

Lesson 6

ηkuη tones

1.0 Tones

The radical vowels (i, u, e, ə, o, ε, a, ɔ) and the final floating vowel (ə, i) of the morpheme $C_1V_1C_2V_2$ can carry a tone that is either high (H) or Low (L). Since the nominal root morpheme has two vowels, tones associated with the root morpheme can either be HH [súŋé], LL [bàŋè], LH [à-tsèʔ-é], or HL [líè].

Next to the H and L tones are three other tones otherwise known as modular tones that can be carried by the radical vowels and the floating vowels. We shall represent these three modular tones as follows:

- Modular High Low (HL): as in [ndâ];
- Modular Low High (LH): as in [sǒ]
- Modular Low High Low (LHL): as in [lǒ]

The modular tones HL and LH have morphemes with tonal structures. In other words, the morphemes do not have C_2 . These modular tones will be represented as HL- C_2 and LH- C_2 respectively. The vowels carried by the HL- C_2 and LH- C_2 are all the open vowels (e, ə, o, ε, a, and ɔ).

Modular tones that act in association with nasal tones obliterate C_2 in their operation. The modular tones HL and LH can appear on:

- floating final vowels (V_2) with morphemes without C_2
- open radical vowels (e, ə, o, ε, a, and ɔ) with C_2 morpheme structures.

It is important to note here that in some cases, the floating tones (HL- C_2 and LH- C_2) of the modulated morphemes may carry a nasal tone as well.

↘	↗	↗↘	↘↗	↘↗↘	↗↘
L	H	HL	LH	LHL	
Falling	Rising	Rising Falling	Falling Rising	Falling Rising Falling	Super Elevated
ñgòbè àbè	fùyá ñwíá tèmó	ñdâ àbè màngyê mîtwê ñbê ñtêm mîô fîô ñwô àbô àntô	ñdză ñgě ñĩ	lô lôn mà so mà zě mà ta à tō à yě à yě	b'á' sàmb'á'

In addition to the five major tones indicated above, there is a super elevated and super low tone in *niyam ní mîñkuñ*. The super elevated tone is much higher than the high tone it precedes and the super low tone is lower than the tone it precedes. The super elevated tone is indicated below with an up arrow ↑ and a down ↓ arrow indicating when the super elevated tone returns.

1.1 Some typical examples are:

- a) b'á' as in the number 2 when counting
- b) sàmb'á' as in the number 7 when counting

1.2 Applying appropriate *niyam ní mîñkuñ* tone marks.

It is important to note here that the words and their tone marks should not be memorized. Each tone mark is pitch specific and therefore should be applied on each word depending on the pitch. The tone in *nìyam ní m̀̀̀kuṛ* determines the name or noun and/or the meaning of the word. A morpheme may therefore carry different tone marks depending on the meaning intended by the user.

1.2.1 High (H) [´]

The rising tone occurs when your voice rises on a vowel. For example:

- a. fí
- b. bé
- c. tú
- d. má
- e. ʃwí

1.2.2 Low tone (L) [`]

The falling or low tone occurs when your voice falls on a vowel. For example:

- a. mà
- b. ǹ̀̀gɔm
- c. tsè
- d. ntsà mbyì
- e. àfù̀̀̀ṛ

1.2.3 Bi-modular HL [^] tone

There are three modular tones in *nìyam ní m̀̀̀kuṛ*. A modular tone is a tone that involves the fusion of two or more tones over one vowel or syllable. This occurs usually in the presence of an enunciative mark / a / at the end of a morpheme. It is the enunciative mark and the tone it carries that fuses with the vowel and tone on the first vowel to form the modular tone. Take for example:

House/**ndá à**/, which is represented in the none IPA format, with slashes, has a rising tone over the first vowel [á] and a falling tone over the enunciative mark /à/. In this example, the enunciative mark creates a double vowel in the word **ndá à**. However, *nìyam ní m̀̀̀kuj* does not have double vowels. Secondly, since the enunciative mark carries a low tone, and fuses that tone with the tone in the first vowel, we can represent the two tones over the first vowel as [ˆ]. Thus, the IPA transcription of the word house, weed and others are as follows:

ndá à /	→	[ndá]
só-í à /	→	[sô]
tsé í à /	→	[tsé] iwã yinjê
wá à /	→	[wá] ndzì àwàsòm wá
mbá à /	→	[m̀̀̀bá] mbâ wá
tí í àjé /	→	[tíjé]

In the second example above, the first two vowels in the non IPA format carry the same tone. The enunciative mark and its tone [à] fuse with the first two vowels to create the modular tone **sô**.

Please note that in some sentences where a question is being asked, the *nìyam ní m̀̀̀kuj* word for house does not carry the enunciative mark. When that occurs, the IPA transcription of the word only carries the high tone of the lexical morpheme or root word. For example: Did you lock the house? [ò f̀̀̀j ndá].

In the imperative form, the vowel in the radical morpheme carries either a low or high tone. If final vowel of the verb is / í /; its realization at the end of the morpheme is the / à /. If the radical vowel carries a low tone, the final and the enunciative sound fuse to form a modular tone.

/z̀̀̀bí à/	→	z̀̀̀bê
/l̀̀̀yí a/	→	l̀̀̀yê
/s̀̀̀bí a/	→	s̀̀̀bê
/b̀̀̀é?í a/	→	b̀̀̀é?ê

In the non-imperative form, the final / í / is not realized as / è /. For instance:

/mà kí zèbí/ → mà kí zèbí
 /mà kí lèyí / → mà kí lèyí

1.2.4 Bi-modular LH [˘] tone

The modular LH is similar in formation to the modular HL tone. The first tone is low followed by a high tone. The presence of the tone on the enunciative mark / a / allows for the fusion of the second tone over the first tone in the lexical morpheme. For instance: The non IPA word for Laugh can be written as follows: /wè á /. Since the enunciative mark carries a high tone, it fuses that tone with the tone in the first vowel of the lexical morpheme. We thus can represent the two tones over the first vowel as [˘]. Thus, the IPA transcription of the *nìyam ní mìnkuŋ* word “laugh” as seen in the following linear diagram is as follows:

/wè á/ → [wě]
 /ŋgà á/ → [ŋgǎ] ŋǎ fúú àwàsòm wá
 /kwè-ì á/ → [kwě] nì kwě
 /kè á/ → [kě] zúŋê kě
 /ŋgwà á/ → [ŋgwǎ] ìdzùm ŋgwǎ
 /zì á/ → [zǐ] zǐ òtsè?éwà?ó
 /zè-ì á/ → [zě] ò zě zǐ òtsè?éwà?ó wá
 /ŋgè á/ → [ŋgě] mà tsì ní ŋgě sìnè yè
 /là á/ → [lǎ] yùr lǎ
 /bì á/ → [bǐ] ndâ bǐ

1.2.5 Tri-modular LHL tone [˘]

The formation of modular LHL tone is also similar to the formation of the bi-modular tones illustrated above. In this case, two tones are fused with the tone on the lexical morpheme. Take for example: The word “to leave” in none IPA transcription /lò-í à/. The tones over the enunciative mark [à] and the middle vowel [í] fuse with the tone over the lexical morpheme to create the LHL modular tone mark. Thus the IPA transcription of /lò-í à/ is shown as [lõ]. Other examples are as follows:

/mà tà-í à/	————→	[mà ta]	I have sown it
/mà zè-í à/	————→	[mà zɛ]	I have seen it
/zù-í àŋ/	————→	[zũŋ]	Buy it
/àzà-í à/	————→	[àza]	àzã kwě Azah is back
/fɛ-í à/	————→	[fɛ]	mà fɛ òdòmɔzì. I missed the road
/byè-í à/	————→	[byè]	àbè nìmò bye. Mothers bag is missing
/lè- í à/	————→	[lě]	è òdzwì lě yè. Yes, good morning
/ndzà-í à/	————→	[ndzã]	ndzã bí. Bi’s vegetable
/sè-í à/	————→	[sě]	mà sě àkóbó. I split the akob

1.2.6 Enunciative mark /a/, and a question.

In the absence of the enunciative mark /a/, and in connection with a question, the modular tone, if it is LHL, returns to LH. If it is HL, it returns to the none modular High or Low tone. For instance:

/ndá-à/ [ndâ]	[ndá]
/só-í à/ [sô]	[só]
/tsé-í à/ [tsê]	[tsé]
/ndzà-í à/ [ndzã]	[ndzã]

1.2.7 Super elevated ↑ tone and a super low ↓ tone.

