The limits of downstep in Ágbò sentence prosody

The complete list of 81 examples transcribed in the Appendix (pp. 110–12) can be heard in the same order [here]. Here’s a photo of the speaker, Julius Ògbú, and me.

Significant correction: Ex. (18a) as cited on p. 109 is observationally correct in some prominent Igbo varieties — e.g. it occurs as such in Mbaisén and adjacent areas — but not in Standard Igbo, moreover the form as given on p. 109 is seriously misleading with respect to considerations of clause–typing. In Standard Igbo, the verb root plus suffix in a subject question of this inflectional type bears L, and not downstepped H:


But Standard Igbo does maintain the downstepped H in subject relative clauses like (18a) = [HH HH HH]. Accordingly, one might well claim that T–to–C (or Infl–to–C) does occur in (18a), just as indicated in the paper, but there is no prosodic evidence for parallel treatment of (18b), contra the little upward arrow to the left of rV in the tree structure in (18b). Incidentally, the identification of Igbo finite rV as a morphological instantiation of the Infl or Tense node of the clausal Middle Field, assumed in 1992 the paper, must be abandoned for independent reasons of temporal and aspectual quantification. Specifically, the longstanding controversy in the Igbo literature regarding the temporal content of rV inflection dissolves, once –rV is recognized to have the distribution of an argument–type clitic.

Otherwise, the general point of the paper remains unaffected: so-called "upstep" is epiphenomenal, and is not an upside–down counterpart of "downstep" as pretended in taxonomic ("tagmemic") work by E. Pike and maintained by many Africanists with the help of enriched autosegmental–metrical notation. Rather, "upstep" is no more than the phonetic realization of antidownstep (downstep reset), a phenomenon itself constrained by syntactic phrasing. Several elementary and general observations support this conclusion, quite apart from the particular analysis of Ágbọ̀ presented in my paper. First, there is no antidownstep without a preceding downstep in the relevant prosodic domain. Second — and this point was admitted anecdotally during the roundtable discussion at the 1992 UPenn workshop by the two invited SIL Mayanists — Mayan languages do not show upstep cumulation, contra E. Pike's published descriptions that started the whole upstep goosechase. Naturally, upstep retains support as a strictly phonetic category, my only purpose here being to show that it plays no role in the statement of linguistically significant generalizations. In sum, phonological use of the term upstep is, on current knowledge, nothing more than a hypostasis or in other words a mystification. SIL/Wycliffe may possess excellent soteriological reasons to look "upward" as much as "downward", but natural languages including Igbo and apparently also the Mayan family are quite innocent of this skyward temptation, and should not be blamed for it.

[Update 6 December 2012] Another telling indication that syntax is not ‘different’ (in the sense of Bromberger & Halle 1989) is that not only prosodic footing, but also syntactic agreement, has now been enthusiastically offered as grist for an upward–looking parameter of structural variation across natural languages (Baker 2008). Automatic sacrifice of restrictiveness is always expedient in the short term, but always too a bad idea for constructing testable theory–space (Martin & Osherson 1998) and at least as far as Niger–Congo languages are concerned, always a recipe for exoticism.


THE LIMITS OF DOWNSTEP IN ÁGBÒ SENTENCE-PROSODY

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ABSTRACT
A recorded corpus of some 80 nonspontaneous Ágbò examples shows systematic resetting of downstepped pitch within the minimal sentence. As this phenomenon is not independent of a preceding downstep, and can never cumulate upward, it is precisely not ‘upstep’ (pace Meir et al. 1975; Snider 1990) but rather antidownstep or downstep-reset. Contra expectations of the reigning phonologival model of downstep (e.g. Clements 1981), downstep-reset is limited neither to clausal boundaries (where trivially it does occur) nor to performance contexts of maintaining adequate pitch range. A first, impressionistic pass over the Ágbò corpus readily identifies two linguistic contexts for downstep-reset:

• After word final downstep before phrase boundary (tracks 2, 3, 13, 26, 28, 31, 33, 41, 48, 50, 52, 63, 70-72, 74, 79, 80). Most examples of this edge effect involve a PP or serial VP — neither type containing a pause.
• After a verb in which lexical H and L are neutralized (tracks 21, 22, 28, 32-35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45-47, 68-70, 72, 76, 77). This architone effect regularly occurs, inter alia, before the negative/relative suffix -ni.

In a framework of tone-metrical licensing (Bamba 1992, Manfredi 1992), the two downstep-reset contexts share one property: a H tone in a weak position. The configurations which predict weak H are found in surface syntax. Weak H also accounts for the downstep-reset in the Ábànkélè dialect—previously claimed to have a so-called ‘upstep’ juncture—and in standard Igbo.

1. GARDEN-PATH TONEMARKING

The problem addressed in this paper was noticed nearly 40 years ago. Transcribing some sentences of ShiTswa (a Bena-Congo language of Mozambique) in 1953, Welmers noticed a failure of deterministic tonemarking. Having convincingly assigned ShiTswa to the ‘terraced-level’ type later codified by Stewart (1965), based on the cumulative pitch lowering which occurs automatically between successive H-tone domains, he was surprised to observe a clear contrast... after low, between a nonlow at the same level as the preceeding nonlow and a nonlow at a slightly lower level. (1973: 87)

Such a contrast creates a garden path for the application of a standard tone orthography comprising three rules:

• H- and L-bearing syllables are individually marked [''] and [' '] respectively.
• Downdrift (Stewart’s “automatic downstep”) occurs between H-bearing syllables across L-bearing syllables.
• (“Nonautomatic”) downstep between two adjacent H-bearing syllables is marked [''].

To demonstrate the breakdown of tonemarking, Welmers (1973: 91f) cites the following paradigm:

1a. Vámùwónà múfànà. 3pl.see... child 'They see [the] child'
b. Vámùwónà múfànà wa mùbìkì. 3pl.see... child of chief 'They see [the] cook’s child'
c. Vámùwónà múfànà wa ṣÌhùsì. 3pl.see... child of chief 'They see [the] chief’s child'

The imparsable syllable is wa ‘of’ in (1b) and (1c): no available tone diacritics fits that word’s pitch. Consider the possibilities. Wa can’t be marked L: it is pronounced higher than the flanking L-bearing syllables in (1b), and higher than the downstepped H in (1c). Neither can wa be marked H: it is pronounced on the same pitch as the middle syllable of múfànà—rather than on a lower pitch which it would be expected to have as the bearer of a well-behaved H tone. Thus,

*Thanks to A. Akinlabí, M. Bamba, Ù. Ìhíønú, Y. Lánírán, M. Liberman, A. Nwàchukwu, J. Ògbú, H. Tada.

1Text given in full below, with four pitch tracks. The examples—elicited to test tone classes of monosyllabic verb roots—are either gnomic, quasi-proverbial sentences with no marked focus; or mini-discourses with controlled focus structure. A hifi recording of the corpus, spoken by one person (not in real time) on one occasion, has been deposited in the phonetics lab, Williams Hall, University of Pennsylvania. Track numbers refer to the file labelled “/home/myl/db/agbo”.

2Ágbò is the westernmost form of Igbo in the historical sense. Colonial/federal governments and their missionary/ academic allies carved the periphery of the Igbo-speaking area into ethnic districts (e.g. “Ika”, “IsiU”, “Ikwêrê”) on ideological grounds (kinship, kingship, confession, lexicostatistics). In reality, many of the claimed unique peripheral characteristics are actually found throughout the area; many others are just borrowings from non-Igbo-speaking neighbors; thus, neither sort of evidence proves anything about Igbo-internal relationships (cf. Ònwụejiogwę 1975).
Welmers is constrained to leave \(wa\) without a tonemark, stipulating that this absence means ‘same pitch level as nearest previous H’. The unmarked \(wa\) is not toneless; it implicitly bears its underlying H as expected, but is preceded by a special juncture which negates the downdrift (automatic downstep) which would ordinarily occur at that point.

As the anomalous, antidownstep juncture occurs only in possessive phrases, all of which are formed with the “associative” morpheme \(wa\), Welmers (1973) conceives a morphological solution: a “phonemic upstep” is assigned to \(wa\) itself, as a kind of prosodic prefix whose bizarre nature is excused by its unique distribution. Though the mechanics of his 1973 proposal are certainly \textit{ad hoc}, the intuition that the antidownstep juncture is construction-specific is consistent with a prosodic government approach—offering at least the prospect of an explanation based on principles of tone-syntax interaction. To explore this possibility, it is first necessary to review some of the elementary relationships of phonological government which pervade the languages of this great, transcontinental family.

2. TONAL PROSODY AS GOVERNMENT

Bamba (1989, 1992) shows that OCP-based, nonlocal pitch effects like downstep, as well as local pitch effects like raising and spreading, reflect the constituency of metrical domains. Bamba’s framework is \textit{prosodic} because the domains in question interact with surface syntax in predictable ways. The basis of this interaction is the core licensing principle which, by hypothesis, is shared by phonology and syntax: the government relation.\(^3\) The overall goal of this section is to show that \textit{downstep-reset} is an example of prosodic licensing in this sense. The first step in the demonstration is to survey some simple cases in the relevant languages.

2.1 Tone and locality

As extended to Benue-Kwa\(^4\) languages by Manfredi (1988/1992), prosodic licensing in Bamba’s sense is implied by cross-linguistic, and language-internal, distributions of (local) spreading and raising with respect to downstep.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>spreading</th>
<th>raising</th>
<th>nonlocal</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H/(L)</td>
<td>L/(H)</td>
<td>H/(L)</td>
<td>L/(H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Yorùbá(^6)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ágbọ</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ónjicha</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbaïsen</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(Auslaut)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Àbánkeléke(^7)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yomalá-Yamba(^8)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yekoyó(^9)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Distribution across Benue-Kwa of some local and nonlocal tone effects

The table shows \textit{inter alia} that L-spreading and L-raising—both being local L tone effects—are in complementary distribution with partial downstep—which is a nonlocal effect, since it cumulates over the entire sentence. It is important to realize that this implication holds robustly even in Yomalá-Yamba, where only strong L tones spread or raise, and only weak L tones qualify as partial downstep triggers.

3If, on the other hand, “phonology is different” (Bromberger and Halle 1989), the licensing principles of metrical domains have nothing in common with those of phrasal syntax. As their pessimistic premise rules out prosodic results in advance, one should reject it provisionally and seek generalizations until they appear or until one tires of the search.

4Benue-Kwa, the largest branch of Niger-Congo, extends from central Côte d’Ivoire (or perhaps from eastern Liberia) to eastern and southern Africa. To date, no phonological (as opposed to lexical) evidence for an internal subgrouping of Benue-Kwa has been offered. A potential candidate for a syntactic isogloss is the movement of a main verb to the position of inflection (“V-to-I movement” cf. Emonds 1978); this occurs in Ígbo and eastwards, and in Anyi (or perhaps Akan) and westwards, but not in a central zone extending from Gbé to Yorùbá and Edó (cf. Déchaine 1992).

5Total downstep lowers an H-tone to the pitch level of a non-H-tone in the same context; partial downstep doesn’t.

6In Yorùbá, (nonautomatic) downstep occurs only after an elided L tone; it is a total downstep as defined in the preceding footnote, since a downstepped H is lowered at least to the level of M. According to Láníran (1992: 250), Yorùbá M is not downstepped, but the preceding H is raised; Yala-Ikom’s ‘downstepped M’ (Armstrong 1975) may be similar.

7A.k.a. “Izá” or “Izí”, an ethnic label promoted in literacy materials, starting shortly before the Nigerian Civil War, by the Êñugwụ branch office of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (cf. Meir et al. 1975).

8A.k.a. “Dschang Bamileke”—studied (and, if I am not mistaken, spoken) by Tadadjieu (1974).

The other complementarity in the table is between total and partial downstep. For nonfinal contexts, one can predict the occurrence of total downstep from L-spreading. In absolute final position (Auslaut), however, total downstep also occurs in Mbaisen (among several other southern dialects) which lacks L-spread. The multiple sources of total downstep suggest that it is a default which obtains wherever H tone is governed.

The distribution in Table 1 can be studied in terms of tone-metrical interaction. Consider the principles in (2).

2. principles

A metrical governor is stronger than its governee (H > L > M).

[s] immediately dominates a metrical governor.

[w] is strictly adjacent to a metrical governor.

Tonal government iff [s].

The idea in (2), adopted from Bamba (1989/1992), is that two different kinds of licensing relation—respectively tonal government and metrical government—are separately responsible for the local and nonlocal phenomena referred to in (2). The generalization of complementarity follows from the fourth assumption, namely that tonal government (e.g. spreading, raising) is possible only if the tonal governor occupies in a strong metrical position. Since H is the metrical governor in the partial downstep relation, partial downstep excludes L from a strong position, hence L cannot be a tonal governor.

To accommodate the variation observed in Table 1, this framework must be supplemented by the parameters in (3).

3. parameters

(i) The set of tonal governors is \{H\}, \{L\}, \{H, L\}.

(ii) Tonal government is expressed by \{spread\} \{raise\} \{both\} \{neither\}

The resort to parameters is, in general, problematic, unless (as suggested by Borer 1984, Fukui 1986) they can be reduced to learnable inventories of closed-class (i.e., ‘functional’) items. Minimally, one would hope that only tonal government needs to be parametrized, at least for the closely languages in question. The required parameter settings are listed in (4).

4. settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>H, L both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agbó</td>
<td>H spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Óniča/Mbaisen</td>
<td>H neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ábánceléke</td>
<td>H raise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yomačá-Yamba</td>
<td>some L both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yekoyó</td>
<td>L spread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the present, I will set aside issues of parametric learnability or arbitrariness, and proceed to examine cases where syntactic government seems to affect the tonal and metrical relationships just outlined.

2.2 Prosodic government

The smallest assumption sufficient to explain downstep-reset is the failure of a licensing condition for downstep. Bamba defines downstep as a nonlocal government relation between tones, mediated by metrical constituency. If tonal government requires syntactic government, then downstep can’t follow a tone which is not in a governing position.

5. licensing

Locally, an element is ungoverned iff governing.

Unlicensed elements incorporate under the local licensed node, e.g.:

(a) Domain-initial L incorporates under following [s].

(b) Domain-final H incorporates under preceding [w].

(5a) accounts for initial L-raising (also in Èdó, cf. Elugbe 1977). (5b) follows from the definitions in (2), and directly advances the goal of this paper to account for the possibility and distribution of weak H tones.

The consequence of (5b) is illustrated in (6a). The filled weak node is unlicensed: it doesn’t govern anything because it is final, and it isn’t governed since it is not weaker than the preceding strong node. Incorporation of stray H yields (6b).

---

10 Most of these principles simply recap the definitions of Liberman and Prince (1977).

11 This hierarchy couldn’t be valid in a true ‘upstep’ language, if any exists. No such language has yet been documented.

12 Láñíran finds L-raising only concomitant with H-raising; her algorithm (1992: 237f) involves a relation called “upstep”, which actually applies right-to-left (n.b. backwards in time) across tonal feet. That this is indeed an example of raising is shown by her observation that the first H’s extra height factor does not affect the level of an initial L.
Prosodic licensing has numerous empirical consequences in Igbo. For example, consider the well-known restriction of lexical downstep to the final syllable, cf. the Ońicha forms in (7): 13

7. átúlú ‘sheep’  ìfìlé ‘shame’  *vcvcv
   nîktà ‘dog’  ìbìlè ‘small creature’

If these forms are composed of three H-bearing morphemes, the third and final morpheme is evidently weak, hence its H tone is exempt from the OCP. As is well known and ill understood, however, the final downstep of nouns drops phrase-internally: 14

8. òní ‘mouth’  ùzó ‘path’  òní ùzó ‘door(way)’  *òní ùzó
   ágù ‘leopard’  áta ‘grassland’  ágù áta ‘savanna leopard’  *ágù áta
   ìbìlè ‘small creature’  nwá ‘child’  ìbìlè nwá ‘dear little child’  *îbìlè nwá
   nîktà ‘dog’  ùnù ‘2pl’  nîktà ùnù ‘your dog’  *nîktà ùnù

Whatever special licensing permits a word-final H to be weak in citation forms such as those in (7), (8) shows that this licensing is not available phrase-internally.

The Ágbọ corpus, however, shows that a weak H is conserved in certain other contexts, which I have labeled architones. If (6b) is a negative verb plus its pronominal prefix, the corpus shows that in a larger verb phrase, the word-final weak H is equivalent to a weak L (the total downstep effect), and the initial H of the following word has higher pitch (the downstep reset effect).

9.  

What needs explaining in this framework, therefore, is the contextual difference between downstep reset in Ágbọ and its absence (with corresponding loss of the word-internal downstep) in Ońicha.

Some Ábáńkeléke examples of (9) are given in (10) and (11).

10.  

(The tone cliticization in (11) is driven by the elision of the last timing unit of míni.)

13The few exceptions in (i) are most likely exempted by internal structure.
   (i) òghẹ̀(lẹ̀) ‘opening’ (Ońicha)  ìkàrọ̀ ‘young man’ (Ábáńkeléke), cf. ìkẹ̀ ‘male’
14One exception may be exempted by internal structure, cf. dí ‘master’:
   (i) ágàdí ‘elderliness’ (Ońicha)  ágàdí nwàìnyì ‘old woman’  *ágàdí nwàìnyì
If the following phrase begins with L, another difference emerges, cf. (12).

By stipulation in (4), tonal government takes the form of H spreading onto following L in Àgbọ, and H raising before L in Àbánkeléké. But by definition in (2), tonal government entails a strong position, so we might not expect a tonal government effect in either dialect. H spread doesn’t occur in relevant Àgbọ contexts, e.g. (24b), but H raising (notated by underlining) is reported by Meir et al. in corresponding Àbánkeléké examples, forcing a derivation like (13) which violates structure preservation.

Fortunately, an alternative analysis is available; indeed it is required by the grammar. Meir et al. report an example minimally contrasting with (13):

Within a principle-based framework, (13) and (14) cannot have the same syntax. Minimally, the conditional clause in (13) must include an additional head, plausibly a determiner, for compositional semantics. Independently, from the so-called associative construction, it is clear that the null Comp in Ògbo relative clauses is spelled out on the surface with a H tone (see Excursus). It is unnecessary to stipulate this, so long as the null Comp is metrically strong. This gives the conditional the s-structure in (15):
How does (15) satisfy prosodic well-formedness? Examples of the genitive construction like (16) have been argued to exemplify the principle in (17), cf. Manfredi (1992: 159).

15. 

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{nwóké} \\
\text{è rí a}
\end{array}
\]

16. 

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{akpa} \quad \text{aku} \\
\text{bag} \quad \text{wealth}^{15} \\
\text{akpa akú} \quad \text{bag of riches}
\end{array}
\]

17. \textit{prosodic cliticization}  
An unassociated element acquires as its association domain the adjacent timing unit of its governing category.

In (15), cliticization of the null Comp creates the context for the observed raising. If this goes through, then tonal government in Ábankèleke is structure-preserving.

A final question is why downstep reset occurs in Ágbọ before the negative morpheme \textit{ní}, which bears H tone, but not for example before the toneless -\textit{gị} of Standard Êgbo (to which it is cognate). \textit{Ní} is either a suffix or a left-branching phrasal head. We might suppose that \textit{ní} as a phrasal head with inherent H is metrically strong. Then after a downstepped verb it will have the exactly the downstep reset configuration in (9). A related effect is seen in the Excursus, where a lexically unmotivated H tone appears in Êgbo relatives as the content of null, strong Comp and Kase nodes.

3. CONCLUSION

The above, preliminary analysis of prosodic licensing in Benue-Kwa languages takes off from the concrete and learnable disjunction between local and nonlocal tone effects, to posit quasi-syntactic relationships of constituency and government among tone elements, in the tradition pioneered by Bamba for Mande languages. Because government also forms an indispensable part of syntactic licensing, such an analysis offers the hope of explaining a wide range of phenomena which have heretofore inspired only bizarre diacritics of 'upstep' juncture. Equally importantly, it brings a rich array of phonological evidence, especially small parametric differences among closely-related languages to bear on issues of syntactic representation.

In light of these results, Welmers’ tonemarking puzzle (with which the paper began) counts as a monument to the keen linguistic intuition of that eccentric missionary, but also to the complacency of Africanist phonologists and syntacticians who have managed to preserve their respective specializations in pristine, obtuse segregation for too many decades.

\footnote{\textit{Akú} is, specifically, inert or non-reproducing wealth, as opposed to \textit{ụghị} which includes seed stocks and livestock.}
EXCURSUS: PROSODIC MINIMALITY IN ÌGBO

In Standard Ìgbo, an otherwise empty functional head is nevertheless strong in order to govern the head of an embedded constituent.16

18a. DP  b.

[énýì lára ahyá] 'the friend that left the market'

[ônyé húru Ëzé] 'Who saw Ëzé?'

EXCURSUS II: YORÚBÁ

Both L and H are necessarily strong in a surface three-tone system. That H also raises before L (Láníran 1992: 240), sentence-initial L does not downstep the following H (1992: 219), and spreading cannot cross M (1992: 199fn.), all follow from the presence of LH feet (1992: 251). Láníran (1992: 270) refutes Pierrehumbert and Beckman’s (1988) claim—repeated e.g. by McCarthy (1988)—that declination is not computed over phonological tones.

EXCURSUS III: AGAINST REGISTER TONES

The register tone framework (Snider 1990) has no account for prosodic domains. Contour tones are overgenerated, unless markedness between ‘modal’ and ‘register’ tones is invoked to exclude possible but unattested contours. A “left-to-right implementation rule” (like Schachter and Fromkin’s numerical algorithm) is also needed. The (non-arboereal) register formalism does not represent cumulation explicitly. The lack of symmetry between upstep and downstep is accidental.

16In Àgbọ, the empty head of a relative clause is spelled out with the copula hún.
Speaker
Julius Ogbú
Idumu Úku, Ágbò
June, 1977

Track no.
1. Ò jnã afya.  ò wó m ognã kúrú.
   ‘I went to market; it took me a brief time’
2. Ñ jnã afyá + ônobé tání.
   ‘I’ll go to market after a little while today’
3. Ní m jnã afyá + éki ìlé.
   ‘Let me go to market tomorrow’
4. Anyú àtú nkọ, ì kebe gi é be nknú.
   ‘An axe is usually sharp before you use it to cut wood’
5. Ànáñí o nó?  Ò tú nkọ.
   ‘How is it?’  ‘It’s sharp’
6. Òpya àtú àtú, ì kebe gi é betúfú ìknuésù.
   ‘A machete is usually sharp before you use it to cut open [a bundle of] yam pegs’
7. Ànáñí o nó?  Ò tú àtú.
   ‘How is it?’  ‘It’s sharp’
8. Mbagbádna enwóke àkọ, ì kebe náhi ohúkpaghá.
   ‘An antelope is usually very clever, before it can escape a hunter’
9. Ànáñí o dñò náhi?  Ò nwo àkọ.
   ‘How did it manage to escape?’  ‘It’s clever’
   [transcription/translation of tracks 10-12 is missing]
13. Èkú ìgbó wé gi èjèrè + kwà àkọ ìkọ.
   ‘A farm coat sewn with hide itches’
14. Ànáñí o mè i?  À àko m ìkọ.
   ‘How does it affect you?’  ‘It doesn’t itch me’
   ‘What does it do to him?’  ‘It itches’
   ‘Why did you take it off?’  ‘It itches’
17. Ègedí aàjá anú àja ní o màrim òshù ìbèlèṣè.
   ‘An elder dices up meat so that s/he can know the sweet taste of “ìbèlèṣè”’
18. Ànáñí o dñò kwádere em?  Ò já anú; ò méyì ofígmì.
   ‘How did s/he manage to prepare it?’  ‘S/he diced meat; s/he added palm oil’
19. Ànáñí o kwáderémé e?  Ò já anú àjá.
   ‘How does s/he prepare it?’  ‘S/he dices up meat’
20. Èmundú àbú èbú ogne ílé ifnó gi etí.
   ‘Small children sing whenever the moon shines’
21. Kí wè mé è wè gíle + ní rahni?
   ‘What did they do that they did not sleep?’
22. Àbú wè èbú, ètnè + ní wè ègù.
   ‘They sang, they didn’t dance’
23. Ógú òmùmù nuì ènì yì nà èré.
   ‘The birth medicine we received was effective’
24. Ànáñí o mì ni i?  Òré ère.
   ‘How then did it work for you?’  ‘It was effective’
25. [incomplete transcription] Òré ère.
   ‘It will be effective’
   ‘The Feast of Farm Food turned out well’
27. Ò pú kè wè dñò kúú?  Ò pù ápú.
   ‘Did it turn out as they said?’  ‘It turned out [well]’
28. "Nké í + hnú lála + ní? Ò pú òpú. ‘Yours which is coming up? ‘It will turn out [well]’
29. Mírni ezue osuo ọhú. (possibly: Mírni + ézue...) ‘Rain fell [in] one area’
30. Ní mírni ezue ubó o rúe úgbé ènyasi. ‘Rain must fall on the farm by evening’
31. Mírni + ní o zuè èbe ndị ọhụ. ‘Rain will fall somewhere’
32. Anyụ ọtụ + ní nkọ. ‘The axe isn’t sharp’
33. Òjile m+ anyụ m ní], ní nkọ! ‘Don’t give me an axé that’s not sharp!’
34. Òpya ọtụ + ní anụ. ‘The machete isn’t sharp’
35. Anụle m gi ópya ọtụ le + ní ọtụ! ‘Don’t have me use a machete that’s not sharp!’
36. Mgbadna áánwo àkọ. ‘Antelopes aren’t clever’
37. N sèka hú tètè mgbadnà nwó le + ní àkọ. ‘I can see the track of an antelope that’s not clever’
38. Òbulụku àákọ àkọ. ‘[The ritual coat of an Ólokún priest] doesn’t itch’
39. Ní è yìmè ekwà ko le + ní ukọ. (speaker hesitates) ‘Let him put on a cloth that doesn’t itch’
40. Ndí kikenì áája anú nké Òbelezéè. ‘People nowadays don’t dice meat for “òbelezéè”’
41. Anụle onye gbara a+ ní ája anú + le ní! (strong effect) ‘Don’t let someone who omits dicing meat host me!’
42. Nmú ndú ábụ ebu ime isi àbali. ‘Children don’t sing [on] moonless nights’
43. Ndí ghàle+ ní ábụ ebu áseka tné egú. ‘Those who omit singing cannot dance’
44. Ògu ìààre ere. ‘[The] medicine is totally ineffective’
45. À ní le m+ gi ogú èle+ ní ère ère. ‘I won’t use medicine that is totally ineffective’
46. Òrírí apú + ní òpú. ‘The feast flopped dismally’ [did not turn out at all]
47. Hnú pù le + ní òpú jokó anwozí. ‘What flops is going to have another [chance]’
48. Èlé+ ògné we gi gú gi+ hnú aka ahnú ká wé gí jú+ ahyúá ní. ‘It is not when they dug yams last year that they’re digging yams this year’
49. Ògné we gí gú gi+ wnnú ògné mírni gí làà gu. ‘The time they harvest yam is the time when rain has finished tapering off’
50. Ògné we égi + gi + wnnú ògné o-wnnù-łe gha eki + jnème. ‘The time they will harvest yam is any time after tomorrow and thereafter’
51. Èbe o wu uzọ chó ewù wnnù epeté ĕpete. ‘Where he stood seeking shade is muddy’
52. Ùbè o wu uzọ rú élú + ákpági. ‘The ladder he stood upright broke’
53. Èbe o wu uzọ ché mmù a wnnù ahámahà ùwàyà. ‘Where he stood waiting for his children is in the middle of the road’
54. Èbe i ewù uzọ ché mmù a wnnù n’ọhùmè. ‘Where you will stand waiting for them is where the path makes a bend’
55. Èmù aknú ìhian aknú. ‘Sickness troubles people’
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56. Òbanije esú ihian esú.
'Sweat affects people greatly'
57. Òbanije esú ihian esúú.
'Sweat doesn’t affect people at all'
58. Êzizá nkú ká ali azzáá.  (why not: Êzizá nkúú...)
‘A broom of mature palm [branches] is best for sweeping the ground’
59. Êzizá õkìtì aâkå ali azzáá kàìì ëzizá nkúú.
‘A broom of baby palm [branches] doesn’t sweep better than one of mature palm’
60. Òwe amãrì nwa èmé nwaá.
‘They know [how] the child will make itself’
61. Òwe amãrì nwa èmé nwaá.
‘They don’t know [how] the child will make itself’
62. Ñwàtà màrì ihie èmé nwaá.
‘A child that knows something will mature’
63. Ñwàtà àmà ihie + á èmé nwaá.
‘A child that doesn’t know something won’t mature’
64. Ònye ehyù ëkwá òhùhu àmãrí onú a.
‘Someone who shops for hen’s eggs knows their price’
65. Ònye eehù ëkwá òhùhu àmãrí onú a.
‘Someone who doesn’t ‘..., doesn’t ‘...’
66. Èru eepú ugbo wnú ekùrù.
‘The mushroom that appears on the farm is “ekùrù”’
67. Èru aâfôdú nkú wnu ekùrù.
‘The mushroom that grows on palm trees is “ekùrù”’
68. Èru aâfôdú ofya, ónòbè ní ènýì hué + ní e, ò rehì.
‘The mushroom that grows in the woods, soon after we don’t pick it’
69. Ëkùrù aâfôdú nkú onòbè, ómèni ènýì hué + ní e, ò rehì ìgbé ényasi.
‘The “ekùrù” that will grow on palm trees soon, if we don’t pick it, it rots by evening’
70. Èru eepú ofya + ónòbè; ní ènýì hué + ní e, ò rehì.
‘A [type of] mushroom will come out in the woods in a little while, if we don’t pick it, it rots by evening’
71. Èru eeffie ènýì ugbò + wnu ekùrù.
‘The mushroom that eludes us in the farm is “ekùrù”’
72. Èru eeffie ènýì + ofya ekí + wnu ugu ënì. Nèdì ènýì aghòsì + ní ènýì kè wè èchọ̀ ̀á.
‘The mushroom that will elude us in tomorrow’s woods “ugu ënì”’
73. Èru eeffie ènýì ugbò + wnu ekùrù.
‘The mushroom that eludes us in the farm is “ekùrù”’
74. Èru eeffie ènýì + ofya ekí + wnu ugu ënì. Nèdì ènýì aghòsì + ní ènýì kè wè èchọ̀ ̀á.
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112. Èru eeffie ènýì ugbò + wnu ekùrù.
‘The mushroom that eludes us in the farm is “ekùrù”’

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