

Negation and V-movement in Igbo: A Minimalist Perspective

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Negation in Igbo is a predicate operator. In other words, negation is dependent on the verb and therefore marked by verbal affixes. In the literature on Igbo linguistics, the popular view is that the negation of a simple declarative sentence is marked by a templatic morpheme e...ghi comparable to the French ne...pas. However, Dechaine (1993) does not agree with the templatic view of Igbo negation. She rather argues that the e- prefix in Igbo negative constructions is an agreement marker which surfaces in negative constructions to give morphological support to stranded Tense. In line with Dechaine's view on Igbo negation, this paper provides further arguments in support of the non-templatic analysis of Igbo negation. The paper adopts the v-movement analysis as conceived in the Minimalist Program framework. It argues for four different projections in the Igbo clause structure: AgrP, TP, AspP and NegP. The morphemes marking these functional categories are verbal affixes and so the inflected verb has to move to the relevant functional categories to check off the features associated with the functional categories. Negation interacts with agreement, tense and aspect in very intricate ways. Above all, the paper shows that tone plays an important role in the morphosyntactic spell out of negation in Igbo.

Keywords: *negation, v-movement, functional categories, agreement, minimalist, program, morphosyntax*

1. Introduction

Negation is defined by Lyons (1977: 768) as a “denial of an assertive proposition or a predication that a proposition is untrue.” Different languages employ different methods of marking negation. Dahl (1979) typified different languages based on their negation marking strategies. Some of the strategies include; the use of negative particles, affixation, independent lexical item, prosodic melody (tone and intonation). Every human language possesses some formal ways of expressing negation. Löbner (2002: 61) notes, “it is no surprise then that all language have systematic means of the polar contrast of a sentence.” While the conveyed meaning and functions of negation are relatively uniform, the formal devices employed exhibit a considerable degree of variation across languages.

In this paper, we shall explore the negative marking strategies employed by Igbo, a New Benue-Congo Language (Williamson and Blench 2000) spoken in South Eastern Nigeria. Igbo is the third largest language in Nigeria spoken by approximately 20 million people as their first language. The major focus of this paper is on how the Igbo negative morphemes which are always associated with the verb could be analysed as features associated with the functional category NEG and how the verb moves to check these features. Igbo employs two negative marking strategies: affixation and tonal melody.

The sections that follow are organized in this order. Section 2 explains the theoretical basis for this study which is the Minimalist assumption that a lexical categories such as verb moves to check off features of functional categories associated with them. Section 3 dwells on the description of negative marking strategies in different construction types in Igbo. The v-movement analysis and how it relates to negation is explored in section 4. The section also

shows how the complex verb forms that carry negative, tense and aspectual morphemes move to check these features against the relevant functional heads. Section 5 is the summary and conclusion.

2. Theoretical background

This paper adopts the Minimalist version of the transformational Generative Grammar (cf: Chomsky 1995, Marantz 1995, Radford 2004). One of the Minimalist assumptions relevant to this paper is that lexical categories (verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs) are fully inflected in the lexicon. That is, that all the affixes are attached to the lexical item before any movement takes place. According to Marantz (1995: 366),

Vs and Ns are taken from the lexicon fully inflected with inflectional affixes. The inflectional nodes in the syntax are not associated with affixes (nor with any phonological content whatsoever) but simply with certain features: Tense, Case and Agreement features among others. Nevertheless, specific bundles of these features of the category AGR and T are lexical items.

This is a further clarification on the earlier assumption in ‘Distributed morphology’ (Halle and Marantz, 1993) that the lexicon contains bundles of syntactic and semantic features that do not have phonological content. It is after the syntactic operations that the phonetic content of these bundle of features are spelt out. This is a radical deviation from the earlier assumption within the older models of TGG (Standard theory to GB) that affixes move to get attached to the lexical categories, especially the verb. This was referred to as the Affix-hopping transformation (cf Chomsky 1965, Akmajian and Heny 1975)

In some languages inflectional categories such as tense, aspect and negation are realised as verbal affixes. It is assumed that in such languages, the verb with its affixes moves from within the VP and adjoins to the relevant functional heads: T, ASP and NEG to check its features against the features of the functional heads. This is commonly known as v-movement in the literature. Feature checking is simply the elimination of uninterpretable features (i.e features that play no role in semantic interpretation). Only the interpretable features (i.e. features that play roles in semantic interpretation) eventually reach the C-I interface level (i.e. LF in the earlier framework).¹ It is important to note that sometimes, the affixes may not be overt, but the Conceptual-Intentional aspect of the grammar (i.e. Logical Form) leads us to posit null affixes which have to be checked by the relevant functional heads.

V-movement is assumed for Igbo because the Igbo verb bears all kinds of affixes marking different grammatical categories. Igbo verbs rarely occur in their bare forms both in finite and infinitival clauses. Dechaine (1993: 456) observes that amongst the Kwa languages, Igbo has exceptionally rich inflectional morphology. The rich inflection of the Igbo verb triggers off v-movement. According to Dechaine, the major difference between Igbo and Yoruba (a typical analytic Kwa language) is the presence of v-movement in the former and its absence in the latter.

Kitagawa (1986), Kayne (1989) and Pollock (1989) argue for the existence of a functional category NEG in Japanese, Romance languages and English respectively. While it is a common knowledge that every language can express negation, it is not yet established whether negation exist as a functional head in every language (cf. Zanuttini, 1996). Negation

has been shown to exist as a functional head in Igbo. According to Dechaine (1993:135), “in Igbo, Neg has the status of a functional head, interacting with other functional heads T and ASP in X⁰-movement and feature-checking relationship.” The relative order of Neg among the other functional and lexical heads is parameterized. Neg projects higher than Tense in some languages and lower in some others. Zanuttini (1986:182) argues that in both Romance languages and English, the presence of NegP implies the presence of TP, because, according to him, “given a TP, the NegP will be generated to its left so as to satisfy the selectional requirements of its head.” The TP dominating NegP seems to be the order for Igbo.

In section 4, we shall discuss v-movement as it relates to the functional head NEG in Igbo. But before then, let us look at the negative marking strategies and the morphemes marking negation in Igbo.

3. Negative marking strategies in Igbo

3.1 Negation of simple indicative sentences

The general negative marker in Igbo is the suffix *-ghi*. The negative suffix can attach to all types of verbs: main verb, auxiliary, stative, non-stative. The negative verb form has the following morphemic structure

- (1) E-VR-ghi
 where E = e/a harmonizing prefix, VR = verb root, ghi = negative suffix

Examples of affirmative sentences and their negative counterparts are shown in (2)-(5) below (different verb types are represented)

- | Affirmative | | Negative | |
|-------------|---|----------|--|
| (2) a. | Àda mà-rà mmā ²
Ada be.beautiful-rV ³ beauty
'Ada is beautiful' | b. | Àda a-mā-ghi mmā
Ada AGR-be.beautiful-NEG beauty
'Ada is not beautiful' |
| (3) a. | Ọ zù-rù akwà
3S buy-rV(past) cloth
'S/He bought some clothes' | b. | Ọ zù-ghī akwà
3S buy-NEG cloth
'S/He did not buy any cloth' |
| (4) a. | Ike nà à-gba egwū
Ike DUR Nom-dance dance
'Ike is dancing' | b. | Ike a-nā-ghi à-gba egwū
Ike AGR-DUR-NEG Nom-dance dance
'Ike is not dancing' |
| (5) a. | Ị gà è-si jī echi.
2S FUT Nom-cook yam tomorrow
'You will look your tomorrow' | b. | Ị ga-ghī è-si jī echi
S FUT-NEG Nom-cook yam tomorrow
'You will not cook yam tomorrow' |

Observe that in (2) and (3), the negative suffix takes the place of the indicative rV suffix. Observe also that there is a verbal prefix in the negative constructions which does not occur if the subject DP is a clitic pronoun (see (3)b. and (5)b.). We gloss this prefix as AGR and we

shall demonstrate in section 3 that the prefix is not part of a discontinuous negative morpheme contrary to the general belief in Igbo linguistics.

3.2 Negation of Perfective sentences

The negative perfective has a more complex structure. It is marked by *-beghi*, which seems to be a combination of two morphemes: *be*, negative suppletive form of the perfective marker and *ghi*, general negative marker. The structure is shown in (6) below

- (6) E-VR-be-ghi
 where E = e/a harmonizing prefix, VR = verb root, be = negative perfective form, ghi = negative suffix

Dechaine (1993:470) sees *-be* as a negative polarity item, translatable to ‘yet’ in English. ‘Yet’ is an NPI which semantically implies imperfective, i.e. non-completive it naturally occurs in the negative form of perfective constructions in English, exemplified in (7b).

- (7) a. He has done it
 b. He has not done it yet

(8) and (9) below are examples of perfective sentences and their negative counterparts.

- | Affirmative | | Negative | |
|-------------|---|----------|---|
| (8) a. | Òbi e-ri-e-la nri
Obi AGR-eat-OVS ⁴ -PF food
‘Obi has eaten’ | b. | Òbi e-ri-bè-ghi nri
Obi AGR-eat-PF-NEG food
‘Obi has not eaten’ |
| (9) a. | Ọ bja-la
3S come-PF
‘S/He has come’ | b. | Ọ bja-bè-ghì
3S come-PF-NEG
‘S/He has not come’ |

We have said that *-be* is a suppletive form of the perfective marker that occurs only in the negative. It could occur without the negative suffix *ghi* as shown in (10) below.

- (10) a. Òbi e-ri-bè-è nri
 Obi AGR-eat-PF-NEG food
 ‘Obi has not eaten’
- b. Ọ bja-bè-è
 3S come-PF-NEG
 ‘S/He has not come’

The elision of the general negative marker *ghi* necessitated the lengthening of the vowel of the negative perfective element. Observe that *-be* and *-ghi*⁵ are on low tone in 8b and 9b. The extra vowel syllable in (10) also bears low tone. It seems that the extra syllable is there to

bear the low tone of the elided *-ghi* suffix. The elision of the negative suffix is one of the features of language where economy is a desideratum, in line with the MP principles.

3.3 Negation of Imperative sentences

The negative imperative form is marked by the suffix *-la*. It is sometimes referred to as the prohibitive. The negative imperative verb form has the following morphemic structure.

(11) E-VR-la

Where E = e/a prefix, VR = verb root, la = imperative negative suffix

Here are some examples.

Affirmative	Negative
(12) a. Rì-e nri ahù eat-OVS food Dem 'Eat that food'	b. E-rī-la nri ahù AGR-eat-NEG food Dem 'Do not eat that food'
(13) a. Zà-a ụlò sweep-OVS house 'Sweep the house'	b. A-zà-là ụlò AGR-sweep-NEG house 'Do not sweep the house'
(14) a. (Ụnù) Gbà-a ọsọ 2P run-OVS run 'You (pl.) should run'	b. (Ụnù) A-gba-la ọsọ 2P AGR-run-NEG run 'You (pl.) should not run'

Naturally, commands are only given to the addressee (second person). When the subject is the second person singular, it is left unexpressed. But, when it is the second person plural there are two options in the imperative. The second person plural pronoun can occur in the subject position before the verb as in (14) or as an enclitic after the verb as in (15) below.

(15) a. Gbà-a-nù ọsọ
run-OVS-2P encl. run
'(You pl.) Run'

b. A-gba-la-nù ọsọ
AGR-run-NEG-2P encl. run
'(You pl.) Do not run'

Notice that the OVS does not occur in the prohibitive which is a piece of evidence that the OVS is an empty morpheme as we have earlier claimed in a previous study (Obiamalu 2009). Observe also that the prohibitive has the Agr prefix as in the negative and the perfective constructions.

3.4 Negative Auxiliary Verbs

There are some Igbo lects such as Nneewi and Onicha where some auxiliary verbs are inherently negative in meaning. Compare the affirmative sentences and their negative counterparts in Nneewi and Onicha below.

(Nneewi)	Affirmative	Negative
(16) a.	<p>Ọ nà è-li nnī 3S DUR Nom-eat food 'S/He is eating'</p>	<p>Ọ̃ ha è-li nnī 3S DUR.NEG Nom-eat food 'S/He is not eating food'</p>
(17) a.	<p>Èmekà nà à-gụ akwụkwọ Emeka DUR Nom-read book 'Emeka is reading a book'</p>	<p>Èmekà a-hā à-gụ akwụkwọ Emeka AGR-DUR.NEG Nom-read book 'Emeka is reading a book'</p>
 (Onicha)		
(18) a.	<p>Ọ gà a-zà ụnò 3S FUT Nom-sweep house 'S/He will sweep the house'</p>	<p>Ọ ma n-zà ụnò 3S FUT.NEG Nom-sweep house 'S/He will not sweep the house'</p>
(19) a.	<p>Ngọzi gà a-la mmīlī Ngọzi FUT Nom-drink water 'Ngozi will drink water'</p>	<p>Ngọzi a-mā n-la mmīlī Ngọzi AGR-FUT.NEG Nom-drink water 'Ngozi will not drink water'</p>

In Nneewi, the durative auxiliary *na* has a negative counterpart *ha*. While in Onicha, the Future (anticipative) auxiliary *ga* has *ma* as its negative counterpart. Observe that in Onicha, the nomino-verbal complement of the auxiliary verb takes *n-* prefix in the negative.

The role of tone in the negative construction cannot be ignored. It is very obvious in these dialects where negative auxiliaries exist. For example, in Nneewi dialect, there is no way of distinguishing (20)a. and (20)b. below except by tone.

(20) a.	<p>Ọ yà è-li nnī 3S FUT Nom-eat food 'S/He will eat food'</p>	(affirmative)
b.	<p>Ọ̃ ya e-li nnī 3S FUT.NEG Nom-eat food 'S/He will not eat'</p>	(negative)

(20) presents some interesting insight into the role of tone in Igbo negation. Ndimele (1995, 2004, 2009) claims that a floating low tone plays important role in Igbo negation. According to him, 'The low tone on the subject pronominal clitics in negative constructions is due to the presence of an abstract (underlying) floating low tone. What happens is that the underlying floating low tone merely displaces the high tone feature of the subject pronominal clitic' (Ndimele 2009:133). Is it actually the low tone of the subject clitic pronoun or the high tone

of the auxiliary verb *ya* that marks negation in 20b? Now consider, in addition these two other possible tone patterns for the same structure.

- (21) a. Ǿ yà è-li nnī (affirmative interrogative)
 3S FUT Nom-eat food
 ‘Will s/he eat food?’
- b. Ǿ yā e-li nnī (negative interrogative)
 3S FUT.NEG Nom-eat food
 ‘Will s/he not eat?’

Our focus here is on the tone pattern of the two elements: subject pronoun and the following auxiliary. The tone of the verb root and its prefix follows from the tone of the auxiliary preceding them. Let us show the tone patterns observed in (20) and (21) and their meanings in table I below.

Data Nọ	Tone on the subject pronoun	Tone on the auxiliary verb	Meaning
20a	H	L	Future affirmative
20b	L	H	Future negative
21a	L	L	Future affirmative interrogative
21b	H	S	Future negative interrogative

Table 1 *Tone patterns in Nneewi affirmative/negative-interrogative constructions*

From the table, one can easily see at a glance that the auxiliary is constantly on low tone in the affirmative and on high tone in the negative. In the negative interrogative, the auxiliary bears a step tone which is caused by the underlying low tone interrogative marker which forces the high tone negative marker to become a step tone. The subject pronoun has no tone pattern that correlates with any of the meanings. The pronoun bears low tone in the affirmative in 21a but high tone in 20a. It bears high tone in the negative in 21b but low tone in 20b. The same pronoun bears low tone in the interrogative in 21a but high tone in 21b. From this analysis, it is clear that the tone on the subject pronoun is not the indicator of negation, but rather the tone on the auxiliary verb. This suggests that Ndimele’s assumption that low tone plays an important role in Igbo negation might not be correct. It is rather the high tone that plays an important role in Igbo negation.

4. V-movement and NEG

In this section, we shall show that the negative verb form bears negative, tense, aspectual and agreement features which needs to be checked with the relevant functional heads present in the clause structure. We argue here that the verb moves up to the relevant functional nodes for feature-checking purposes. The rest of this section is devoted to explaining why the verb has to move and how the various features (some of which occur as overt morphemes) associated with the negative verb form are licenced.

which occurs if the subject DP is not a clitic. Clitic pronouns such as the third person singular, *o/ò*, the second person singular, *i/ì*, the first person singular, *m* and the impersonal pronoun, *e/a* do not allow the *e-* verbal prefix. We have been glossing this prefix as ‘AGR’.

The view of most Igbo analysts is that negation in Igbo is templatic and comparable to French *ne ... pas* or the Hausa *ba ... ba* negation frame (cf. Emenanjo 1985, Clark 1989, Uwalaka 2003, Ndimele 2009). Dechaine (1993) does not agree with the template view of Igbo negation. She rather argues that the *e-* prefix in negative constructions is a ‘default agreement’ marker (Manfredi 1991) which surfaces as a result of stranded tense. According to Dechaine, ‘Neg between T and V is a barrier for V to T movement. As V can’t raise beyond Neg, T above Neg is empty’. Dechaine’s position is further clarified as follows. V does not move further to T because NEG is a barrier just like the NEG barrier analysis that triggers off do-support in English. Since the V, which has strong tense features does not get to tense, tense will lack an overt spell-out. The *e-* prefix surfaces in the Agr head position to give support to the empty T position because the verb has strong tense feature. *E-* is an agreement prefix because it occurs only with some types of subject DPs.

The presence of such *e-* prefix in Igbo perfective construction where no negation is implied, gives support to Dechaine’s analysis and also supports our assumption that Tense and Aspect occupy different head positions, contrary to Uwalaka (2003). Consider (27) below.

- (27) a. Àda a/à-zà-a-la ụlò
 Ada AGR-sweep-OVS-PF house
 ‘Ada has swept the house’
- b. Ha a/à-zà-a-la ụlò
 3P AGR-sweep-OVS-PF house
 ‘They have swept the house’
- c. Ọ zà-a-la ụlò
 3S sweep-OVS-PF house
 ‘He/She has swept the house’
- d. Òbi è-gbu-o-la agū
 Obi AGR-kill-OVS-PF lion
 ‘Obi has killed a lion’
- e. O gbu-o-la agū
 3S kill-OVS-PF lion
 ‘S/He has killed a lion’

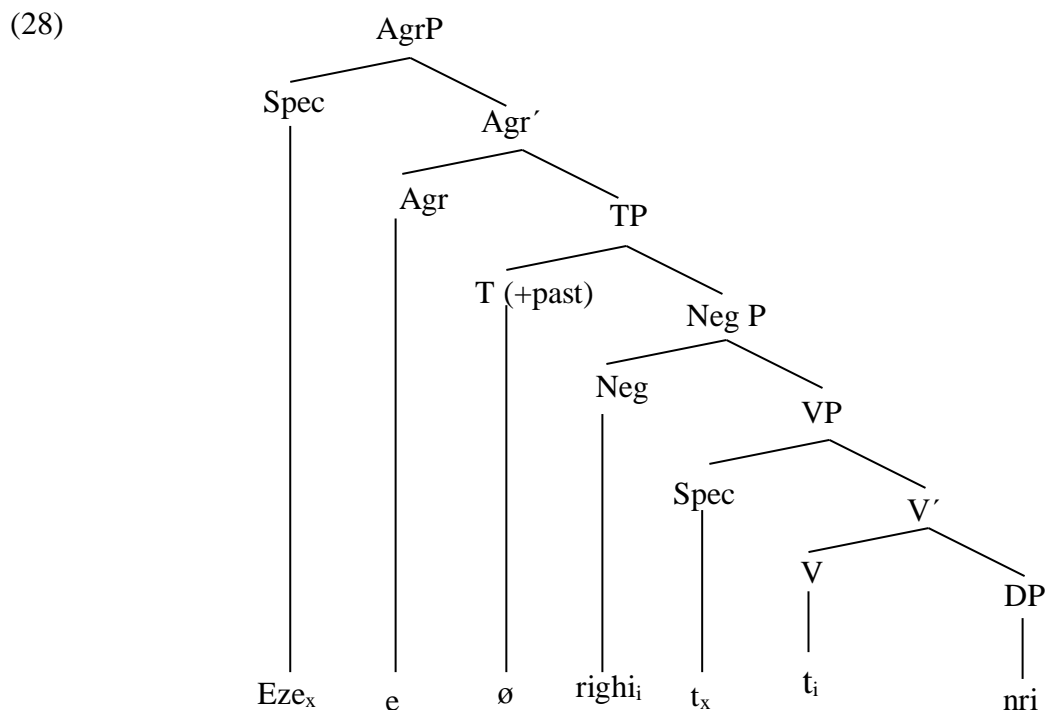
In the perfective construction the *e-* prefix occurs in exactly the same environment as in the negative construction. If the same kind of prefix will behave the same way in both negative and perfective constructions, then it cannot be part of a negative morpheme as claimed by Uwalaka (2003) Emenanjo (1985) and Clark (1989). However, if the *e-* prefix occurs as a result of Neg barrier as claimed by Dechaine (1993), how do we account for its occurrence in perfective constructions? Tense and aspect morphemes hardly co-occur in Igbo. The same with tense and negative morphemes. In the perfective aspect, tense morpheme is absent and

so for that reason the verb does not raise to T. In other words, V moves to Asp and does not move further to T giving rise to the same *e*-prefix as support for strong tense feature that has no overt realisation.

We therefore modify Dechaine’s Neg-barrier analysis by saying that in the absence of a tense affix, V does not need to move to T. But because the tense feature of T is strong in negative and perfective constructions, a default agreement element emerges to give support to the empty T head position. For example, a negative construction can be [+ past] without a past tense morpheme. The perfective construction has an implicit past tense reading.

Following our analysis, (23)b. will have the structure in (28).

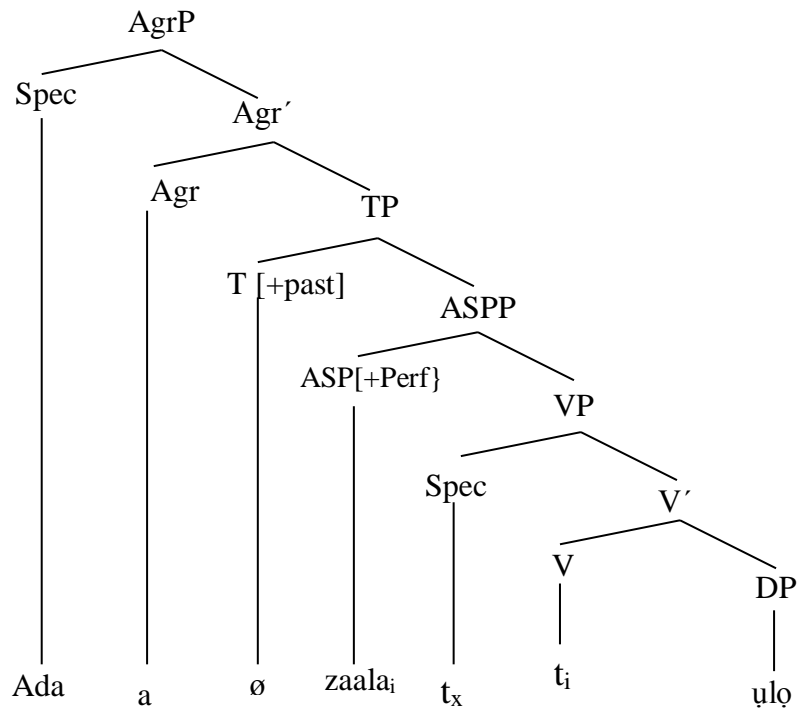
- (23) b. Eze e-rī-ghī nri
 Eze AGR-eat-NEG food
 ‘Eze did not eat food’



For the sake of comparison with the *e*- prefix in perfective construction, let us show the structure of the perfective construction in (27)a. in (29).

- (27) a. Àda à-zà-a-la ulò
 Ada AGR-sweep-OVS-PF house
 ‘Ada has swept the house’

(29)

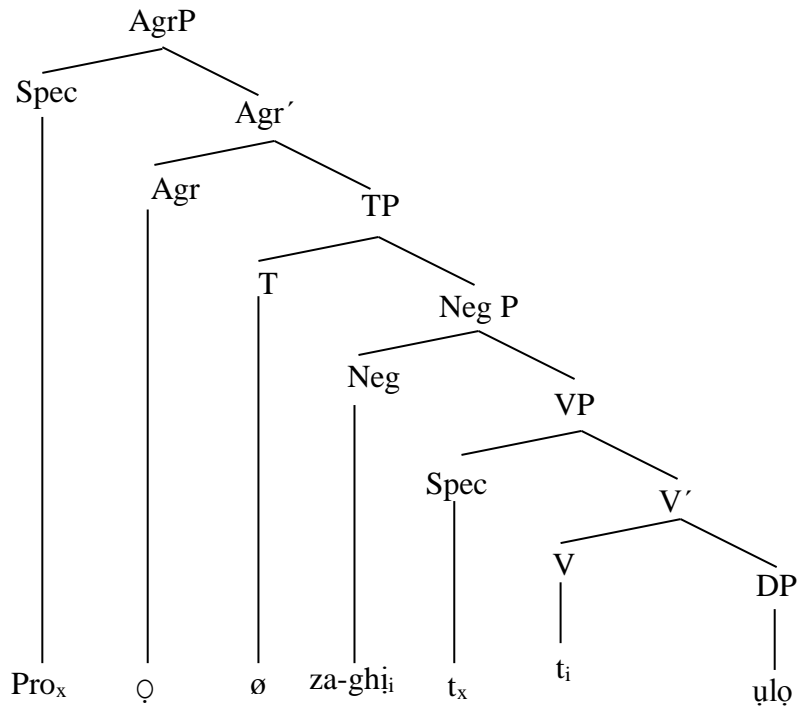


In (28), the verb raises to Neg and stops there. This leaves the T node empty. But because the T node has strong past tense feature, the agreement prefix gives morphological support to the otherwise stranded Tense. The same thing is applicable to (29), where the verb raises to Asp but does not raise further to T. T in (29) also has strong past tense feature. We therefore conclude that empty T head with strong tense features requires morphological support which comes in form of an agreement element.

It is important to note that this same Agr head position is where the clitic subject pronouns occur. (25)b., for example (repeated here for convinence), will have the structure in (30).

- (25) b. Ò za-ghì ulò
3S sweep-NEG house
'S/He did not sweep the house'

(30)

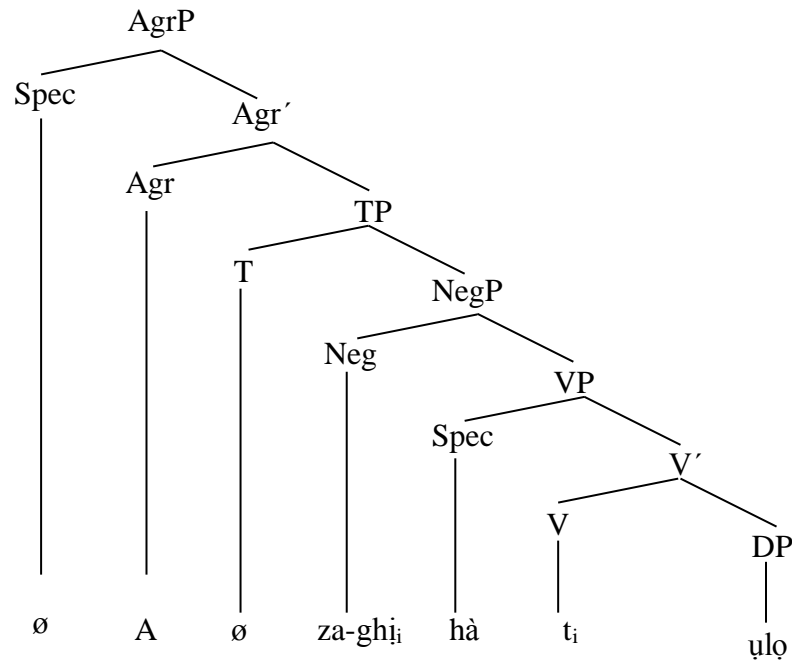


Eze (1995), Anyanwu (2005) and Obiamalu (2010) have given some syntactic evidence in support of the pro-analysis in (30). The arguments in support of the pro-drop analysis for Igbo is outside the scope of this work. For details of the arguments, see the three works cited above.

When the subject pronoun *m* and *ha* remain in-situ (i.e. occur after the verb), the *e*-verbal prefix occupies the Agr head position and serves as the syntactic ‘subject’ of the sentence. This is demonstrated with (31).

- (31) a. À-za-ghì hà ụlò
 AGR-sweep-NEG 3P house
 ‘They did not sweep the house’

b.



The presence of NegP automatically implies the presence TP. In fact, Zanuttini (1996: 181) rightly notes, “the functional category NegP is parasitic on the functional category TP”. In other words, there can be no NegP without a TP. If Neg is dependent on T and T has scopal authority over V, then that explained why NegP (ie as a functional head) is a predicate operator in languages where it exists. Igbo has only NegP and for that reason no constituent of an Igbo sentence can be negated without involving the predicate. Constituent negation in Igbo involve cleftings, where the negated constituent is focused and introduced by a copula predicator such as *bụ* and *dị* as in (32)b. or the verb *nwe* which translates as ‘there is’ as in (32)a.

- (32) a. Ò nwe-ghī onye zụ-rụ akwụkwọ ya
 ES cop-NEG person buy-rV book his
 ‘Nobody bought his book’
- b. Ò bụ-ghī Obi zù-rù ụgbọala ahù
 ES cop-NEG Obi buy-rV vehicle that
 ‘It is not Obi that bought that vehicle’

The constituents of the sentences, *Onye* and *Obi* are negated by the cleft constructions *O nweghi* and *O bughì*.

We have shown in section 3.4 that high tone plays an important role in Igbo negation. Dechaine (1993) observes that the agreement prefix bears a high tone, but we have seen that the same agreement prefix can bear low tone if no negative meaning is implied. Even main verbs can sometimes be negated without the negative suffix as in (33) (adapted from Uwalaka 2003; 11, glossing is mine):

- (33) a. A-mā Jizọs bụ ọrịa
 AGR.NEG-know Jesus be sickness

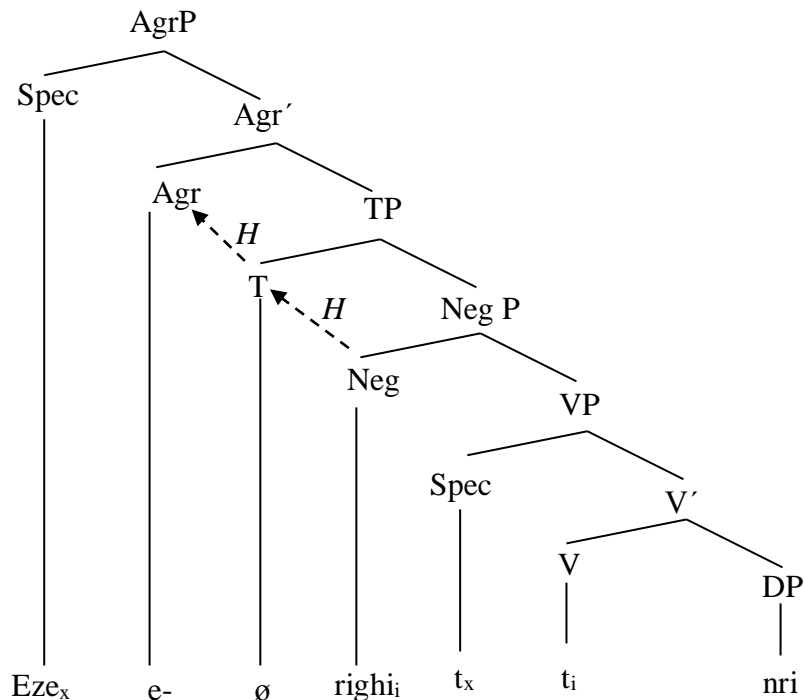
‘The lack of knowledge of Jesus is sickness’

- b. Madù a-mā Jizos bù ọrìà
 person AGR.NEG-know Jesus be sickness
 ‘For a person not to know Jesus is sickness’

In (33)a. and (33)b., the agreement element bears a high tone. This high tone marks negation and influences the low tone (which most verbs bear in simple declarative sentences, irrespective of their inherent tone pattern) of the main verb *ma* ‘know’ to become a downstep. This is why we gloss the agreement prefix as AGR.NEG.

Our argument is that negation is jointly marked by the suffix *ghi* and high tone borne by some other element in a higher c-commanding position in Igbo. The fact that negation can be expressed only with tone as in 20b and 33 is an indication that high tone plays a more important role in Igbo negation than the negative suffix. The *e-* agreement prefix which normally bears high tone in negative construction is therefore a joint spell-out of stranded T and Neg. The segmental morpheme belongs to T/Agr, while the prosodic morpheme belongs to Neg. This is possible because T c-commands NegP in Igbo and so the features of Neg can percolate to T. Zanuttini’s (1996) proposal on the dependence of NegP on TP, lends support to the T and Neg interaction on the *e-* prefix. This is why we gloss the *e-* high tone prefix in negative constructions as ‘AGR.NEG’. The tree diagram in (34) shows how the high tone of Neg percolates to Agr.

(34)



The high tone is a negative feature which appears on the *e-* default agreement prefix.

5. Summary and Conclusion

What we have tried to do in this paper is to show how negation is morphologically marked in different sentence types in Igbo. We observe that negation in different sentence types except the imperative is marked by a verbal suffix *-ghi* which does not co-occur with the tense suffix. In addition, an *e-* verbal prefix would normally co-occur the negative suffix depending on the subject type. Contrary to the popular belief, we have argued that this prefix is not part of the negative morpheme but a morphological expression of the suppressed tense morpheme. The argument is that the complex negative verb form moves to the functional head, Neg but does not move further to T since the verb does not bear any overt tense morpheme. The prefix is a default agreement prefix which gives support to the stranded T akin to do-support in English. We also observed that this agreement prefix bears high tone in negative constructions which makes it possible for some constructions to be interpreted as negative even without the negative suffix. We therefore conclude that the *e-* prefix with the high tone is the joint spell out of negation and agreement. The segmental morpheme belongs to Agr while the prosodic morpheme belongs to Neg. The tree diagram in 34 shows how this is derived.

Notes

- ¹ For a more detailed and simplified discussion of feature checking, see Radford (1997, 2004).
- ² We adopt here the tone marking convention proposed by Green and Igwe (1963) which marks low tone with [`], downstep with [-], leaving high tone unmarked
- ³ The rV suffix (r+vowel copy of the verb root vowel) occurs with eventive and non-eventive verbs. When it occurs with eventive verbs, it carries a past tense reading.
E.g. Obi ri-ri nri
Obi eat-rV(past) food
'Obi ate'
But when it occurs with non-eventive verb,
E.g. Obi bu-ru ibu
Obi be.big-rV bigness
'Obi is big'
no past reading is implied. For that reason some Igbo linguists argued that Igbo rV suffix is not a tense marker but a factative aspect marker. This paper retains the idea that rV suffix marks mark past tense and factative aspect simultaneously. This is why the suffix is glossed as PAST.FACT in the later part of the paper.
- ⁴ OVS equals to Open Vowel Suffix (e, a, o, ɔ). This verbal suffix can occur in a variety of constructions: perfective, imperative, serial verbs, etc. It seems to be semantically empty and may be just a stem extender.
- ⁵ *-ghi* is inherently toneless, its tone is determined by the tone of the preceding syllable. It takes low after low tone preceding syllable or downstep after high tone preceding syllable.
E.g. \acute{O} righī, \acute{O} zaghì, \acute{O} ribèghì.

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