

Pitch Accent Patterns and Meanings of Full and Insubordinated Conditional Constructions in Sidaama (Cushitic, Ethiopia)

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This study examines the relation between the pitch accent patterns and meanings of conditional constructions in Sidaama, a Cushitic language of Ethiopia, and shows that insubordination might have contributed to the emergence of a new pitch accent pattern of the insubordinated conditional in this language.

Evans (2007) shows that insubordination, whereby subordinate clauses come to be used as main clauses, is widespread across languages, and hypothesizes that insubordination follows four stages of development: (a) subordinate construction, (b) ellipsis of main clause, (c) conventionalized ellipsis, and (d) reanalysis as main clause structure. He mentions distinctive prosodic characteristics of a few instances of insubordinated constructions, but there seem to be no previous studies investigating the role of prosody in the course of insubordination, especially in understudied languages with no written records like Sidaama.

In Sidaama, the meaning of an insubordinated conditional clause differs depending on the location of a high pitch on the verb, as well as the person of the subject, aspect, and the speaker's evaluation of the expressed event, as shown in some of the patterns illustrated in Table 1. When a high pitch occurs on (i) the penultimate vowel segment of the verb of the conditional clause, the construction conveys a strong meaning (specifically, a meaning with strong interpersonal force or a strong emotional meaning), as compared to when a high pitch occurs in one of the normal positions, namely on (ii) the penultimate vowel segment or (iii) the conditional marker. However, such a strong meaning is not commonly expressed by the full conditional construction containing a consequence clause. It is normally expressed only by an insubordinated conditional with a high pitch on (i). On the other hand, conditional clauses with a high pitch on (ii) or (iii) could always form the full conditional construction with a consequence clause. Thus, insubordinated conditionals with a high pitch on (i) are more conventionally used as independent, main clauses and could be hypothesized to be at a later stage of the diachronic development of insubordination than those with a high pitch on (ii) or (iii), whose consequent clauses are easily recoverable to form full conditional sentences.

In sum, some uses of the insubordinated conditional construction in Sidaama, which are more conventionalized than others, might have developed the distinctive pitch accent pattern.

Table 1: Some of the patterns of relations between the location of a high pitch and the meaning of an insubordinated conditional clause in Sidaama

pat-tern	pers of subj	aspect	evalu-ation	(i) penultimate vowel segment of the verb	(ii) ultimate vowel segment of the verb	(iii) conditional marker right after the verb stem
1. e.g. <i>nabbab-a-tt-a-ro</i> . [study-IPFV.2SG-2SG-FEM-if] <i>lit.</i> 'If you (SG.FEM) study.'						
	2	IPFV	positive for 2	command (e.g. <i>nabbab-á-tt-a-ro</i> .)	advice (e.g. <i>nabbab-a-tt-á-ro</i> .)	suggestion (e.g. <i>nabbab-a-tt-a-ró</i> .)
2. e.g. <i>waá abb-a-tt-o-ro</i> . [water.ACC bring-IPFV.2SG-2SG-MASC-if] <i>lit.</i> 'If you (SG.MASC) bring me water.'						
	2	IPFV	positive for 1	command (e.g. <i>abb-á-tt-o-ro</i> .)	request (e.g. <i>abb-a-tt-ó-ro</i> .)	hope/wish (e.g. <i>abb-a-tt-o-ró</i> .)
3. e.g. <i>c'anc'ó uurris-a hoog-a-tt-a-ro</i> . [noise.ACC stop-INF not.do-IPFV.2SG-2SG-FEM-if] <i>lit.</i> 'If you (SG.FEM) don't stop the noise.'						
	2	IPFV	negative for 2	warning (e.g. <i>hoog-á-tt-a-ro</i> .)	criticism (e.g. <i>hoog-a-tt-á-ro</i> .)	occurrence of a bad event (e.g. <i>hoog-a-tt-a-ró</i> .)
4. e.g. <i>re-i-tt-o-ro</i> . [die-RECENT.PFV.2SG-2SG-MASC-if] <i>lit.</i> 'If you (SG.MASC) die'						
	2	recent PFV	positive for 1	curse (e.g. <i>re-í-tt-o-ro</i> .)	strong wish (e.g. <i>re-i-tt-ó-ro</i> .)	wish (e.g. <i>re-i-tt-o-ró</i> .)
5. e.g. <i>muddam-a hoog-ee-mm-a-ro</i> . [hurry-INF not.do-IPFV.1SG-1SG-FEM-if] <i>lit.</i> 'If I (FEM) don't hurry.'						
	1	IPFV	negative for 1	strong obligation (e.g. <i>hoog-eé-mm-a-ro</i> .)	obligation (e.g. <i>hoog-ee-mm-á-ro</i> .)	asking the addressee's opinion (e.g. <i>hoog-ee-mm-a-ró</i> .)
6. e.g. <i>songó ha'r-a hoog-oo-mm-o-ro</i> . [meeting.OBL go-INF not.do-DISTANT.PFV.1-1-MASC-if] <i>lit.</i> 'If I (MASC) had not gone to the meeting.'						
	1	distant PFV	positive for 1	strong regret (e.g. <i>hoog-oó-mm-o-ro</i> .)	regret, wish (e.g. <i>hoog-oo-mm-ó-ro</i> .)	wish (e.g. <i>hoog-oo-mm-o-ró</i> .)