

H tone insertion on verbs in *na*-focus sentence in Akan

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Akan belongs to the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo family and is spoken by about 8.3 million people in Ghana. The data used here is based on the Asante Twi dialect. We will use Akan as a cover term. Akan is a terraced level tone language with two tones L(ow) & H(igh) (Welmers, 1959). The TBU is the syllable (e.g. Dolphyne, 1988). Tone has lexical and grammatical function. The latter plays a more important role in the grammar of Akan (Dolphyne, 1988). It is a SVO language with head-initial characteristics (Kobebe & Torrence, 2006).

Focus on a specific XP can be expressed syntactically by displacement to the sentence initial position. A resumptive pronoun, if the fronted XP is animate, or copy, if the fronted XP is a verb, is realized at the base position of the focused XP. The fronted element is obligatorily morphologically marked by the focus marker *na* (e.g. Boadi, 1974). The morpho-syntactic marking of focus has been observed to interact with the tonal phonology of the verb (Schachter, 1973; Boadi, 1974; Bearth, 2002). The verb is realized high(er) in *na*-focus sentences. This is illustrated in (1). (1a.) shows a simple SVOAdv sentence with a L toned verb and (1b.) the ex-situ variant with focus on the verb. In (1b.) the fronted verb and its copy appear with a H tone.

Contradictory claims regarding the scope of the raising effect have been made. Boadi (1974) suggests that it additionally applies to the fronted element whereas Bearth (2002) claims that it only affects the verb (root). Our data suggests that the fronted element appears raised only if it is a verb (1) or a pronoun (2), but not if it is a noun (3).

It is controversial whether the observed effect on the verb of the matrix clause has to be regarded as tonal change. Boadi (1974:19) suggests analysing it as phonetic raising effect, Schachter (1973) and Bearth (2002) as tonal change (phonological process). Our data shows that the process should be analysed as phonological since the scaling of the H tone on the verb of the matrix clause of *na*-focus sentences is comparable to that of other H tones. Moreover, it stands in a downstep relation to preceding H tones.

The occurrence of the H tone on the verb in the matrix clause seems not to be limited to *na*-focus sentences. Boadi (1974) observes that it occurs in the majority of embedded sentences. Schachter (1973:23) remarks that "...clauses of a few other types show the tonal substitutions in question. But while these substitutions are not absolutely restricted to relative and out-of-focus clauses, neither are they by any means characteristic of subordinate clauses in general. It appears likely, in fact, that the other kinds of clauses that show the substitutions and the relative and out-of-focus clauses together form a class for which a deep semantic similarity can be postulated."

In a further data collection we want to explore the scope of the effect by extending the verb root and nexus and by extending the post-verbal part. Furthermore, we are planning to investigate in which embedded structures the H tone insertion applies.

- (1a.) Àgyèmàn dò Yàw páá.
 A. love.HAB Y. a lot
 ‘Agyeman loves Yaw a lot.’
- (1b.) Dó nà Àgyèmàn dó Yàw páá.
 love.HAB na A. love.HAB Y. a lot
 ‘It is love that Agyeman feels for Yaw a lot.’
- (2a.) Yàw dò mè páá.
 Y. love.HAB 1SG a lot
 ‘Yaw loves me a lot.’
- (2b.) Mé nà Yàw dó mè páá.
 1SG na Y. love.HAB 1SG a lot
 ‘It is me who Yaw loves a lot.’
- (3a.) Mè-wò papà bèbrèè.
 1SG-possess.HAB fan many
 ‘I possess many fans.’
- (3b.) Papà nà mè-wó bèbrèè.
 fan na 1SG-possess.HAB many
 ‘It is fans that I possess many.’

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