affirmative sentence to negative sentence. The use of negative morphemes, which are mainly suffixes, is the main strategy for expressing negation in Igbo. In Standard Igbo, the negative morphemes are attached either to the root of the verbs or to the auxiliary verbs, but the data for this study show that in Nenwe dialect, the negative morphemes are not found on the auxiliary verbs.

The widest distributed negative marker in Nenwe

The widest distributed *negative* marker in Nenwe dialect is the suffix *-hU* (*-hu/-hy*). The variants are allomorphs of the morpheme that are phonologically conditioned. This negative suffix has the widest distribution than other negative markers in the dialect. This is because it is used with all tenses and aspects. The negative suffix can be attached to the main verb, stative and non-stative verbs but are not found on the auxiliary verbs. The following illustrate the use of the negator:

- | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| 1a. | O | shìrù | edè. | (Past Affirmative) |
| | 3sg | cook-rV(past) | cocoyam | 'He/she cooked cocoyam'. |
| b. | O | shīhū | edè. | (Past Negative) |
| | 3sg | cook-NEG | cocoyam | 'He/she did not cook cocoyam' |
| 2a. | Ọ | tàrù | alụ. | (Past Affirmative) |
| | 3sg | eat-rV(past) | meat | 'He/she ate meat'. |
| b. | Ọ | tāhū | alụ. | (Past Negative) |
| | 3sg | eat-NEG | meat | 'He/she did not eat meat' |
| 3 a. | Àda | vùrù | ivù. | (Stative Affirmative) |
| | Ada | fat-rV(stative) | fat | 'Ada is fat'. |

- b. Àda evùhù ivù. (Stative Negative)
Ada Vpre-fat-NEG fat ‘Ada is not fat’.
- 4 a. Òbi nwèrù egō. (Stative Affirmative)
Obi have-rV (stative) money ‘Obi is wealthy’.
- b. Òbi enwēhū egō. (Stative Negative)
Obi Vpre-have-NEG money ‘Obi is not wealthy’.
- 5 a. Ọ là-ède ẹkwụkwọ (Progressive Affirmative)
3sg AUX-Vpre-write book ‘He/she is writing a book’.
- b. Ọ̄ là-èdehu ẹkwụkwọ (Progressive Negative)
3sg AUX-Vpre-write-NEG book ‘He/she is not writing a book’.
- c. *Ọ lāhū-ède ẹkwụkwọ
3sg AUX-NEG-Vpre-write book ‘He/she is not writing a book’.
- 6 a. Ha là-èshi nrī (Progressive Negative)
3pl AUX-Vpre-cook food ‘They are cooking food’
- b. Ha alá-èshihu nrī (Progressive Negative)
3pl Vpre-AUX-Vpre-cook-NEG food ‘They are not cooking food’.
- c. *Ha alāhū-èshi nrī
3pl Vpre-AUX-NEG-Vpre-cook food ‘They are not cooking food’

In examples 1-4, (a) examples are the affirmative sentences while the (b) examples are their negative counterparts. In (1b) and (2b), the negative suffix (-*hu/-hu*) is attached to the root of the non-stative verbs: *shi* ‘cook’ and *ta* ‘eat’, while in (3b) and (4b), the suffix is attached to the root of the stative verbs: *vu* ‘fat’ and *nwe* ‘have’. However, in (5b) and (6b), where the constructions have auxiliary verbs, the negative suffix is also attached to the root of the verbs, and not to the auxiliary verbs. This is contrary to the popular view in the literature on Igbo negation that negation is marked by the attachment of the widest distributed negative morpheme to the root of the lexical or auxiliary verbs (Emenanjo, 1987; Oluikpe, 1979; Uba-Mgbemena, 1981; Ndimele, 1995, 2004; Uwalaka, 1997). In Nenwe dialect, attaching the negative suffix to the auxiliary verb derives semantically odd sentences. This renders example (5c) and (6c) unacceptable in the dialect.

It is pertinent to note that evidence from Echie, another dialect of Igbo also contradicts the view in the literature on Igbo negation that negation is marked by the attachment of the general negative morpheme to the root of the lexical or auxiliary verbs. According to Ndimele (2004) and Onugha (2016), the widest distributed negative morpheme in Echie is -V (harmonizing) negative marker. This negative marker “co-occurs only with auxiliary verbs or copulative (linking) verbs” (Ndimele 2004:942). Below are examples from Onugha (2016):

- 7 a. Ọ gáà èrì rí b. Ọ díì ríè rí
3sg Fut-NEG eat food ‘S/He will not eat food’ 3sg COP-NEG eat food ‘S/He did not eat food’

In example (7a), the harmonising -V marker in Echie co-occurs with the future tense auxiliary, *gá-* (will), while in (7b), it co-occurs with a copulative or linking verb. Based on this observation, Ndimele postulates that “Echie has witnessed total negative shift from lexical verb to the auxiliary verb, and not the other way round” (Ndimele, 2004:942). He adds that Kimenyi (1979) has made a similar observation in Kinyarwanda. Based on Ndimele’s postulation, this study proposes that Nenwe dialect has not witnessed any negative shift at all, since the widest distributed negative morpheme co-occurs only with the lexical verbs. The table below summarises the syntactic distributions of the widest distributed negative morphemes in Standard Igbo, Nenwe and Echie.

Table 1: Syntactic Distribution of the Widest Distributed Negative Morpheme in Standard Igbo, Echie and Nenwe.

Dialect/Widest Distributed Negative Marker	Lexical Verb	Auxiliary Verb
Standard Igbo (-Ghi)	Yes	Yes
Echie -V (Harmonising)	No	Yes
Nenwe (-Hu)	Yes	No

The behaviour of the general negative markers in Standard Igbo, Echie and Nenwe varies. In standard Igbo, it can co-occur with lexical or auxiliary verbs. In Echie, only the auxiliary and copulative verbs can host it while in Nenwe, only the lexical verbs can host it. This calls for further studies on the behaviour of the widest distributed negative marker in other dialects of Igbo in other to find out if other dialects have similar behaviour with Echie and Nenwe.

Another interesting observation in examples (1- 4) above concerning the behaviour of negative morphemes in Nenwe dialect is that the verb that hosted the rV-past¹ and the rV-stative suffixes in examples (1a-4a) lose them when the widest distributed negative suffix (-hU) is attached as seen in examples (1b-4b). This observation is in line with Morava (1977), Baertsch (2001) and Ndimele's (2004) findings in Standard Swahili, Lamnso and Standard Igbo respectively that the presence of negative suffix causes the loss of inflectional endings such as the tense marker. Worthy of note in the data for this study is the behaviour of the subject NPs and the verbs in negative construction. If the negative sentence has a noun or a plural pronoun as its subject NP, the verb takes a verbal prefix (Vpre) together with the negative suffix (-hU) as seen in *evùhù* 'not fat' in sentence (3b) and in *enwēhū* 'does not have' in sentence (4b), but if the sentence has a singular pronoun as its subject NP, the verb does not take the verbal prefix (Vpre), it appears only with the negative suffix (-hU) as seen in *sīhū* 'not cook' in sentence (1b) and in *tāhū* 'not eat' in sentence (2b). However, if the construction has an auxiliary verb and a singular pronoun as its subject NP, the auxiliary does not take the verbal prefix as seen in *la-èdehu* 'is not writing' in example (5b), but if the construction has a noun or a plural pronoun as its subject NP, the auxiliary verb attracts a verbal prefix as seen in *alà-èshihu* 'is not cooking' in example (6b).

The negative simple future tense marker

The future tense marker in Nenwe is *là-* 'will'. It is an auxiliary verb which, in the affirmative, expresses simple future. When this auxiliary co-occurs with the verb, the verb root takes the participle verbal prefix E-, which could be phonologically conditioned as 'e-/a-'. This prefix is attached to the verb root to realise the participle form of the verb that co-occurs with the future tense auxiliary. To negate a simple future tense construction in Nenwe dialect, the general negative suffix *-hU* (*-u/-y*) is attached to the participle form of the verb and not to the future tense auxiliary as is obtainable in the Standard Igbo. Consider the following Nenwe dialect examples:

- 8 a. Chinwè là-èdje avjā (Future Affirmative)
Chinwe FutAUX-Vpre-go market 'Chinwe will go to the market'
- b. Chinwè alà-èdjehu avjā (Future Negative)
Chinwe Vpre-FutAUX-Vpre-go-NEG market 'Chinwe will not go to the market'.
- 9 a. Chilèdu là-àzà ulò (Future Affirmative)
Chiledu FutAUX-Vpre-sweep house 'Chiledu will sweep the house'
- b. Chilèdu alā-āzāhū ulò (Future Negative)
Chiledu Vpr-FutAUX-Vpre-sweep house 'Chiledu will sweep the house'.
10. a. Ọ là-abjia echi (Future Affirmative)
3sg FutAUX-Vpre-come tomorrow 'He/she will come tomorrow'.
- b. Ọ là-àbjiahū echi (Future Negative)
3sg FutAUX-Vpre-come-NEG tomorrow 'He/she will not come tomorrow'.

It is observed in examples (8b-10b) that the negative suffix in Nenwe dialect is hosted by the main verb and not by the auxiliary. In addition, if the auxiliary is preceded by a noun, there is a harmonising verbal prefix (a-) as seen in (8b) and (9b), however, this verbal prefix is absent when a singular pronoun precedes the future tense auxiliary as seen in example (10b). The former observation is contrary to what is obtainable in the Standard Igbo, where the negative suffix is always hosted by the auxiliary *ga-* as seen in the following examples:

- 11 a. Chinwè gà-àga ahjā (Future Affirmative)
Chinwe FutAUX-Vpre-go market 'Chinwe will go to the market'
- b. Chinwè àgaghī àga ahjā (Future Negative)
Chinwe Vpre-FutAUX-NEG Vpre-go market 'Chinwe will not go to the market'.

12. a. Ọ gà-abĩa echi (Future Affirmative)
3sg FutAUX-Vpre-come tomorrow 'He/she will come tomorrow'.
- b. Ọ̄ gaghĩ àbĩa echi (Future Negative)
3sg FutAUX-NEG Vpre-come tomorrow 'He/she will not come tomorrow'.

In Standard Igbo as seen in examples (11b) and (12b) above, the negative suffix *-ghĩ* is always hosted by the future tense auxiliary verb *ga-*. In addition, when the negative suffix is attached to the auxiliary verb, there is a harmonizing verbal prefix attached to the auxiliary verb. However, the harmonizing prefix is absent when a singular pronoun precedes the future tense auxiliary as seen in example (12b).

The negative progressive aspect marker

In Nenwe dialect, the auxiliary *là-* marks both simple future tense as seen in section (21.2) above, as well as the progressive aspect. To negate an affirmative construction that expresses progressive aspect, the widest distributed negative suffix *hU-* is attached to the verb and not to the auxiliary as explained in the simple future tense sentences in section (2.1.2) above. The difference between the simple future tense construction and the progressive aspect type lies in the tone of the verb, which the auxiliary is attached to in the affirmative. But in their negative counterparts, the meaning is deduced from the context of use. Let us differentiate the simple future sentence and the progressive aspect using example (7) above:

- 13 a. Chinwè là-èdje avjā (Future Affirmative)
Chinwe FutAUX-Vpre-go market 'Chinwe will go to the market'
- b. Chinwè alá-èdjehu avjā (Future Negative)
Chinwe Vpre-FutAUX-Vpre-go-NEG market 'Chinwe will not go to the market'.
- 14 a. Chinwè là-èdje avjā (Progressive Affirmative)
Chinwe ProgAUX-Vpre-go market 'Chinwe is going to the market'
- b. Chinwè alá-èdjehu avjā (Progressive Negative)
Chinwe Vpre-ProgAUX-Vpre-go-NEG market 'Chinwe is not going to the market'.

We can see that the difference between the future affirmative sentence in (13a) and the progressive affirmative in (14a) is the tone on the lexical verb, which the auxiliary *la-* is attached: *là-èdje* 'will go' and *là-èdje* 'is going'. However, the tones on their negative counterparts are the same. This implies that the future and the progressive meanings are deduced from the contexts. As explained in (2.1.2) above, to negate a progressive aspect construction, which is similar to the future tense construction in the dialect, the general negative suffix *-hU* (*-u/-u*) is attached to the participle form of the verb and not to the progressive aspect auxiliary as is obtainable in the Standard Igbo.

The negative perfective aspect marker

The negative perfective aspect verb form in Nenwe dialect is marked by the suffix *-behu*. This suffix can be attached to any lexical verb, particularly the non-stative verbs. It has a peculiar structure compared to other negative suffixes in Nenwe dialect. Others are monosyllabic but the negative perfective aspect suffix is not only disyllabic, it is also bi-morphemic. Its bi-morphemic nature causes it to express two different notions: the first morpheme (*-be*) expresses completed action, while the second morpheme (*-hu*) expresses negation. Below are examples of perfective aspect verb forms and their negative counterparts:

- 15a. Ọ sawo ẹkwà
3sg wash-Perf cloth 'He/she has washed cloth'
- b. Ọ sàbèhù ẹkwà
3sg wash-Perf-NEG cloth 'He/she has not washed cloth'
- 16 a. Ọ shiwo nrī
3sg cook-Perf food 'He/she has cooked'
- b. Ọ shibèhù nri
3sg cook-Perf-NEG food 'He/she has not cooked'.

- 17 a. Òbi ènwewo egō
Obi Vpre-have-Perf money 'Obi has got money'
- b. Òbi enwèbèhù egō
Obi Vpre-have-Perf-NEG money 'Obi has not got money'.
- 18 a. Ha àmawo mmā
3pl Vpre-be beautiful-Perf beauty 'They have become beautiful'
- b. Ha amàbèhù mmā
3pl Vpre-be-beautiful-Perf-NEG beauty 'They have not become beautiful'

From the above examples, it is observed that the verb roots which host the negative perfective aspect marker lose the perfective aspect marker (-wo) before the attachment of the negative perfective suffix (-*behu*) as seen in (15b) – (18b). Also, it is observed that both the perfect aspect suffix (-wo) and the negative perfective suffix (-*behu*) are not phonologically conditioned as observed in the general negative suffix (-*hU*) in section (2.1.1) above.

The behaviour of the subject NPs and the verbs in negative construction as explained in the previous sections is also observed here. If the negative sentence has a singular pronoun as its subject NP, the verb does not take the verbal prefix (Vpre); it appears only with the negative perfective suffix (-*behu*) as seen in *sàbèhù* 'has not washed' and *shìèhù* 'has not cooked' in sentence (15b) and (16b) respectively, but if the sentence has a noun or a plural pronoun as its subject NP, the verb takes a verbal prefix (Vpre) together with the negative perfective suffix (-*behu*) as seen in *enwèbèhù* 'has not got' and *amàbèhù* 'have not become' in sentences (17b) and (18b) respectively.

The negative imperative mood marker

The negative imperative mood in Nenwe is marked by –shI (-shi/-shì). This suffix can be attached to verbs whether they are stative or non-stative verbs. Below are examples:

- 19 a. Nwùò mēç
drink-Imp wine 'drink wine'.
- b. Anwūshī mēç
Vpre-drink-NEG wine 'Do not drink wine'.
- 20a. Rie nrī
Eat-Imp food 'Eat some food'
- b. Erīshī nrī
Vpre-eat-NEG food 'Do not eat some food'.
- 21 a. Ulū tèè egwū
2pl dance-Imp dance 'You people should dance'
- b. Ulū etēshī egwu
2pl Vpre-dance-NEG dance 'You people should not dance'.

Observe from the above imperative examples (19a-21a) that the imperative mood marker (Imp), which is an open vowel suffix (-*ø* in *nwùò* 'drink + Imp; -*e* in *rie* 'eat + Imp; -*e* in *tèè* 'dance + Imp), disappears when the negative imperative mood, –shI (-shi/-shì) is attached as seen in examples (19b-21b). The verb where the negative imperative suffix is attached also takes a harmonizing vowel prefix (Vpre), e-/a- together with the negative imperative marker as seen in *anwūshī* 'do not drink', *erīshī* 'do not eat' and *etēshī* 'do not dance' in examples (19b), (20b) and (21b) above. It is also observed that an imperative construction in Nenwe dialect can have an overt subject, if the constituent in the subject position is a second person plural as seen in example (21). Ndimele (2004) has made a similar observation in Standard Igbo. These observations are contrary to the popular belief that imperative sentences do not contain an overt subject NP.

Worthy of note in Nenwe dialect is that the negative imperative mood suffix –shI (-shi/-shì), is phonologically conditioned. This is contrary to what is obtainable in the Standard Igbo where, the negative imperative mood suffix –*la* is invariant irrespective of the Advanced Tongue Root (ATR²) pattern of the vowel in the verb where it is attached. Consider the following Standard Igbo examples:

- 22 a. Gùò akwùkwò
read-Imp book 'Read a book'.
- b. Agūlā akwùkwò
Vpre-read-NEG book 'Do not read a book'
- 23 a. Rie nrī
eat-Imp food 'Eat some food'.
- b. Erūlā nrī
Vpre-eat-NEG food 'Do not eat some food'.

The ATR values of the vowel in the verbs in examples (22b) and (23b) differ. Example (22b) is (+ATR) while example (23b) is (-ATR), but the negative imperative mood suffix is invariant in the two sentences.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that Nenwe dialect employs three different morphemes in marking negation. They are the widest distributed negative suffix *-hU*, the negative perfective suffix *-behu* and the negative imperative suffix *-shI*. The paper observes that these negative morphemes are attached to the root of the lexical verbs only and are not found on the auxiliary verbs. This observation is contrary to the view in the literature on Igbo negation that negation is marked by the attachment of the widest distributed negative morpheme to the root of the lexical or auxiliary verbs. The paper therefore, proposes that Nenwe dialect has not witnessed any negative shift, contrary to Echie dialect that has witnessed total negative shift from the lexical verbs to the auxiliary verbs (Ndimele, 2004). This observation calls for further studies on the behaviour of the widest distributed negative marker in other dialects of Igbo in order to find out if the morpheme in other dialects has similar behaviour with Echie and Nenwe.

The paper also finds out that in Nenwe dialect of Igbo, negation marking exhibits rich morpho-syntactic and phono-syntactic processes, for instance it reveals that the difference between the affirmative simple future tense construction and the progressive aspect type lies in the tone of the verb to which the future and progressive marker (*la-*) is attached. However, their negative counterparts have similar tones, hence, their meanings are deduced from the context of use.

In line with Morava (1977), Baertsch (2001) and Ndimele (2004) findings in Standard Swahili, Lamnso and Standard Igbo respectively that the presence of negative suffix causes the loss of inflectional endings such as the tense, aspect and mood markers, this paper shows that tense, aspect and mood markers are neutralized when negated in Nenwe dialect.

Endnotes:

1. The *-rV* suffix is so called because it reduplicates the vowel of the preceding syllable (Green and Igwe, 1967:54). A number of *-rV* suffixes are distinguished for Igbo (Uwalaka, 1988). But the inflectional *-rV* suffixes are *-rV* stative or present suffix, which co-occurs with a sub-class of stative verbs to express a present meaning; and *-rV* past tense suffix, which is found with the past tense forms.
2. According to Matthews (1997:9), Advanced Tongue Root is “a distinctive feature of vowels e. g. in many West African languages. Abbreviated [\pm ATR]: in the production of vowels that are [+ATR] the tongue is drawn forward so that the space between the tongue root and the back of the throat is widened; in vowels that are [-ATR] the tongue is retracted so that this space is narrowed”.

Abbreviations:

AUX	Auxiliary verb	FutAux	Future tense auxiliary marker
-ghI	Harmonising negation marker	-hU	Harmonising general negative marker
la-	simple future tense marker/progressive aspect marker	Imp	Imperative mood marker
OVS	Open vowel suffix	ProgAux	Progressive aspect auxiliary marker
-rV (past)	Suffix that indicates past tense	-rV (stative)	Suffix that indicates state
-shI	Harmonising negative imperative mood marker	Vpre	Verbal prefix
Isg	First person singular pronoun	2pl	Second person plural pronoun
-behu	Negative perfective aspect marker	3pl	Third person plural pronoun
NEG	Negation		

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