

# GLIDES IN ÒGBAHÙ DIALECT OF ÌGBÒ LANGUAGE

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Ògbahù dialect has a register tone pattern. It has a number of level tonemes. These are, high, low and an intersyllable feature, ‘downstep’. Nevertheless, it has a small number of glides which occur as a result of the grammatical environment in which they are used. This paper seeks to explore their occurrences with a view to ascertaining their roles in the tonology of the dialect.

Two types of glides occur to distinguish certain grammatical relationships. The glides are:

## 1 Low-rising glide, marked ‘<sup>˘</sup>’

This is in complementary distribution with low tone and is, therefore, an allotone of the low toneme. It occurs in a syllable which has a lexical low tone but which precedes the high tone of the monosyllabic noun in associative construction, as in the following:

1a.	/ɔd̥ù/	+	/ji/	[ɔd̥ùd̥zi]	‘tail (end) of yam’
	H L		H	H LR H	
	‘tail’		‘yam’		
b.	/obi/	+	/di/	[ob̥idi]	‘mind of husband’
	HL		H		
	‘heart’		‘husband’		

## 2. High-falling glide, marked ‘<sup>ˆ</sup>’

This is in complementary distribution with high tone and, therefore, an allotone of the high toneme. It occurs in a syllable which has a lexical high tone but which precedes a low tone in a factative construction, as in the following examples.

2a.	/ife/	+	/mèli/	[ifè mèli]	‘something happened’
	H H		LL	HHF LL	
	‘something’		‘happened’		
b.	/òke/	+	/nwùlù/	[òkèŋwùlù]	‘rat died’
	L H		L L	LHF L L	
	‘rat’		‘died’		

From the above discussion, we conclude that a low tone has two allotones in complementary distribution. These are a low-rising glide (LR) which occurs before a high tone of the monosyllabic noun in the associative construction and a low tone which occurs elsewhere. Similarly, a high tone has two allotones in complementary distribution. They are, a high-falling glide (HF) which occurs before a low tone in the factative construction and a high tone which occurs elsewhere.

### 3. Reconstructions to Explain the Occurrences of these Glides<sup>1</sup>

#### 3a. Low-rising Glide:

The tonal behaviour of the monosyllabic noun as a second element in the associative construction seems to suggest that possibly these nouns might have been disyllabic with LH tones. We therefore, explain the occurrence of the low-rising glide by postulating a basic form, then reconstructing it in order to arrive at the surface form, as illustrated in the following examples:

3ai. /jí/ 'yam'  
      /òdù 'tail'

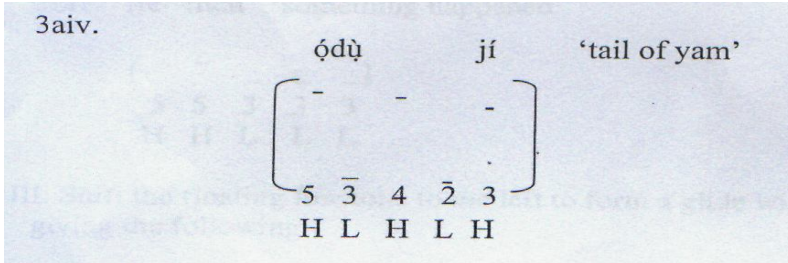
3aai. /òdù/ Basic form:      ódù    ìjí  
                                         tail (end) of yam'

In the basic form above, we have postulated a floating high tone between the two nouns to account for the eventual leftward tone shift, resulting in the low-rising glide. According to Hyman and Schuh (1974: 94), tone shifting is a natural synchronic tone rule. They say that, normally, but not always, shifting occurs from left to right, citing examples from Mbui Bamileke. We have also inserted a prefix vowel /i/ to the noun /jí/ 'yam'<sup>2</sup>.

Rule I: Delete the inserted prefix vowel /i/, and retain a floating L, as shown below:

3aiii.    ódù    jí  
          'tail of yam'

Rule II: Downdrift: The initial H lowers L to 3 which lowers the next H to 4, which lowers the next L to 2, which in turn lowers the final H to 3, as illustrated below:



Rule III: The floating H (4) moves left to form a glide with L (3), thus giving:



Rule IV: Delete the floating L (2) causing (3) to be a downstepped H, thus giving:



**3b. High-falling Glide**

This also applies to the monosyllabic nouns but it is no means limited to them. It occurs in any syllable which has a lexical high tone but which precedes a low tone in the factative construction. The rule of deletion still applies on the assumption that there was possibly in the verb a vowel prefix which was dropped some time in the past<sup>3</sup>. Consider the following examples:

- 3bi.    /ífé/    ‘something’
- /mèlì/    ‘happened’

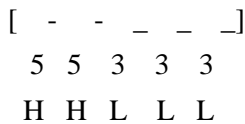
3bii.    Basic form: ífé èmèlì    ‘something happened’

Rule I: Delete the inserted vowel and retain the low tone as floating, thus giving the following:

3biii.    ífé `mèlì    ‘something happened’

Rule II: Downdrift: The initial H lowers the L, as shown below:

3biv.    ífé `mèlì    ‘something happened’



Rule III: Shift the floating low tone to the left to form a glide with high tone, thus giving the following:

3bv. Ífê mèli 'something happened'

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, we have shown that two types of glides occur in Ògbahù to distinguish certain grammatical relationships. These are the Low-rising glide, marked ' & ' and the High-falling glide marked ' ⊥ '. It is evident also that these tones are non-distinctive, non-tonological, since their occurrences are predictable. Furthermore, rules are postulated to explain their occurrences.

#### Notes

1. It is only in this section that the high tone is marked '´', for illustration.
2. The choice of the prefix vowel to be inserted depends on the vowel of the monosyllabic noun. The prefix vowel copies the stem vowel, but the prefix tone remains constantly low.
3. The choice of the prefix vowel to insert depends on the following criterion: if the root vowel is /è/ for example, then the inserted prefix vowel will be /è/.

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