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## The sentence final particles *wé* and *tá* in Ikwere

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### 1. Introduction

Among the wide class of familiar discourse markers<sup>1</sup> found in many languages of the world, a subset of less familiar particles<sup>2</sup> which mainly (but not exclusively) occurs in the sentence final position is found in some languages including Ikwere, an Igboïd language of the Benue-Congo branch. They are referred to as sentence final particles. Sentence final particles have also clearly been identified in other Nigerian languages including Igbo (Williamson 1972; Echeruo 1998); Kana (Ikoro 1996: 247); and the Nigerian Pidgin English (Faraclas 1996: 116, 209 and 283).<sup>3</sup>

Consistent with their traditional label as discourse markers, sentence final particles seem to express a wide range of meanings both within a given language and across languages. According to Williamson (1972), the particle <o> in Igbo for instance, is used when speaking to someone at a distance; it is also used as a sign of affirmation, or as assent to a salutation. In Kana, these particles may conclude a story, provide the reason for an action, express a speaker's emotions (e.g. total disappointment, deep anger, complete frustration) or indicate an obligation (Ikoro 1996: 247-248). And in the Nigerian Pidgin English, the sentence final particle <o> adds the meaning of empathy, solidarity and realis modality to the assertion (Faraclas 1996: 116).

### 2. Aim

This article focuses on two sentence final particles *wé* and *tá* in Ikwere. There are two reasons for that: The first is that though Ikwere has several sentence final particles as illustrated in examples (1) to (6) below, *wé* and *tá* are among the most common ones encountered in everyday language. The second reason is that so far, I have been able to carry out proper investigation on these two particles alone.

This article is an attempt to give a precise account of the specific part each of the two particles plays in sentences and in the construction of the meaning of such sentences, and to work out the invariant meaning element of each of them.

To achieve this aim, I consider their distribution. I also take into account, where necessary, the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic constraints surrounding their use in a given situation. I further consider the way they interact with other elements in sentences in which they occur and check the semantic effects they bring about or the impact their deletion and replacement may have on the well-formedness of sentences. In other words, the way each particle operates

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<sup>1</sup> Interested readers may see Hartmann (1994: 2957); Paillard (1986, 1999, 2001, 2002); Paillard & Markowicz (1986); Schourup (1999); Schiffrin (1987); and Hansen (1998) for discussion.

<sup>2</sup> I use the word 'particle' here to refer to those linguistic units in Ikwere that do not belong to the class of verbs, nouns or qualifying terms.

<sup>3</sup> Interested readers may also see Ameka (1990); Dimmendaal (1996) and Singler (1988) for African languages spoken outside Nigeria. Similar particles have also been found and massively described in both Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese (see for instance Law (2002); Shei (2005)) as well as in Japanese (see for instance Saigo 2011).

in everyday speech is examined in detail and characterized. It is hoped that this work will contribute to a better understanding of discourse markers.

The exact number of sentence final particles (henceforth SFP) in Ikwere remains as yet unknown. However, the most common ones include *wé*, *tá*, *ó*, <sup>2</sup>*ò*, *kó* and *nú* as illustrated below.<sup>4</sup>

- [A cry of pain]
- (1) m̀ wu-nêm wé  
1SG die-PFT ASS SFP<sup>5</sup>  
I am dead (I'm finished).
- (2) ì wó-né máyá tá  
2SG drink-PFT NON ASS wine SFP  
By the way, have you had some drink?
- (3) m̀ zé-nê-m ó  
1SG go-PFT ASS AGR SFP  
I'm gone.
- (4) sík<sup>wǔ</sup> cíkè <sup>2</sup>ò  
to call.INJ Chike SFP  
Call Chike (for me) [The speaker is not happy at all].
- (5) jé kó  
2SG.EMPH SFP  
What about you? (Won't you eat?)
- (6) kwùrú á nú  
carry someone.INJ 3SGO SFP  
Carry him please.

<sup>4</sup> Note however that *kó* and *nú* can also occur in other positions which are not examined here.

<sup>5</sup> Abbreviations

1SG = 1<sup>st</sup> person singular pronoun; 1SGO = 1<sup>st</sup> person singular pronoun object; 2SG.EMPH = 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular pronoun emphatic with contrastive effect; 2PL = 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural pronoun; 3SG = 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronoun; 3SGO = 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronoun object; 3SG.EMPH.EXCL = 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronoun emphatic with exclusion; ASS = assertive; AGR = 1<sup>st</sup> person singular agreement; CTF = centrifugal movement; CTP = centripetal movement; DAT = dative of interest (quite similar to ethical dative in French, used here for lack of a better label); F.T. NEG = falling tone negation marker; INJ = injunctive; LOG = logophoric pronoun; PFT = perfect marker; PFT NON ASS = nonassertive perfect marker; SFP = sentence final particle.

Ikwere tones are indicated as follows: *á* for High, *à* for Low, *ǎ* for Rising, *â* for Falling and *ʼá* for Down-step High. The tilde under a vowel indicates nasalization. IPA symbols are used in Ikwere examples except that *dʒ* is replaced with *j*; *tʃ* with *c*, and *j* with *y*. The symbol *gb* is used here for nonexplosive, bilabial stop with no velar occlusion. (Interested readers may see Clements & Osu 2002 for further details).

### 3. Theoretical background

This article is realized using the theory of linguistic markers within the framework of enunciative and predicative operations, often referred to as TOPE (French: *Théorie des Opérations Prédicatives et Enonciatives*), elaborated by Antoine Culioli and his research associates (Culioli 1990, 1995, 1999a&b; see also Groussier 2000; Osu 2003a, 2005).

The basic assumption is that there is a finite series of cognitive processes underlying language activity. These processes, called linguistic operations, are represented by words in individual languages. And for that reason words, including the sentence final particles under study, are termed as markers of operations. However, several units can represent the same operation just as one single unit can represent several operations. Therefore, there is no one-to-one relationship between markers and operations. Each marker has its own way of marking a specific operation or operations. And each marker has an invariant property that is flexible enough to enable it to behave the way it does. In this view, the specific role a marker plays while interacting with other markers in the construction of meanings is equivalent to its invariant property.

Within Culioli's theoretic model, a *notion* is a hybrid entity that provides extralinguistic materials which linguistic units are made from. Roughly speaking, a notion is like a mental image, our representation of reality. It is regarded as a complex bundle of physico-cultural properties that has no fixed boundary, meaning that with additional properties the boundary can always be extended. In fact, notions are characterized by two things, namely ramification as a result of inter-notional relationships created by the user (e.g., sheep and dog as opposed to sheep and lion); and abundance as physical, cultural and anthropological properties interrelate in such a way as to refer to a multiplicity of potentialities (see Culioli 1995: 44).

These notional properties are filtered with the help of a certain number of primitive operations that underlie language activity. One such operation is quantifiabilization (also referred to as fragmentation or individuation). It is a complex operation of determination that can be broken down into two components i.e., quantification and qualification. The operation of quantification consists of extracting and singling out an occurrence of a given notion and locating such an occurrence with reference to spatio-temporal parameters (enunciator and time of enunciation) of the referential space while the operation of qualification differentiates the extracted occurrence from all other related occurrences.

The result of the operation of quantifiabilization is that a notional domain is constructed. Therefore, a notional domain is an occurrence of a notion. Lexical items, grammatical units and predicative relations (or grammatical sentences) are obtained by filtering notions. For example, with the notion 'being a dog' or 'being red' one can construct a notional domain 'dog' or 'red'; similarly, from the notion of aspect, one can construct aspectual categories; and finally from a complex notion of the type 'lion, trap, escape' one can construct a complex notional domain or predicative relation <lion-escape trap> which utterances can be made from.

It must be underlined that notions are only perceived through words, and that there is no one-to-one relationship between notions and words; a word, a lexical unit, a morpheme or a predicative relation does not equate with a notion, it is all a matter of representation, a matter of regulation in the sense that a lexical unit embodies only some properties of the notion but never all of them.

It should then be clear that words are very complex entities. They are a means of representing cognitive activity, real entities, events and states of affairs and at the same time, they are traces of linguistic operations.

A notional domain is organized into three different zones that are intrinsically related. These are, the Interior zone which represents the notional domain by default; the Exterior zone which is the linguistic complement of the Interior; and finally, the Boundary, which is neither the Interior nor the Exterior but compatible with the Interior and the Exterior. Thus the notional domain is inherently composed of two equiponderant values ( $p$  and  $p'$ ). Since  $p$  is by definition different from  $p'$ , the relation between both is characterized as that of alterity (or otherness).

The Interior zone contains a class of occurrences which identify with one another and at the same time differ from each other. The Interior zone also contains an abstract representative occurrence that serves both as its organizing centre (or prototype) and as its attracting centre. The organizing centre enables one to discern what occurrences do or do not belong to the class associated with the domain. It can be likened to the Platonic archetype. The attracting centre enables one to state that something is identifiable with the representative occurrence to a lesser and lesser degree. And it can be likened this time to the prototype in prototype semantics (see in particular Rosch 1978; Lakoff 1987; Kleiber 1990; Geeraerts 1994). The Interior zone represents the notional domain and therefore is associated with a positive value, conventionally noted  $p$  while the Exterior zone is associated with the negative value and is noted  $p'$ .

The Boundary, also noted  $p'$ , is assimilated a priori to the Exterior zone. However, it entertains relations which can be qualified as simple difference with the Interior zone. The Exterior zone is regarded as being totally different from the Interior zone. The Exterior zone has therefore nothing to do at all with the Interior zone. For example, if we use the word 'dog' to refer to a notional domain, then anything that has nothing in common with the prototypical representation of 'dog' will belong to the Exterior zone, while a hybrid wolf-dog for instance will be viewed as belonging to the Boundary.

The article is divided into two unequal parts. This can be accounted for by the fact that the SFP *wé* is more frequent than the SFP *tá*. The first part deals with the SFP *wé*. It is argued that this particle marks the operation of asserting.<sup>6</sup> But given that there can be different ways of asserting, I underline what kind of assertion the SFP *wé* brings into play. The second part discusses the SFP *tá*. I show that it only occurs in questions. I also show that it is used where the need arises to call into question something initially introduced.

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<sup>6</sup> Within the Culiolian approach, assertion is a technical term and should not be confused with the English 'Assertion'. The latter word in English corresponds to what Culioli describes as the positive assertion. I discuss this technical term further below.

#### 4. The sentence final particle *wé*

As earlier mentioned, the SFP *wé* marks assertion. The technical term assertion/asserting here means that the speaker, in his capacity as enunciator, noted  $S_0$ ,<sup>7</sup> takes responsibility no matter how little, for the validity of a complex notional domain, in other words, a predicative relation written X-P (where X stands for subject and P for process) in such a way that any other predicative relation (X-Q, X-Q', X-P', Y-Q, Y-Q', Y-P, Y-P', etc.) is automatically excluded. In fact, the operation of asserting implies two complementary processes. First,  $S_0$  (or asserter) indicates that something is the case. Thus,  $S_0$  locates an occurrence of a predicative relation yet unidentified, relative to a referential system also called situation of enunciation (noted  $Sit_0$ ). Second,  $S_0$  constructs an occurrence of a specific predicative relation with two constituent values (recall that p stands for the positive, and p' for the negative). The choice of one value invalidates (rules out) the other. (See in particular Culioli 2002: 280). Culioli further writes:

“To be able to assert, to produce an assertion, I must declare it publicly: an interior assertion is not an assertion; but there also needs be the commitment of someone who takes responsibility, who guarantees your statement or who wishes to assert something despite your position. If it is simply an instance of locution, you do not really have assertion. For there to be responsibility, one must guarantee what one states.” (1995: 92).

In some cases the focus of the assertion or the asserted element is the relationship between the speaker and what he says. Put differently, the focus of assertion is the very act of saying something.

In some other cases the focus of assertion is what the speaker says, otherwise called speech content.

But we can also imagine situations where the object of assertion is the speaker on one hand and what he says on the other. In this case the speaker and what he says are asserted separately, and indicated each time by a different marker.

Alternatively, we can think of situations where none of them is the object of assertion, meaning that there is no assertion at all. See questions and injunctive constructions for example.

##### 4.1 Different uses of the SFP *wé* and analysis

The SFP *wé* occurs in affirmative, negative and injunctive sentences. It also occurs in questions. I examine each sentence type in turn.

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<sup>7</sup> The speaker refers to a real physical entity whereas the enunciator is not just the speaker. The enunciator is neither the psychological subject nor the psychoanalytic ego. The enunciator is an abstract metalinguistic construct derived from the speaker. The enunciator serves as the parameter by which the dynamic process involved in the production of well-formed utterances are calculated and, consequently, understood. In sum, the enunciator is a SIMULATED SUBJECT. For ease of reading, I use the personal pronoun 'he' for enunciator. (cf. Osu 2003a: 543)

### 4.1.1 Affirmative sentences

Affirmative sentences are a means by which a speaker positively evaluates events, states of affairs, processes or predicative relations. The speaker considers that a given state of affairs represented by a predicative relation is *certain* in the sense that its locating relative to time and space is conform to what he expects. Put differently, the speaker states with an affirmative sentence that a state of affairs *is the case*. Thus if he says ‘it is raining’, he means that <it is raining> is the case. Now consider (7)-(9):

(7) \*m̀ wú-nêm  
1SG die-PFT ASS  
\*I am dead.

(8) m̀ wú-nêm t̂  
1SG die-PFT ASS today  
I am dead (finished) today.

(9) [A cry of pain]  
m̀ wú-nêm wé  
1SG die-PFT ASS SFP  
I am dead (finished) and I mean it.

A sentence like (7) \*m̀ wú-nêm ‘I’m dead’ is not well formed. As a native speaker of Ikwere, one has the impression that it is not a complete sentence, it is not stabilized. But if I add t̂ ‘today’ which makes it m̀ wú-nêm t̂ ‘I’m finished/dead today’, it becomes stabilized and natural as given in (8). This kind of sentence is produced by someone who has committed an offence and is afraid of the punishment due to him or her. So, (8) can be interpreted as follows: “I foresee a punishment so severe that at the end of it, I will have died”. But though the speaker states that the predicative relation <I-be dead>, rewritten X-P, is the case, there is no evidence that he will actually be punished (or dead to use the speaker’s metaphor).

Further, if in place of m̀ ‘I’, we use the third person singular ð as in ð wú-nêm ‘S/he is dead’ for instance, we obtain a sentence that is equally natural. With ð wú-nêm ‘S/he is dead’, the speaker tends to answer the question whether or not a certain person is still alive. The question can be implicit or explicit depending on the context.

We can therefore deduce that the unnaturalness of (7) \*m̀ wú-nêm ‘I am dead’ is due to the fact that one cannot be dead and talk at the same time, at least to our common knowledge. In both m̀ wú-nêm t̂ ‘I’m finished/dead today’ and ð wú-nêm ‘S/he is dead’ the speaker states that the relation X-P is the case. This is a way of asserting the validity of X-P.

Now, if we replace t̂ ‘today’ with the SFP wé as in (9), the sentence is still valid but takes an additional meaning: It is as if the speaker is emphasizing what he says. What specific part does the SFP wé play in the construction of this meaning and how does it do that?

First, we find that (9) m̀ wú-nêm wé ‘I am dead (finished) and I mean it’ also typically occurs in a situation where someone is being severely punished. Apart from stabilizing the sentence and rendering it natural, the SFP wé further indicates that there is a shift of the focus of

assertion. Thus, instead of the relation X-P the focus is on the act of saying X-P. In other words, this time, the enunciator takes responsibility not for the validity of X-P, but for the very act of saying/producing X-P. And to guarantee his own act of saying something is tantamount to committing himself twice (first for X-P and second for his act of saying). Hence the impression that the speaker emphasizes what he is saying.

But then, why must the speaker want to assert his own act of saying? Is there anything in the situational context that urges him to do that?

In the situation at hand the speaker in (9) tends to say that he is/will be dead. That alone is enough to breed doubts because as I pointed out earlier, a dead person does not talk to our hearing. The speaker's doubts mean that there are two alternative values (p and p') related to two inter-subjective positions, the enunciator's position and the co-enunciator's position. Thus, from the point of view of the enunciator (noted S<sub>0</sub>), p <I-be dead> is the case. But from the point of view of the co-enunciator (noted S'<sub>0</sub>), p' <I-not be dead> is the case.

Put differently, there is a relation of alterity (or otherness)<sup>8</sup> between the point of view of S<sub>0</sub> and the point of view of S'<sub>0</sub>. With the SFP *wé* the point of view of S<sub>0</sub> is presented as the valid one against that of S'<sub>0</sub> i.e., against any other point of view (real or imaginary), and against all odds. Example (10) reveals similar features.

(10) [A cry of pain]

*ścí m wé*  
    leg ISGO SFP  
    My leg is paining (me) severely.

Ikwere has several ways of expressing the fact that one is feeling pains. For instance, to explain why you don't want to walk around, you can say *ścí nògbúm ígbúgbú* 'I have leg pains (literally, leg is paining me)'. You can equally say, *éyím ścí k<sup>w</sup>ékám mś-lǎ ðlòlò* 'my dear, my leg(s) do(es)n't let me make any move', etc. Note the use of the reduplicative verb form ...*mś-lǎ ðlòlò* here. This form implies that the speaker cannot realize what he refers to as *ðlòlò* 'the act of shaking one's body' or 'moving one's body' in any way at all. In fact, in some earlier publications (Osu 2008, 2010), I have shown that reduplicative forms generally indicate that an occurrence of a given notional domain is identified relative to the representative occurrence of the domain, with the result that alterity which originally characterizes the domain is eliminated. This domain is therefore said to be a centred domain in the sense that it fully identifies with p, the representative occurrence. Thus, the reduplicative form implies that there is p and just p, meaning that there is no room for anything outside the domain in question or again, nothing outside p.

The sequence *ścí m wé* in (10) contains no verb. We can assume that the verb is simply elliptical and that the situation in which the sentence is produced can help identify or

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<sup>8</sup> To be more specific, alterity is a technical term that refers to an inherent property of language activity. It underlines the quantitative and qualitative singularity of a given linguistic object; the property that differentiates such an object from other linguistic objects. With this term, one can account for failures, mistakes, misunderstandings, ambiguity, and polysemy that characterize language activity. This term equally enables one to account for regulation or adjustment between the enunciator and the co-enunciator in the process of meaning construction (cf. Culioli 1990: 103).



reintroduce it like this: *ǎcí mí h<sup>w</sup>ùlém wé* ‘my leg has disappeared’; *ǎcí gbàjíméném mé wé* ‘my leg has broken’.

Assuming the speaker says *ǎcí mí* that is, in the absence of the SFP *wé*, assuming also that it is used as the short form for *ǎcí mí h<sup>w</sup>ùlém* ‘my leg has disappeared’, he would simply be stating that the p value of the predicative relation <my leg-disappear> is the case. Consequently, the p' value is presented as ‘not being the case’. We find that in the absence of *wé* the focus is on the predicative relation (i.e. what the speaker says, the content) and not on the act of saying. We must not forget however that the sequence \**ǎcí mí* is not very natural in the language.

The use of the SFP *wé* in (10) is linked to the fact that from the speaker’s own perception of things, his cry of pain (i.e., what he is saying) is not being taken seriously by someone, real or imaginary. He is then led to oppose two inter-subjective positions, introducing alterity. Thus, according to him, from the point of view of someone else (represented as S'0), perhaps due to the fact that the person is simply not aware of the speaker’s condition, the speaker’s cry of pain is not serious whereas from the speaker’s own point of view (represented as S0), his cry of pain is serious. The use of the SFP *wé* is intended to call the attention of the person to the speaker’s cries, phrased like this: “you don’t seem to pay attention to my cries, otherwise you will realize that I have serious pains”. Thus, from the alternative point of view, the p' value (i.e., anything other than the act of crying) is valid. But from the point of view of S0 the p value (i.e., the act of crying) is valid. This is how the focus of assertion shifts from pains to the very act of crying such that any other imaginable act, any alternative point of view introduced is disqualified, and alterity eliminated. The pragmatic effect of this sentence is that the speaker’s leg pains can be interpreted as serious pains and therefore, considered for emergency treatment. Let us consider (11) and (11a) below:

(11) *cíkè byá-lé m̀ lálém wé*  
 Chike come-PFT NON ASS 1SG return.CTF-PFT ASS AGR SFP  
 If Chike comes, I will go away and I mean it.

(11a) *cíkè byá-lé m̀ lálém*  
 Chike come-PFT NON ASS 1SG return.CTF-PFT ASS AGR  
 If Chike comes, I will go away.

If we delete the SFP *wé* in (11), we have a valid inter-clausal sentence, as illustrated in (11a), in which the speaker states that the relation introduced by the subordinate clause *m̀ lálém* ‘I will go away’ is the result of the relation introduced by the main clause *cíkè byá-lé* ‘If Chike comes’. This kind of relation (11a) does not warrant the additional comment ‘and I mean it’.

Indeed, the use of the SFP *wé* in (11) creates the impression that the speaker emphasizes X-P i.e., the fact that he will go away should there be Y-Q i.e. Chike come. In so doing, the speaker seeks to avoid Y-Q.

The discussion so far shows that this impression is quite consistent with the way the SFP *wé* operates in the language. It comes from the fact that the speaker urges the addressee to listen carefully to what he is saying and take it seriously.

By urging the addressee, the speaker in his capacity as enunciator, asserts his very act of saying what he is saying. In point of fact, the SFP *wé* is used here to insist on the possibility



granting him protection. Therefore, Osi wants to know if he could choose not to protect his friend next time. His uncle replies that he is bound to protect his friend no matter what happens.

Recall that the notional domain is inherently composed of two equal weighted values (p and p') and that p is by definition different from p'. If we use X to represent  $\acute{e}k^{w\grave{a}}$  'the act of protecting someone' and P for  $\grave{a}l\grave{a}$  'to go away', we can then say that X is located at the very centre of the Interior zone of P. If we combine all that with negation, we obtain the opposite i.e., X is located at the very centre of the Exterior zone of P, noted X-P'.

Now let us consider (13). The fact that the SFP *wé* combines with a reduplicative verb form in (13) is further evidence that this particle does not mark the assertion of the predicative relation. This sentence is produced in a situation where despite his uncle's answer Osi continues to give reasons why he may not protect his friend next time. It's as if he is calling into question what his uncle has said to him. Therefore, the speaker uses (13) to emphasize what he has already told Osi.

- (13)  $\acute{o}s\grave{i}$ ,  $\acute{e}k^{w\grave{a}}$   $\acute{l}\grave{a}$   $\grave{a}\grave{l}\grave{a}$   $w\acute{e}$   
 Osi act of protecting someone go away.F.T. NEG REDUP SFP  
 Osi, the act of protecting a friend has no end (or the act of protecting friends should never leave you).

We find that the use of the SFP *wé* in this context is a means of avoiding further arguments with Osi. Here again, the speaker uses this particle to indicate to Osi that he, in his capacity as enunciator, asserts something in particular. What matters therefore is whether or not Osi should be allowed to call the act of producing X-P' into question.

We have two alternative points of view with  $S_0$  taking responsibility for p' (i.e. his act of saying that X-P' is the case) while assigning the responsibility of p (i.e., any other possible act of saying e.g. that X-P is the case) to  $S'_0$ . The whole process amounts to validating p' and not validating p. It should be noted here that p' is the right value from the enunciator's point of view because of the negative construction.

- (14)  $y\acute{a}$   $gb\acute{u}-l\acute{e}$   $\grave{a}$   
 3SG.EMPH.EXCL to kill-PFT NON ASS F.T. NEG 3SGO  
*He*<sup>9</sup> didn't kill it or It is not him who killed it.

After Osi has come back from the bush with a Grass-cutter he claims to have killed, Chima tries to find out whether or not Osi is the one who killed it. With the negative construction, the speaker states that Osi is not the one who killed it. Thus, whereas Osi in his capacity as co-enunciator asserts the predicative relation X-P (i.e. Osi-kill Grass-cutter) and validates the p value of the domain in question, the speaker in his own capacity as enunciator asserts the relation X-P' (i.e. Osi-not kill Grass-cutter) and therefore validates p' or put differently, invalidates p.

- (15)  $y\acute{a}$   $gb\acute{u}-l\acute{e}$   $\grave{a}$   $w\acute{e}$   
 3SG.EMPH.EXCL to kill-PFT NON ASS F.T. NEG 3SGO SFP  
*He* didn't kill it or It is not him who killed it. (I tell you).

<sup>9</sup> I use italics here to mean emphasis.

The SFP *wé* occurs in (15) because the speaker senses that despite his answer, Chima does not totally believe him, meaning that Chima still has doubts as to whether or not Osi is the one who killed the Grass-cutter. So when the speaker uses the marker *wé*, he doesn't mean to focus on whether Osi did kill the Grass-cutter or not, but to make Chima believe what he said. Thus, Chima's doubts imply that there is an alternative choice to the speaker's act of saying.

And the consequence is that the p value is brought forward, where p stands for the act of saying anything other than that it is not Osi who killed the Grass-cutter. The additional comment "I tell you" renders the idea that the speaker maintains what he earlier said. Therefore, the asserted value is p'.

The use of the SFP *wé* in negative sentences requires situations where the negative value of a given predicative relation is introduced by the speaker. This act of introducing the negative value is then called into question. With *wé* the speaker signifies that he maintains what he says. In other words, the speaker in his capacity as enunciator takes responsibility for what he says irrespective of whether or not what he says contains the negative value. In so doing, he validates p' (what he says) and consequently, p (what he does not say or what someone else might say) is invalidated.

#### 4.1.3 Interrogative sentences

Questions generally introduce a predicative relation while indicating that the speaker is not in a position to determine which of the two constituent values of the domain represented by this relation is valid. He therefore calls on someone else to select a value.

The SFP *wé* only occurs in questions used for greetings.<sup>10</sup> It is very important to underline the tautological nature of such questions since they are asked in order to find out whether the subject of the process is doing something which he is already doing. However, unlike rhetorical questions which do not require answers, greetings in the form of questions must receive a response otherwise the social norm will be broken. Consider (16) for instance.

- [The speaker passes by people sitting down. If he fears they might not answer his greetings, he greets them saying:]
- (16) ànù z-àmí wé  
 2PL to be-confirmation SFP  
 You are there?

In (16) the element *-àmí* in the verb *zàmí* (a contracted form for *zàmí*) 'be located in time and space' is used in order to confirm something. And it can occur with or without the SFP *wé*. Whenever it combines with the question as in (16), we obtain a sentence that can be phrased as follows: "While you comply with the custom which holds that one must answer greetings, could you confirm that you are located in time and space?"

I interpret the speaker's fear in this example as meaning that the addressee calls his greeting into question. In that case, the SFP *wé* indicates that the enunciator asserts the act of greeting (recall that his greeting consists of asking the addressee to confirm that he (the addressee) is

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, greetings in Ikwere are always in the form of a question.

actually located in time and space. Therefore, any alternative act (e.g. not greeting them the way he did) is excluded.

But if, for instance, his act of greeting is not called into question then the use of the SFP *wé* will be uncalled for.

Let us further compare (17) and (18) below:

[The speaker greets someone returning from the market:]

(17) ḡ yá-lé  
2PL return-PFT NON ASS  
You have returned?

(18) ḡ yá-lé wé  
2PL return-PFT NON ASS SFP  
You have returned? (I'm greeting you.)

And let us take a typical situation where someone returning from the market is drenched in rain. If the speaker greets the person without using the SFP *wé*, as in (17), it will be understood that he does not mean to show any concern about the state which the person is in. In other words, the speaker simply greets the person no more, no less.

Alternatively, if he uses the SFP *wé* as in (18), he means to show concern or to sympathize with the person. The question is: How does this particle enable him to achieve that?

My analysis is that the speaker assumes that for one reason or another, the addressee may not pay attention to or hear his greetings and therefore respond accordingly. Such an assumption is a way of introducing a different perception of his act of greeting, phrased like this:

“To me, you are in such a state I’m afraid you may not pay attention to my act of greeting you, and therefore, you may not reciprocate my greeting. So I am asking you to pay attention and respond accordingly”.

This phrasing brings forward the fact that the speaker takes the addressee’s condition into account. Hence the meaning of “sympathy” or “concern” as previously mentioned. Here again, we have two alternative viewpoints: the point of view of  $S_0$  (the speaker’s greeting is not just an ordinary one, it is intended to show you that he feels concerned about your condition) and the point of view of  $S'_0$  (the speaker’s greeting may be an ordinary one). Under this condition, the enunciator guarantees the speaker’s position (i.e., the act of seriously greeting the addressee), and therefore, invalidates any other position.

In this kind of use, the speaker introduces X-P e.g. (in 16) <you-be located in time and space>; and (in 17) <you-return from the market>. With the question, marked here by a combination of the non-assertive form of the verb, tone inclusive, and the intonation, he states that he is not in a position to say which of the two constituent values of the notional domain represented by X-P is the right value and therefore asks the addressee to select and validate one of the two values.

Further, we have seen that the circumstances surrounding X-P are such that the speaker’s greeting is likely to be called into question. He is led to indicate publicly that in his capacity as enunciator he takes responsibility for his act of greeting the addressee. Consequently, any other conceivable act of saying, any other position in relation to his act is excluded. In sum, the SFP *wé* indicates that the enunciator takes charge of the speaker’s act of greeting.



We must recall that the use of the SFP *wé* implies that an alternative point of view is introduced in relation to the speaker's act of saying something. This is about making a request in (20).

The alternative point of view is introduced in this example by the fact that the speaker thinks the addressee may not want to carry the baby despite his request.

Note however that it is the speaker himself who introduces the alternative point of view. But he does introduce it with the ultimate aim of blocking it. In so doing, he presents *p* as the good or necessary value so that *p'* is ruled out. The semantic effect is that the addressee is politely led to comply.

If we substitute *nó* for *wé* as in (21), we find that 1) there is need to redefine a given state of affairs; 2) an element is introduced so that it is taken into account in order to redefine such a state of affairs.

In fact, in (21), the speaker makes his request so that it will serve as a reference point for redefining the state of affairs in question, like this: take what I am telling you i.e., my point of view as the reference point in order to determine whether or not you carry the child. However, and this is a major feature of *nó*, it is not explicitly indicated whether or not other possible reference points are taken into account and/or eliminated.<sup>11</sup>

A quite similar analysis of the SFP *wé* can be made of (23). But first, a short comment on (22) is in order. This is a simple request for the addressee to come in, no more, no less. Hence one does not have the impression of emphasis. Example (23) however, suits a situation where a person does not come in despite several attempts to make him do so. The SFP *wé* signifies that the speaker's invitation holds, no going back, no calling it into question. The speaker can further make use of vowel lengthening to double the intensity of his assertion as in (24).

In sum, the SFP *wé* intrinsically contains a degree of emphasis, and vowel lengthening adds yet another degree.

(22) *bà-yâ*  
 enter-CTP  
 Come in.

(23) *bà-yâ wé*  
 enter-CTP SFP  
 Come in I say.

(24) *bà-yâ wé:*  
 enter-CTP SFP  
 Come in I say.

(25) *ánú byà-nú-ní wé*  
 2PL come-DAT-1SGO SFP  
 Come to my rescue. (Please).

Example (25) is quite similar to (9) and (10) seen previously with the difference that (25) contains a verb. Recall from examples (9) and (10) that the speaker finds himself in an

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<sup>11</sup> See Osu (2003b) for details.

uncomfortable situation. His cry of pains is nothing but a call for help, an emergency call. If we delete the *wé* particle in (25), we have a sequence that is not stabilized, meaning that we need to introduce some elements to stabilize it. Such stabilizing elements may include *óg<sup>wú</sup>* ‘celebration’ as in *ánú byànúmí óg<sup>wú</sup>* ‘Come and celebrate with me’ and *ótìbì* ‘a kind of prenuptial retreat’ as in *ánú byànúmí órǎ ótìbì* ‘Come for my prenuptial retreat’ (if it is a young lady in the process of marriage).

The injunctive construction alone (in 25) implies that the speaker invites the addressee to realize the process <come and celebrate with me>, <come for my prenuptial retreat>. And the situational context alone is enough to indicate that one is no longer dealing with an ordinary invitation.

The use of the SFP *wé* in (25) implies the following:

- a) Despite the fact that the speaker has been crying out he has not (yet) been rescued. It is as if his cry is not heard or that it is not taking place, in short, it is not recognized by the addressee. And the p' value is introduced.
- b) The speaker therefore signifies that his cry does exist. In this way, his act of crying is asserted.

Injunctive constructions introduce two alternative values with p as the privileged one from the point of view of S<sub>0</sub>, and p and p' as equiponderant for S'<sub>0</sub> pending the selection of p or p' by S'<sub>0</sub> through effective realization (or not) of the process by a subject. In this case, the SFP *wé* implies that the speaker's request or order should be considered as something serious.

#### 4.1.5 Summary of the way the SFP *wé* functions

In affirmative sentences, the speaker affirms X-P, a given predicative relation or a state of affairs. He declares that X-P is the case. But the addressee in his capacity as co-enunciator has a different point of view on this act of affirming the relation. The SFP *wé* is consistently used in order to assert the act of affirming the relation in question or the act of declaring that X-P is the case. In negative sentences, the speaker negates a predicative relation. And it is this act of negating that is asserted by the enunciator. In interrogative sentences used for greetings, the speaker's act of greeting is likely not to receive a response, which is a way of calling his act into question. But the enunciator guarantees the act. And finally, in injunctive sentences, the speaker makes a request but he is afraid his request may not be granted or listened to. Here again, the enunciator takes responsibility for the act of producing such injunctive sentences.

All this points to the fact that the SFP *wé* does not focus on the affirmation, negation, question or request. Its focus is the speaker's act of saying (i.e., affirming, negating, greeting, and making a request). Thus the use of the SFP *wé* implies that a speaker's act of saying is (tentatively) called into question maybe because this act is not considered the right one, from the point of view of S'<sub>0</sub>, an alternative point of view, serving as the source of alterity. And then, S<sub>0</sub> reassesses the relation and presents his act as the right one, with the result that the alternative point of view is ruled out.

The fact that someone says something and his act of saying asserted explains why sentences with the SFP *wé* sometimes give the impression that the speaker emphasizes what he says.



## 4.2. The sentence final particle *tá*

The SFP *tá* only occurs in the final position of interrogative sentences. Let us recall that interrogative sentences generally imply that the speaker is not in a position to state whether or not a given process has taken place. And this may be because he is not able or willing to do so. The effect of this is that the relation is not stabilized.

The question in (26) carries the verb suffix *-né* (the nasalized form of *-lé*, with the vowel ‘e’ harmonizing for [-ATR]). This suffix implies that the predicative relation <you-have some drinks> (rewritten X-P) is subject to two different constructions: a construction relative to time and space, meaning that the process represented by the relation actually takes place; and a subjective representation, implying that the process may have been expected or planned.

[Chima has come to his uncle’s family. At some point, he goes to meet his uncle. And the latter asks him:]

- (26) ɪ wó-né máyâ  
2SG to drink-PFT NON ASS wine, alcohol  
Did you have some drinks?

The aim of the question in (26) is to know if X-P located relative to time and space corresponds to X-P as expected by the speaker (that is, as represented by a subject). The interesting thing here is that the speaker in his capacity as enunciator does not favour (or give preference to) any answer. Therefore, the answer can be ‘yes’ represented as the p value or ‘no’ represented as the p’ value. Both values have equal weight (they are equiponderant). Given such an open question, it is understood that whichever value the co-enunciator validates, the enunciator will adopt it. And consequently, the two different points of view are reduced to one.

Assuming that Chima answers ‘yes’, and begins after a while, to show signs of uneasiness. The uncle may wonder whether the process which has been regarded as a given fact has actually taken place. In that case, the SFP *tá* becomes compulsory as in (27) and the question aims therefore to reassess the situation.

- (27) ɪ wó-né máyâ tá  
2SG to drink-PFT NON ASS wine, alcohol SFP  
By the way, did you have some drinks? (I suddenly have some doubts as to whether you have had some drinks).

Thus, from a position where the p value is introduced without any consideration of p’, we move to a position where the p’ value is introduced through the speaker’s doubts as an alternative value. It is up to the addressee in his capacity as the co-enunciator, to assert one value or the other. It turns out that the SFP *tá* emphasizes the relation of alterity between p and p’.

[In a telephone conversation, A asks B:]

- (28) ì n-èmé kíní  
2SG PROG-to do what  
What are you doing?

In (28) the progressive marker *n-* implies that the predicative relation <B-be doing something> (noted X-P) is located relative to time while the question word *kíní* ‘what’ indicates that the object of the process ‘do something’ has to be specified. This can be phrased as follows: Is it the occurrence  $O_i$ ,  $O_j$ ,  $O_k$ ,  $O_y$  or  $O_z$  of the class O that is valid? And unless an occurrence is selected, the relation <B-be doing something> cannot be stabilized.

[But to a person refusing to take advice, the speaker A can say:]

- (29) ì n-èmé kíní tǎ  
2SG PROG-to do what SFP  
What are you doing? (What on earth do you think you are doing  
when you refuse to take advice?)

The difference in (29) as compared to (28), is that when speaker A declares using the question that he is not in a position to say whether it is  $O_i$ ,  $O_j$ ,  $O_k$ ,  $O_y$ , or  $O_z$  that B is doing, he does not ask B to select an occurrence of the class of O in order to stabilize or validate the relation. In fact if we pay closer attention to the context here (B refuses to take advice) we observe that we are not dealing with a real question; it is a question used to disapprove of B’s attitude. More precisely, the question word *kíní* ‘what’ implies quite alright that the object of the process ‘do something’ has to be specified. But with the SFP *tǎ* the speaker additionally indicates that he is wondering whether what B is doing is worth being recognized.

We can now see how we move from a position where (in 28) the speaker recognizes X-P (he simply notices that the subject is realizing the process and asks him to specify the object or complement of the process) to a position (in 29) where he calls X-P into question, implying that the subject can as well do something else. In other words, we go from a position (in 28) where the p value assigned to X-P by default<sup>12</sup> raises no question to a position (in 29) where upon re-evaluation, p and p' are both considered possible values.

[Osi has been treated badly and threatens to retaliate by doing something very bad. But his threat begins to irritate his friend who doesn’t believe Osi can do anything tangible. Hence his friend asks him:]

- (30) má kà ì z-ògbú bádù tǎ  
1SG say 2SG FUT-kill human being SFP  
I am saying (i.e., come on), will you kill somebody?

We notice that the speaker (in 30) simultaneously introduces the predicative relation X-P <you-kill somebody> (with the default value p) and the SFP *tǎ*. The introduction of X-P here has to do with the fact that killing somebody is culturally regarded as the worst thing Osi or anyone else could do at least in such circumstances. The *z-* prefix indicates that the predicative relation <you-kill somebody> is assigned a distinguished value p, meaning that though p' has a lesser weight than p, it still remains a possible value. With the SFP *tǎ* the

<sup>12</sup> Recall that the p value is the representative or the default value of a given notional domain.

speaker indicates that upon re-evaluation he is wondering whether the p value really has more weight than p' <you-will not kill somebody>, in other words, both values are assigned equal weight.

Example (30) can be interpreted as follows: “you threaten to do something very bad, now if I take the bad thing you are talking about to mean killing somebody, I am wondering whether you would be able to do it. If you won’t be able then why disturb my peace?”

[Ekwe will be passing through the speaker’s place to the farm. And the speaker is waiting in order to have a talk with him. At a point in time, he asks his neighbor who has been sitting outside:]

(31) ék<sup>w</sup>é ó h<sup>w</sup>èlé òh-â  
 Ekwe 3SG pass-PFT NON ASS here  
 Has Ekwe passed by?

The speaker does not know whether or not Ekwe has passed by. The two values p <Ekwe-has passed by> and p' <Ekwe-has not passed by> are assigned equal weight, and it is only the neighbour’s answer that will specify which of them is valid.

(32) ék<sup>w</sup>é ó h<sup>w</sup>èlé òh-â tǎ  
 Ekwe 3SG pass-PFT NON ASS here SFP  
 Has Ekwe passed by? (How am I sure he has not passed by at this time of the day).

The specific thing with (32) is that the speaker first thinks that p' i.e., <Ekwe has not passed> is the case. But when he realizes what time of the day it is, he begins to wonder if it is still the case that Ekwe has not passed by. Through the act of wondering, p i.e., <Ekwe has passed> is introduced with the effect that both p and p' become possible values.

In sum, the functioning of *tǎ* involves the following:

1) The p value (or in some cases p' as in 32) of a given notional domain represented by a predicative relation is initially introduced and regarded as valid without any reference to p' (or p); thus, no reference is made to any relation of alterity between the two values.

2) But for some reason (e.g. in (27) Chima is not happy), the speaker has doubts over p (or p') bringing about a reassessment of the value thus introduced.

3) The speaker then introduces p' (or p) alongside p (or p') so that they are considered possible values. Where both values are pre-constructed with one of them assigned a more or lesser weight than the other, the use of *tǎ* means that the two values are assigned equal weight. This is exactly the case in (30).

#### 4.2.1 Some further arguments in support of the above analysis

The overall analysis is supported by the fact that the SFP *tǎ* does not occur in questions in which the validation of p is *certain* from the point of view of the enunciator (i.e., it is real, in conformity with the way the enunciator represents reality).

Thus, the SFP *tǎ* does not occur if the aim of the question is to confirm something, in other words, if the enunciator favours one of the two values. This is illustrated in (33) and (34):

- (33) \* ànú z-àní tá  
 2PL to be-confirmation SFP  
 \*You are there. (A way of saying ‘good day’.)
- (34) \* í b̀-lé tá  
 2SG to pull apart-PFT NON ASS SFP  
 \*You have come through the night. (A way of saying ‘good morning’.)

The correct forms are (35) and (36):

- (35) ànú z-àní  
 2PL to be-confirmation  
 Confirm that you are there (see 16 already discussed).
- (36) í b̀-lé  
 2SG to pull apart-PFT NON ASS  
 Good morning or You have come through the night?

As we can see, examples (35) and (36) are two different ways of greeting somebody in Ikwere. The speaker introduces each time the value *p* as the privileged value and asks someone else to confirm it. He does not call it into question. Hence SFP *tá* does not sound natural here.

The SFP *tá* does not occur if there is no doubt about the *p* value of the domain X-P, meaning that *p* has already been asserted. This is illustrated in (37) to (38).

- (37) \*ĩ z-èrí érí tá  
 2SG FUT-to eat REDUP SFP  
 \*Will you really? Sure? (I’m wondering whether you will eat.)
- (38) \*ḍ z-àbyá ábyá tá  
 3SG FUT-to come REDUP SFP  
 \*He will surely come? (I’m wondering whether he will come.)

The correct forms are (39) and (40):

- (39) ĩ z-èrí érí  
 2SG FUT-to eat REDUP  
 Will you eat? Sure?
- (40) ḍ z-àbyá ábyá  
 3SG FUT-to come REDUP  
 He will come? For sure?

Examples (39) and (40) contain reduplicative verb forms (*zèrí érí*; *zàbyá ábyá*). Since reduplicative forms generally indicate that *p* is centred such that there is no room for *p'*, any attempt to call *p* into question is bound to fail. Hence (37) and (38) are not natural.

#### 4.2.2 Summary of the way SFP *tá* functions

From the analysis so far, we can say that the SFP *tá* marks a reassessment of the validation of *p* initially introduced without any reference to *p'*, by considering *p'* as an alternative value so that they both become possible values.

Let's recapitulate. Open questions generally imply that the speaker is not in a position to distinguish between *p* and *p'*. And therefore his question signifies that from the beginning *p* and *p'* have equal weight. The speaker then has recourse to someone else and asks him or her to distinguish between the two values by selecting one of them. This mechanism can further be represented as follows:

Open questions generally: From the point of view of  $S_0$ : *p*, *p'* (*p* AND *p'*)  
From the point of view of  $S'_0$ : *p* OR *p'*

But with the addition of the SFP *tá* the speaker begins by assuming validity for *p* alone. However, upon re-evaluation, he calls *p* into question and thus introduces *p'* so that they both become possible values. The speaker then invites someone else to validate one value or the other. The whole process can further be represented as follows:

Question + *tá*: From the point of view of  $S_0$ :  $p \longrightarrow p, p'$  (*p* AND *p'*)  
But from the point of view of  $S'_0$ : *p* OR *p'*

#### 5. Conclusion

This article has focused on *wé* and *tá*, two of the numerous sentence final particles in Ikwere. The aim has been to find out the specific feature of each of them. My analysis has shown that the two sentence final particles are used in order to reassess a process or a predicative relation and therefore to state the speaker's point of view relative to a given state of affairs. I have underlined how each of them contributes to this reassessment, indicating the speaker's point of view.

The SFP *wé* implies that a speaker's act of saying is (tentatively) called into question from the point of view of  $S'_0$ , urging  $S_0$  to reassess it as the right act, with the result that the alternative point of view is ruled out.

Similarly, the SFP *tá* marks a reassessment of the validation of *p* (or *p'*) initially introduced without any reference to *p'* (or *p*), by considering *p'* (or *p*) as an alternative value so that the two are regarded as possible values.

I have shown that these particles make a significant contribution to the meaning of sentences in which they occur. Thus *wé* can lead to the meaning of emphasis while *tá* implies that one is not sure of something in a given situation. And finally, this article has been able to highlight the specific ways in which each particle brings into play alterity, a fundamental property of the language activity.

In the case of the SFP *wé*, alterity is brought into play by the fact that the point of view of  $S_0$  differs from that of  $S'_0$  relative to an act of saying whereas with the SFP *tá*, alterity is brought

into play through shifting from a position where p exists alone to a position where p coexists with p'.

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