

"NOW" AND "SO" AND THEIR PROSODIC DIMENSIONS IN NGUGUI WA THIONG' O 'S *WEEP NOT, CHILD*: AN ENUNCIATIVE STRATEGY.

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Abstract

The discourse status of the short lexical item "now" seems to be so clear that one will not realize that it can be prosodically marked. It is well-established that it is an adverb of time, but this enunciative particle is also used to indicate the speaker's progression through a discourse, especially when it is used to indicate shift in the speech flow.

Prosodically, one "now" will be stressed. The unstressed one behaving normally as a grammatical word is indeed more common, but the emphatic one is not an adverb of time but an enunciation marker. Similarly "so", which is an inferential marker will be discussed in this work.

In this work, seen as a wake up call, because of the so many misunderstanding problems very often generated, we are expecting to show in line with the "discourse and prosody" axis to which extent these enunciative clues can act on discourse segments further apart.

Key words: adverb, discourse, enunciation, now, prosody, so, stress.

Résumé

Le statut dans le discours du lexème 'now' semble si clair qu'on ne saurait penser qu'il soit prosodiquement marqué. Il est bien établi que cette particule énonciative est utilisée comme un adverbe de temps, mais elle indique aussi la progression du locuteur dans le discours. 'now' indique également un tournant dans la conversation. Evidemment, 'now' en tant qu'unité grammaticale est plus connue et n'est normalement pas accentué, mais la forme emphatique, elle, n'est pas un adverbe de temps mais un indice de la stratégie

énonciative et elle est par conséquent accentuée. De même, 'so' qui est un marqueur inférence sera discuté dans ce travail.

Dans ce travail, qui s'inscrit dans l'axe 'discours et prosodie', et qui sonne comme un cri d'alarme, à cause des trop nombreuses incompréhensions souvent engendrées, nous espérons montrer dans quelle mesure ces indices de l'énonciation peuvent agir sur les segments du discours.

Mots clefs: accent, adverbe, discours, donc, énonciation, prosodie, maintenant.

Introduction

Njoroge's hunger for education and the Mau Mau uprising in Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child*, were so impelling that one was to wonder whether the resort to the time adverb '**now**' will not be prosodically misleading co-speakers. Alike, the conjunct '**so**' which is an inferential and a causal connector will prosodically convey sometimes quite the opposite of the expected conclusion. Thus, prosody in discourse will behave like an argumentative instrument.

In fact, discourse is not only a pervasive tool, but also an effective one for precise communication of information, for making decisions, and for enlisting actions, essentially a transmission tool. This is also made possible through prosody. Stress and intonation do help convey accurately the intended message. This can be observed through the prosodic functioning of two linguistic units which are "**now**" and "**so**". The present study: "'**Now**' and '**so**' and their prosodic dimensions in Ngugi Wa Thiong' o' s *Weep Not, Child*: an enunciative strategy" will give us the opportunity to shed light on the way prosody can influence enunciation strategies.

Our concern is, therefore, to know whether these discourse particles can be marked prosodically? How far do "**now**" and "**so**" prosodically pave the way to enunciation strategies? Do their prosodic realizations affect them semantically? What functions do they perform in discourse?

In a bipartite work, it will be first of all displayed, the primary words class of these items in connection to prosody that is: prosody in time adverb '**now**' and prosody in the

conjunction 'so'. Secondly, the prosodic functioning and the prosodic contours of discourse markers "*now*" and "*so*" will be discussed.

I. PROSODY OF THE TIME ADVERB '*NOW*' AND CONJUNCTION '*SO*' IN DISCOURSE.

The discourse status of the short lexical items '*now*' and '*so*' seems to be so clear that one will not realize that they can be prosodically marked. In fact, polysyllabic items are mostly dealt with when discussing prosody. Defining prosody, Palmer (1981:156) asserted that "The prosodic features include primarily what is usually handled under intonation and stress". The following sequences will shed light on the circumstances which trigger their accentuation or not.

I.1. STRESSED TIME ADVERB '*NOW*' AND CONJUNCTION '*SO*' .

When defining stress, McMahon (2002:118) writes that:

There are three important factors which combine to signal stress. First, the vowels of stressed syllable are produced with higher fundamental frequency; that is the vocal folds vibrate more quickly, and this is heard as higher pitch. Secondly, the duration of stressed syllables is greater, and they are perceived as longer. Thirdly, stressed syllables are produced with greater intensity, and are thus heard as louder than adjacent unstressed syllables.

In the same vein, it is worth noting this observation by Cruttenden (1986:95): "adverbials which limit the main clause take a rise, while those that reinforce take a fall". The following examples will exemplify it.

(1) - **Now** I would be fighting for the black folk. (WN: 73).

The adverb '**now**' will experience a rise. It limits intonationally the main clause. To make it obvious, one can put it this ways: I would be fighting for the black folk **now**, if...'. The reason is that an adverb can occur either in the initial position or at the final position in free variation. Generally, the time adverb "**now**" is unstressed but it is not the case as follows.

(2) - What did he live for **now**? (WN:73)

The rising tone is imposed by the interrogation. This is what Palmer (op, cit.) unveiled it showing "the use of a rising intonation to indicate a question and that of a fall-rise to suggest". In fact, Njoroge, one of the main character in the novel and his brother are wondering why Jacobo, a white man is living presently.

(3) - **Now**, if we leave them alone, there 'll flare up big, big trouble in the village (WN: 79).

This two clauses sentence can be rearranged. Thus, one will obtain 'if we leave them alone **now**, there' ll flare up big, big trouble in the village. The time adverb '**now**' indicating tonally the clause limit will therefore prosodically rise.

Likewise, the conjunction "**so**" will be stressed in initial and final position.

(4) - **so** I pitied her. (WN: 23).

It sounds clear that the conjunction 'so' shows a relation of premise and conclusion as expected but it is stressed. The premises being:

(5) - “It is a bad woman this. If I had been my father, I would not have married her (WN: 23) and

(6) - “Nobody could have taken her” (WN: 23).

In fact, it was just a joke in Nyokabi’ s family showing tenderness and love in that family.
In

(7)- **So** you are one of the three who escaped. (WN: 70).

One can easily decipher in this utterance that ‘So’ creates coherence in this understanding test of Kori. In fact, Kori is astonished in seeing his brother Boro, who he thought was member of those arrested. ‘So’ therefore obviously marks causal connection.

(8) - Oh, there — **Now**— Don’ t you ever go away again,

The time adverb ‘now’ is stressed. Stenström (1990) points out, rightly, that adverbials are distinguished prosodically not only by segmentation (presence or absence of a boundary) but also by tonicity (presence or absence of nuclear tone) and by tonality (choice of tone).

It can also be observed in the following example

(9) - **Now** this man, Ngotho, as you know, is a bad man. (WN: 78).

Here, ‘now’ is preparing a suggestion from Jacobo; hence, a rise fall in the sense of the tone. It is possible to see in this suggestion, the displaying of one’ s subjectivity. That Jacobo’ s subjectivity is contained in the sequence

(10) - "As I was telling you the other day" (WN: 78)

By "I was telling" which implies the speaking subject's authority. The focus on 'now' was indicating to the character Howlands that it is high acting if peace is to come.

In the same line, Bréal (1897:254-5) states that axiologic subjectivity is embedded in language: «Ce côté subjectif est représenté: par des mots ou des membres de phrase, par des formes grammaticales, par le plan général de nos langues¹». In the case under study, the grammatical forms are at stake. As Thakur, (1998 : 2) put it "a grammar, which is the art of using words properly, comprises four parts: orthography, etymology, syntax and prosody". With this high awareness, one will easily agree with Palmer (1981:157) that "With other variations in the intonation tune the speaker can express emotions, attitudes, etc., and this is a more typical usage of intonation".

Apart from the marginal stress dimensions of the time adverb 'now' and the conjunction 'so', what do we know of them when they are unstressed?

I.2. UNSTRESSED TIME ADVERB 'NOW' AND UNSTRESSED CONJUNCTION 'SO' .

In discussing conjuncts, Wichmann (1998:220) concluded that "In their unstressed form, these conjuncts behave just like other grammatical conjunctions (because, and etc)".

(11) - He is anxious that you go on, **so** you might bring light to our home. (WN: 38).

In this interaction, Kamau is explaining his junior brother Njoroge the reason why Kamau should not go to school and why Njoroge should. It sounds here obvious that 'so' has the

¹¹ This subjective side is represented by words or parts of the sentence, by grammatical forms, by the general lay out of our languages. (Translation mine).

status of an inferential connection. It marks the causal relationship between what Father said and Njoroge's going to school. Consequently, the conjunction 'so' is unstressed. However, it is worth noting that the conjunction 'so' should not be mixed up with other 'so' like the infinitive marker in 9 and the intensifier 'so'. For example, in

(12) - "And help me God **so** that Mwihaki may not beat me in class." (WN: 44) or

(13) - "That's how I feel and that's what makes it all **so** awful" (WN: 112)

Even if Aijmer (2002:66) acknowledged "the exact relationship between 'now' and prosody is unclear", it seems fair not to stress it when it functions as grammatical word category, that is as a time adverb and chiefly when it is utterance-internal. It will be exemplified in

(14) - "I can **now** make a chair, a bed, and things like that" (WN: 42).

Kamau is praising his achievements. The temporal adverb 'now' indicates the particular speaking moment of Kamau. As such, it is unstressed.

In the same perspective, Wichman et al (2015 :35) noticed that "If, as intonation theory claims, prosodic prominence is directly related to semantic weight, we would expect grammaticalised items to be infrequently stressed, just as function words are usually unstressed in English."

Example 15 also witnesses it:

(15) - "I have **now** been with him for six months yet it was only yesterday that he first allowed me to handle a plane". (WN: 20).

Here, Kamau is complaining about his employer Nganga, the village carpenter. His 'now' amounts to the exact moment when Nganga has decided that Kamau can handle the plane. As noticed by Benveniste (1974:83):

Le présent est proprement la source du temps. Il est cette présence au monde que l'acte d'énonciation rend seul possible, car, qu'on veuille

bien y réfléchir, l'homme ne dispose d'aucun autre moyen de vivre le « maintenant » et de le faire actuel que de le réaliser par l'insertion du discours dans le monde²

It is true that some claim that the degree of prosodic prominence is directly related to the informativeness or propositionality of the associated word or phrase, but Palmer (1981: 156) mentioned "The use of a rising intonation is to indicate a question and that of a fall-rise to suggest". Palmer continued by saying that (op. cit: 157) "Falls are associated more with statements, though a more casual or tentative statement can occur with a rise." It becomes therefore comprehensible that 'now' and 'so' be unstressed because of statements displayed. 'So' signals that the force of the utterance is a conclusion which follows from the preceding discourse and 'now' shows the speaking moment.

Warningly as put Rosenblatt (2005:22) "The polysemic character of language invalidates any simplistic approach to meaning", it seems relevant to discuss 'so' and 'now' under another angle. In other words, what is 'now' when it is not a time adverb? And what is 'so' when it not an inferential connection marker? In which way do they function prosodically then?

II. DISCOURSE MARKERS 'NOW' AND 'SO' AND THEIR PROSODIC CONTOURS.

Palmer's assertion in this section deserved attention. "A great deal of meaning in the spoken language is carried by the prosodic and paralinguistic features of language—intonation, stress, rhythm, loudness, as well as features as facial expressions and gestures"

² The present tense is clearly the source of time. It is this presence in the world that only the enunciation act makes possible, because, deep thinking reveals that, man has no other means to live the "now" and to make it present if it is not by its discourse insertion in the world. (Translation mine).

. (1981:39). It teaches that in language, nothing is innocent, that anything can convey meaning. That is what can't be verbalised can be expressed bodily or in another way. In other terms, in language nothing can be considered as unutterable since there is always a way to say things.

II.1. STRESSED DISCOURSE MARKERS 'NOW' AND 'SO' .

Among the different aspects of the expression strategies of “**now**” and “**so**”, a focus will be put on intonation. As concluded by Palmer (1981:39) "We can by various devices, including intonation, indicate what is important, contrastive or new"

It is made obvious in the example that follows:

(16) - We want back our land! **Now!** (WN: 58).

This stressed discourse marker 'now' can pair the utterance:

(17)-"Today, we, with one voice, we must rise and shout:" (WN: 58)

One can picture the above sentence as if he were doing things with words³.

As it can be observed, discourse markers are typically from lexical material. That is to say that the discourse marker 'now' has first of all a propositional content. In other words, they can by themselves have a meaning. This is for example not the case of the deictic “now” that is empty varying according to the locutor's position. Its development entails desemanticisation that is loss of meaning and increasing pragmaticalisation; meaning in context. With 'now', one will learn that, taking into account the punctuation, it reflects

³ A parody of John Langshaw Austin's *How To Do Things With Words*. (1962).

the attitude and emotion of the speaker Ngotho, which can but be understood in context. Jarzabkowski & Seidl (2007) wrote "that discourse has institutional properties that enable its transmission within and between context."

In fact, the core meaning encoded by the discourse marker 'now' provides the hearer with the information about how "to interpret the message conveyed by that segment 2 (S2) vis-a-vis the interpretation of segment 1 (S1). For Lenk (1998:52)

Discourse markers are short lexical items, used with a pragmatic meaning on a metalingual level of discourse in order to signal for the hearer how the speaker intends the present contribution to be related to preceding and/or following parts of the discourse.

Similarly, the conjunction "so" can be prosodically marked where it functions as the boundary marker. For Muller (2005:80), 'so' "relates instructions to the beginning of the narrative in the interaction". The example 14 evidenced it: "To kill. Unless you kill, you' ll be killed. **So** you go on killing and destroying." (WN: 102). Boro, the freedom fighter with this discourse marker 'so' instructs about the necessity of fighting because survival is at stake. In that case, the subjectification of the discourse marker 'so' increases the association with the speaker attitude, hence the stressed discourse marker 'so' .

As can be concluded, high awareness of un-subjectivity is provided by Michel Bréal (op.cit: 254):

« L'élément subjectif », « S' il est vrai, comme on l' a prétendu quelquefois, que le langage soit un drame où les mots figurent comme acteurs et où l' agencement grammatical reproduit les mouvements des personnages, il faut au moins corriger cette comparaison par une

circonstance spéciale : l' impresario intervient fréquemment dans l' action pour y mêler ses réflexions et son sentiment personnel»⁴.

The idea is that for language to include axiological subjectivity is not new. The ignorance of the subjective element most often causes conversation failure.

Ringle & Bruce (1982:203) will therefore point out that

Speakers frequently misunderstand one another but are somehow able to detect and repair one another's errors. Conversation failure, in fact appears to be the rule rather than the exception. The reason that dialogue is such an effective means of communication is not because the thoughts of the participants are in such perfect harmony, but rather because the lack of harmony can be discovered and addressed when it is necessary.

It then appears relevant to draw attention on stressed 'now' and 'so' because of the importance they have in communication and Palmer (1981:158) observed:

Concentration on the written language has misled grammarians —they have often failed to see that the spoken language is different from the written and have, misleadingly, attempted to describe the spoken language in terms appropriate to the written.

⁴ "The subjective element", "if it is true, as one sometimes pretended it, that language is a drama where the words represent actors and where the grammatical arrangement reproduced the characters' movements, one must at least correct the comparison by a special circumstance : the impresario frequently intervenes in the action to convey his reflections and his personal feeling. (Translation mine).

In their stressed form, however, they behave as other grammatical elements do, whether noun phrase, adverbial or main clause, when a new topic or title is being announced—namely by treating the item as a complete utterance according to Wichman (1998:35). This will obviously widen the scope of the discourse marker which according to Quirk et al. "can relate units much larger than sentences: nonetheless at the beginning of a paragraph or a section of a text, the discourse marker will indicate a conjoining contrast with the whole preceding paragraph or section" (1985:632).

(18) - "**Now**, don't you pretend that you don't know the answer. Can't you see home?" (WN: 38).

Kamau is using the discourse marker 'now' which acts as a turn-taking signal. In the terms of Aijmer (2002:42), 'now' is used for "Introducing a new turn". For her, "Whenever a new turn is introduced, the item also functions as a turn-taker, signaling the other participants in the conversation that the speaker wants to start a new contribution". Kamau's contribution is in fact linked to the non-absolutisation of school. Whereas his junior brother Njoroge thinks the

(19) - "...schooling was the very best that a boy could have" (WN:38),

Kamau sees relativity in this view. This stressed 'now' has nothing to do with the time adverb 'now'. Even the punctuation mark that follows it shows that intonation. A very similar example is the example the following:

(20) - "... **Now**, the chief was a big man with much land". (WN: 63)

In speech, this phenomenon of linking across larger or smaller domains is taken in charge by prosody. In such a case, the size of the shift is exaggerated.

A careful look at this functioning will undoubtedly lead to parroting Aijmer (2000) when she argues that "Prosody plays an important role in distinguishing various uses of pragmatic markers. For instance, the temporal adverb 'now' and the pragmatic marker 'now' tend to be realised differently from a prosodic point of view". The core meaning is formulated by Holmes (1985: 53) as "an overt signal that the speaker is assuming that the hearer accepts or is already familiar with the propositional content of her or his utterance, and functions to emphasize the validity of that content". Knowingly, the speaker uses lexical signpost, which structure the discourse on a metacommunicative level.

On the basis on that, it is quite normal to agree with Benveniste (1974: 84) that:

Dans son tour syntaxique comme dans son intonation, l'assertion vise à communiquer une certitude, elle est la manifestation la plus commune de la présence du locuteur dans l'énonciation, elle a même des instruments spécifiques qui l'expriment ou l'impliquent⁵.

Dewey's warning is proved reasonable when he wrote that "A universe of experience is a precondition of a universe of discourse" (1938: 68). This uncertain feature of discourse markers led Traugott (1997:5) to state that "If we want to claim that discourse markers are the result of the processes of grammaticalisation we have to rethink the criteria of grammaticalisation as well as the nature of the grammar".

⁵ In its syntactic form or in its intonation, the assertion aims to communicate a certainty, it is the speaker's most common indicator of his presence in enunciation, it even has specific instrument that express it or implies it. (Translation mine).

II.2. UNSTRESSED DISCOURSE MARKERS ‘NOW’ AND ‘SO’ .

The discourse marker ‘Now’ is not stressed when used as a conjunct; that as a adverbial with a connective function. In fact, conjuncts and disjunctive elements are tools in discourse. But while disjunctives have primarily non-connective function, conjuncts have primarily connective function.

" ‘conjuncts, adverbials with a connective function, on the other hand, are either separate with a falling tone, or unstressed and integrated. The distribution is not given. It is therefore not surprising that the same prosodic patterns can be found on ‘normal’ conjunctions (co-ordinating, subordination). The idea is that discourse particles can have uses in common with other grammatical categories". Aijmer (2000 :27)

It is illustrated in the following example:

(21) - "**Now**, you know that at the beginning of things there was only one man (Gikuyu) and one woman (Mumbi)" (WN: 24).

Ngotho was telling a story. This ‘now’ is unstressed, it is joining what has just been said and the subsequent thought. This helps perceive that there is no newness but rather a focus. Moreover, the subsequent discourse marker ‘you know’ conveys that there is a shared knowledge of father and his audience. For this reason, the conjunct ‘now’ is unstressed.

As conveyed by its name, a conjunctive adverb brings together two complete thoughts and each clause can stand on its own as a sentence. Here, the first clause is

followed by a semi-colon. Sometimes there is a comma after the conjunctive adverb, 'now' and 'so' listed in this category.

'so' in the example below unveils another aspect.

(22) - "So soon?" (WN: 93)

That aspect of 'so' complies with the Colling COBUILD English Dictionary (1995: 1581-1582) entry: "in conversations to introduce a new topic". In the interaction, the attention will be diverted. The focus is now on the 'time' judged 'soon'. Fortunately, as the comment goes "She didn't hear" (WN: 93). Mwihiaki's failure to understand this utterance made them stuck to the destroying topic.

Conclusion

Linguistic units 'now' and 'so' cannot be thoroughly studied if greater attention is not devoted to their prosodic dimension. Most often, the time adverb 'now' is not stressed chiefly when it is utterance-internal. When it is the case it occurs with verbs in the present tense. Prosodically, the discourse marker '**now**' often constitutes a tone unit on its own. Therefore it is accentuated. But, unexpectedly, the discourse marker 'now' can be part of a larger tone unit. In such a context, '**now**' is unstressed.

'so' is unstressed as it is a coordinating conjunction. But when it is a discourse marker, 'so' is stressed. The rising intonation indicates an intention to continue the turn, while its lengthened vowel stresses hesitation or reflection. Nevertheless, it might happen that the discourse marker 'so' be unstressed, it then works as a conjunctive adverb.

As can be seen, discourse markers ‘**now**’ and ‘**so**’ share functions with other grammatical classes. And their intonational meaning relates propositional content to prosodic prominence. One can rightly state that there is no one-to-one relationship between prosody and the lexical item, or between prosody and word class.

On disambiguating the two elements ‘**Now**’ and ‘**so**’, it is worth mentioning that ‘**now**’ and ‘**so**’ are not analysed as part of the same micro-system. Both are rather part of two different and quite distinguishable micro-systems where they work as homophoneous and homographic homonym pairs. That is the micro-system ‘**now**’ (time adverb) and ‘**now**’ (discourse marker) on one hand and the (conjunction) ‘**so**’ and ‘**so**’ (the discourse marker) on the other hand.

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