

## 第 14 章

# Aspects of Xitsonga tone

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Xitsonga (S53)

Xitsonga is a southern Bantu language spoken in South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. As one of the official languages in the Republic of South Africa, it is spoken in the northeastern part of the Limpopo province by about 2.2 million people (Statistics South Africa 2012: 23). The language is taught in primary and secondary schools as well as in higher education institutions such as the University of Venda in Thohoyandou and the Limpopo University in Polokwane. As an official language, Xitsonga materials are available in media either online or in print. Descriptive grammars of Xitsonga (Baumbach 1987) as well dictionaries (Cuenod 1967) are also available.

The tonal system of Xitsonga exhibits the unbounded spreading of a high (H) tone from a tonal sponsor. The uniqueness of Xitsonga H tone spreading lies in the pattern where H tone spreading is sensitive to the binarity status of constituents; H tone may not spread into a binary constituent, while it does spread into a unary constituent (Kisseberth 1994, Selkirk 2011). Another tone related pattern in Xitsonga that is unique is the interaction between tone and a group of consonants called ‘depressors’. The spreading of an H tone is blocked by these depressor consonants (Baumbach 1987, Lee 2008, Lee 2015).

### 1.2 Xitsonga tone system: An overview

Xitsonga has a 2-tone system similar to other Bantu languages in the area. The high versus low contrast is often phonologically analyzed as a privative H tone system (H versus  $\emptyset$ ). For ease of exposition, this paper will not mark the phonologically unspecified tone, but refers to it as a low

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(L) tone. In (1), tonal minimal pairs are shown, where the tonal contrast distinguishes between the 2<sup>nd</sup> singular and the 3<sup>rd</sup> singular pronominal prefixes. Basic tonal patterns in nouns are shown in (2) and in verbs in (3).

(1) Tonal contrast in Xitsonga<sup>1</sup>

ú	‘he/she’	H tone
u	‘you’	L tone

(2) Tonal contrast in Xitsonga nouns

mbila	‘xylophone’	L tone
mbíla	‘dassie rat’	H tone
mpalá	‘deep narrow burrow’	LH tone
mbíla	‘rock rabbit’	HL tone

(3) Tonal contrast in Xitsonga verbs

ku kúkula	‘to sweep’	H tone
ku dzá	‘to eat’	H tone
ku tsutsuma	‘to run’	L tone
ku pfala	‘to close’	L tone

When two H tones are adjacent, a downstep (marked with a downward arrow) is observed as in (4). The H tone noun is downstepped when it appears after the H-toned copula // in (4a) or after the H-toned locative circumfix [é...-eni] in (4b). Both examples demonstrate that downstep is not applicable between H tones within a root.

- (4) a. /ɲ<sup>w</sup>áná/ ‘a child’ [í<sup>\*</sup>ɲ<sup>w</sup>áná] ‘it is a child’  
 b. /k<sup>h</sup>átlá/ ‘a shoulder’ [é<sup>\*</sup>k<sup>h</sup>átlwé:ni] ‘on the shoulder’

<sup>1</sup> All Xitsonga forms are written in the International Phonetic Alphabet unless noted otherwise. Xitsonga forms in italics are written in Xitsonga orthography. Syllables with an acute accent denote lexical H tones, and unmarked syllables indicate L-toned syllables.

The tone bearing unit (TBU) in Xitsonga is a syllable rather than a mora. There is no contrast in vowel length, and no contour tones are found except when a vowel is lengthened due to penultimate lengthening. A word-initial nasal forms a syllable by itself because a tone can be assigned to such a nasal consonant as in (5a). A difference between the syllabic nasals in (5) needs to be mentioned. The unmarked form of the class 1 prefix is /mu-/, corresponding to the Proto-Bantu class 1 prefix \*mɔ-, while the unmarked form of the class 9 prefix is a segmental nasal. This difference may contribute to the status of syllabicity; while the class 1 nasal prefix tends to be syllabic across Bantu languages, the class 9 nasal prefix does not.<sup>2</sup>

- (5) a. *ń.dú.ná*                      ‘a headman (CL1)’    all H  
       b. *ŋ.gu.lu.βe* or *<sup>h</sup>gu.lu.βe*    ‘a pig (CL9)’        all L

H tone is mobile in Xitsonga and it is subject to unbounded H tone spreading, an issue discussed in detail in section 3. Examples in (6) demonstrate minimal tonal pairs at a sentence level. The only difference between (6a) and (6b) is the subject pronominal prefix: /u/ ‘you (sg)’ is L-toned, but /ú/ ‘he’ in (6b) is H-toned. The H tone of the subject pronoun spreads to the penultimate syllable contrasting (6b) with (6a).

(6) Spreading of H tone

- a. u    *faβa*    *ŋ-gulu:βe*  
       2sg    buy    9-pig  
       ‘you buy a pig’  
 b. ú    *fáβá*    *ń-gúlú:βe*  
       3sg    buy    9-pig  
       ‘he buys a pig’

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Daisuke Shinagawa who drew my attention to this cross-Bantu pattern on noun class prefixes.

As an overview paper of the tonal system in Xitsonga, basic tonal patterns are described in section 2. The spreading of H tone as well as other phonological patterns that interact with H tone spreading are discussed in section 3.

## 2. The tone system in the Xitsonga lexicon

Xitsonga lexicon has various tonal patterns as reported in earlier studies such as Cole-Beuchat (1959). This section first presents tones in Xitsonga nouns. Then, other parts of speech of Xitsonga with a more restrictive tonal pattern are described.

### 2.1 Morphological structure of nouns

Xitsonga nouns are organized into noun classes that are marked by a noun class prefix. These noun class prefixes are L-toned except for the class 2a prefix [βá] that is used to mark kinship terms or people. Examples of each class prefix are shown in (7). Even-numbered noun classes are plural forms of odd-numbered noun classes. The plural of noun class 11 is noun class 10 (instead of an expected noun class 12). Tonal patterns in singular and corresponding plural forms are identical. The number in parentheses after the gloss represents the noun class.

#### (7) Noun classes in Xitsonga

Noun class 1	<b>mu</b> -ŋu	‘a person (CL1)’
Noun class 2	<b>βa</b> -ŋu	‘people (CL2)’
Noun class 2a	<b>βá</b> -βanúná	‘men (CL2a)’
Noun class 3	<b>mu</b> -tí	‘a village (CL3)’
Noun class 4	<b>mi</b> -ti	‘villages (CL4)’
Noun class 5	<b>ri</b> -lámǀfú	‘a fence (CL5)’
Noun class 6	<b>ma</b> -lúmpǀfú	‘fences (CL6)’
Noun class 7	<b>ŋi</b> -loka	‘an axe (CL7)’
Noun class 8	<b>ŋi</b> -loka	‘axes (CL8)’
Noun class 9	Ø-ŋimpǀfú	‘a sheep (CL9)’
Noun class 10	<b>ti</b> -ŋimpǀfú	‘sheep (CL10)’

Noun class 11	<b>ri</b> -ts <sup>w</sup> álo	‘mercy (CL11)’
Noun class 10	<b>tin</b> -ts <sup>w</sup> álo	‘mercies (CL10)’
Noun class 14	<b>βu</b> -tamá	‘completeness (CL14)’
Noun class 15	<b>ku</b> -tjira	‘working (CL15)’
Noun class 16	<b>há</b> -nsí	‘below (CL16)’

## 2.2 Tone in Xitsonga nouns

This section introduces tone in Xitsonga nouns based on the length of a root. In monosyllabic roots, nouns can either be H tone or L tone as shown in (8). Note that all monosyllabic nominal roots are preceded by a noun class marker. Monosyllabic nominal roots do not seem to occur without the prefix, suggesting that Xitsonga nouns display the word-minimality constraint.

### (8) Monosyllabic nominal roots

#### a. H tone

mu-t <sup>w</sup> á	‘a thorn (CL3)’
ri-tó	‘voice (CL5)’
ri-fú	‘death (CL5)’
mú-ɲú	‘salt (CL3)’
mú-sí	‘smoke (CL3)’
βú-šá	‘hard porridge (CL14)’
mu-mú	‘heat (CL3)’
βu-ɽá	‘bow (CL14)’
há-n-sí	‘underneath (CL16-CL9)’

#### b. L tone

ji-lo	‘a thing (CL7)’
ma-ti	‘water (CL6)’
ri-bze	‘a stone (CL5)’
ri-fu	‘cloud (CL5)’
ji-n-clɰu	‘house (CL9)’

Most nominal roots in Xitsonga are disyllabic which may or may not have a noun class prefix. All four tonal patterns are actively found in disyllabic roots with a class prefix (9) and without a class prefix (10).

(9) Disyllabic nominal roots with a class prefix

a. H tone

ku-súfí	‘near (CL17)’
n-dzófó	‘vegetables (CL3)’
n-kájí	‘marula tree (CL3)’
n-símú	‘field (CL9)’
ŋ-wálá	‘nail (CL3)’
ri-lámpfú	‘fence (CL5)’
ri-pápá	‘wing (CL11)’
ri-súná	‘mosquitoes (CL11)’
ri-ts <sup>w</sup> áló	‘mercy (CL11)’
m-bzáná	‘dog (CL9)’
bz-ájí	‘grass (CL14)’
m-bútí	‘goat (CL9)’
ŋ-óká	‘snake (CL9)’
ŋ <sup>w</sup> -íjí	‘owner (CL1)’

b. HL tone

m-pfúndŷa	‘hare (CL3)’
mu-fána	‘boy (CL1)’
n-dzóngo	‘moisture (CL3)’
m-pfúla	‘rain (CL9)’
ŋ <sup>w</sup> -ána	‘child (CL1)’

c. LH tone

m-pfuβú	‘hippo (CL9)’
n-tangú	‘shoe (CL9)’

ri-βantí	‘door (CL11)’
ʃi-fungá	‘necklace (CL7)’
ʃi-lajá	‘jaw (CL7)’
ʃi-loká	‘axe (CL7)’
βu-tamá	‘completeness (CL14)’
bz-alwá	‘beer (CL14)’
bz-ongó	‘brain (CL14)’
m-bilú	‘heart (CL9)’
m-ombó	‘face (CL3)’
n-dlʒeβé	‘ear (CL9)’
ɲ-impfú	‘sheep (CL9)’
β-ojá	‘wool (CL14)’

## d. L tone

ku-tɪ̄ra	‘working (CL15)’
n-kolo	‘throat (CL3)’
n-ʃak <sup>wa</sup>	‘elephant trunk (CL3)’
n-tʃopi	‘arrow (CL3)’
ri-ts <sup>h</sup> uri	‘dust (CL11)’
ri-βambu	‘rib (CL11)’
ʃi-dumo	‘noise, sound (CL7)’
ʃi-gajo	‘mill (CL7)’
ti-mbila	‘xylophone (CL10)’
bz-atso	‘boat (CL14)’
ɲ-ama	‘meat (CL9)’
ɲ-aŋga	‘doctor (CL9)’

## (10) Disyllabic nominal roots without a class prefix

## a. H tone

fiók <sup>hwé</sup>	‘parrot (CL1)’
k <sup>h</sup> údzú	‘thumb (CL5)’

- m̩éfió<sup>3</sup> ‘wind (CL9)’  
 b. HL tone  
   há<sup>h</sup>a ‘twin (CL5)’  
   fiélo ‘not far (CL16)’  
   lóβo ‘autumn (CL5)’  
 c. LH tone  
   humbá ‘snail (CL9)’  
   jim̩bú ‘ostrich (CL9)’  
   k<sup>h</sup>atzá ‘shoulder (CL5)’  
   tandzá ‘egg (CL5)’  
 d. L tone  
   dari ‘malarial fever (CL5)’<sup>4</sup>  
   d̩zambu ‘sun (CL5)’  
   dzana ‘hundred (CL5)’  
   d̩zaha ‘young man (CL5)’  
   fiéle ‘cockroach (CL5)’  
   k<sup>h</sup>ondl̩go ‘rat (CL5)’  
   kuwa ‘fig (CL5)’  
   nambu ‘river (CL3)’  
   n̩amu ‘neck (CL9)’  
   neŋge ‘leg (CL3)’  
   ʃandl̩ga ‘hand (CL7)’

In (11), trisyllabic nominal roots show various tonal patterns: HHH, HHL, HLH, LHH, LHL, and LLL (cf. Cole-Beuchat 1959). Other than the all L tone roots, no root appears to allow a sequence of more than one L-toned syllable (\*LLH, \*HLL).

<sup>3</sup> The [m̩] in [m̩éfió] may be an allomorph of the class 9 nasal prefix. In this paper, the morpheme boundary will not be marked for the breathy nasal [m̩] segment.

<sup>4</sup> The class 5 words tend to begin with a voiced alveolar stop or affricate, which suggests that they may be related to the Proto-Bantu prefix \*li. The initial consonants /d, dz, d̩z/, however, are not morphologically parsed as a noun class prefix in contemporary Xitsonga. I owe Shigeki Kaji for pointing this relationship.

## (11) Trisyllabic nominal roots

## a. H tone only (HHH)

bikírí 'mug (CL5)'

ri-sókótí 'ant (CL11)'

## b. H tone(s) followed by a final L tone (HHL)

mánána 'mother (CL1)'

mu-góǰwána 'rhino (CL3)'

## c. HLH tone

háǰawá 'next year (CL16)'

háǰaní 'paternal aunt (CL1)'

ǰákuǰzá 'food (CL8)'

ǰákuǰná 'beverage (CL8)'

## d. initial L tone followed by H tone(s) (LHH)

kokwána 'grand parent (CL1)'

lamúlá 'orange (CL5)'

ǰi-galána 'tick (CL7)'

## e. LHL tone

tatána 'father (CL1)'

## f. L tone only

bodǰela 'bottle (CL5)'

komponi 'compound (CL9)'

m-ǰongolo 'donkey (CL9)'

m̩eembe 'black rhino (CL9)'

m-fukuǰo 'comb (CL3)'

m-palala 'wooden hoe (CL9)'

mi-ǰaǰamu 'nightmare (CL4)'

ǰ-guluve 'pig (CL9)'

This paper reports the only handful of multisyllabic nouns longer than three syllables as in (12). Longer nouns can be formed by reduplication as in [ʃi-kaŋákaŋá] ‘a bicycle (7)’ suggesting that diverse tonal patterns may be formed in longer nouns.

(12) Nouns that are four syllables or longer

a. HLHL tone

námiʃóŋge ‘eland bull (CL1)’

b. HHLL tone

ʃi-pálaʃbandz<sup>va</sup> ‘strong beer (CL7)’

c. HHHL tone

tʰéléfóni ‘telephone (CL9)’

d. LHLH tone

ʃi-kaŋákaŋá ‘bicycle (CL7)’

e. L tone only

ʃi-frontʒoʃila ‘giant (CL7)’

βu-qimamusi ‘horizon (CL14)’

### 2.3 Tone of diminutive nouns

Lee & Burheni (2014) report aspects of Xitsonga diminutives, which is formed by adding a circumfix /ʃi-...-ana/ (singular nouns) or /ʃi-...-ana/ (plural or collective nouns) to the nominal root. When a noun class prefix is present, it is dropped in the diminutive form and substituted to either the singular [ʃi-] (CL7) or the plural [ʃi-] (CL8), except when the class prefix is a nasal segment. H tone and most HL tone nouns retain the H tone in the diminutive as shown in (13a) and (13b). Some HL tone nouns assign an L tone to the final syllable of the suffix part of the diminutive (13c). The LH tone nouns retain the L tone in the root of the diminutive and the H tone in the suffix part /-ana/ as [-áná] shown in (13d). In L tone nouns, the whole diminutive form is produced with L tone only (13e).

(13) Tonal patterns of diminutives<sup>5</sup>

## a. H tone ‘small ...’

pótó	ʃi-pót <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘pot’
bódó	ʃi-bód <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘hole’
ménó	ʃi-mén <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘teeth’
tínó	ʃi-tín <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘tooth’
ndzéló	ʃi-ndzél <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘wooden bow’
sóndzó	ʃi-sóndz <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘cow’s leg’
nlókó	ʃi-nlók <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘head’
βókó	ʃi-βók <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘hand’
mi-rófió	ʃi-rófi <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘vegetable’
ʃi-tóló	ʃi-tól <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘store’
ri-kókó	ʃi-kók <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘hard part after cooking porridge’
ma-βóndzó	ʃi-βóndz <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘jealousy’

## b. HL tone: type 1

khóto	ʃi-khót <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘court’
sónto	ʃi-sónt <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘Sunday’

## c. HL tone: type 2

khóso	ʃi-khós <sup>w</sup> -ánà	‘coarse’
ndófo	ʃi-ndófi <sup>w</sup> -ánà	‘maize seeds’
dzóko	ʃi-dzók <sup>w</sup> -ánà	‘yoke’

## d. LH tone

tótó	ʃi-tót <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘animal waste’
ʃi-godó	ʃi-god <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘tree stump’
ʃi-panó	ʃi-pan <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘team’
mijó	ʃi-mij <sup>w</sup> -áná	‘moming’

## e. L tone

ʃi-phato	ʃi-phat <sup>w</sup> -ána	‘totem’
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<sup>5</sup> All nominal data in (13) end with the vowel -o. For other patterns, refer to Lee and Burheni (2014).

ji-khodo	ji-khod <sup>w</sup> -ana	'useless person'
mano	ʃi-man <sup>w</sup> -ana	'senses'
n-kolo	ʃi-nkol <sup>w</sup> -ana	'neck'
bdʒatso	ʃi-bdʒats <sup>w</sup> -ana	'boat'
k <sup>h</sup> otso	ʃi-k <sup>h</sup> ots <sup>w</sup> -ana	'prison'
tʃ <sup>h</sup> oko	ʃi-tʃ <sup>h</sup> ok <sup>w</sup> -ana	'chalk'
n-tofio	ʃi-ntof <sup>w</sup> -ana	'monkey'
ʃi-tsotso	ʃi-tsots <sup>w</sup> -ana	'locust'
ri-m̩ondzo	ʃi-m̩ondz <sup>w</sup> -ana	'hom'
mu-gajo	ʃi-gaj <sup>w</sup> -ana	'mealie meal'
ri-ntífio	ʃi-ntífi <sup>w</sup> -ana	'singer'

The tonal patterns in the diminutive show that tone in Xitsonga is not independent of morphophonology processes since the suffix part of the diminutive circumfix shows variable tonal patterns dependent on the tone of the nominal root.

## 2.4 Other parts of speech: verbs, adjectives, and adverbs

Verbs have only two tonal patterns in Xitsonga determined by the first syllable of the verbal root, regardless of the size. In (14), the tonal pattern of verbal roots is shown: H-toned verbs in (14a) and L-toned verbs in (14b).

### (14) Verbs

#### a. H tone

-bá	'to hit'
-d̩z̩á	'to eat'
-fá	'to die'
-n <sup>w</sup> á	'to drink'
-t <sup>w</sup> á	'to hear, to feel'
-áka	'to build'

-ála	‘to refuse’
-fámba	‘to walk’
-húma	‘to come out’
-lánda	‘to follow’
-láḽa	‘to want’
-njéna	‘to enter’
-pfúka	‘to wake up’
-rándza	‘to love’
-ḽeka	‘to cook’
-ts’háma	‘to sit’
-ḽóna	‘to see’
-ḽúja	‘to return’
-ḽúlaḽula	‘to speak’
-kúkula	‘to sweep’

## b. L tone

-lʷa	‘to fight’
-rí	‘to say’
-endlʒa	‘to do’
-lamba	‘to wash’
-laya	‘to count’
-leka	‘to laugh’
-rima	‘to plough’
-susa	‘to remove’
-tjra	‘to work’
-tsala	‘to write’
-riḽala	‘to forget’
-tsutsuma	‘to run’

Xitsonga has few adjectives that agree with the head noun. These adjectives are all H-toned as shown in (15).

## (15) Adjectives

-nts <sup>h</sup> wá	'new'
-kúlú	'big'
-njíngí	'many'
-tsóngó	'small, few'
-βéβúká	'light'

Adjective meanings are also expressed with adjectival verbs that show agreement patterns akin to verbs. As in verbs, these adjectival verbs can be underlyingly specified as H-toned (16a) or L-toned (16b).

## (16) Adjectival verbs

## a. H tone

-ánama	'to be wide'
-kárifa	'to be sharp'
-k <sup>w</sup> álala	'to be dull'
-nónofa	'to be hard'
-njáŋgana	'to be sweet'
-óloβa	'to be soft'
-bífa	'to be bad'
-dz <sup>w</sup> íí	'to be dark'

## b. L tone

-basa	'to be clean'
-k <sup>h</sup> ale	'to be old'
-koma	'to be low, short'
-lala	'to be lean, thin'

-lefa 'to be long, tall'

Adverbs in Xitsonga do not have a fixed tonal pattern as shown in (17).

(17) Adverbs

mundzuku	'tomorrow'	L
mundɔ́ʒána	'day after tomorrow'	LHL
namúntɔ́há	'today'	LH

This section has presented tonal patterns in various parts of speech in Xitsonga. The nominal tonal pattern is the most complex with various tonal patterns depending on the size of a nominal root. The tones of these roots are shown to affect tones of morphophonological processes such as diminutives. Other parts of speech have displayed more restrictive tonal patterns compared to Xitsonga nouns.

### 3. High tone spreading in Xitsonga

Xitsonga has an unbounded H tone spreading that shows the rightward movement of an H tone from an H tone sponsor. This section presents H tone spreading patterns and also two conditions when the H tone spreading is blocked: (a) constituents that are binary, and (b) the presence of depressor consonants.

#### 3.1 H tone spreading

The unbounded spreading of H tone is shown in (18) and (19). An H tone that originates from a subject pronominal prefix /βá/ (18a, 19a) or an H-toned verb (18b, 19b) spreads to the penultimate syllable of a sentence when all the following words do not have an underlying tone. In all the examples, the sponsored syllable is the only syllable with an underlying H tone. The sponsor of an H tone is underlined in the following examples.

## (18) H tone spreading: intransitive verbs

- a. Subject pronoun is the sponsor of an H tone, followed by a toneless verbal root

βá tí:ra ‘They work’

βá tsútsú:ma ‘They run’

βá núhí:la ‘They grow fat’

- b. Verb is the sponsor of an H tone after a toneless subject /na/ ‘I (disjoint)’

na βúláβú:la ‘I speak’

na núnújú:ta ‘I whisper’

na tsémáká:ní:sa ‘I divide (in two)’

## (19) H tone spreading: transitive verbs and a direct object

- a. Subject pronoun /βá/ is the sponsor of an H tone, followed by a toneless verbal root

βá jáβá ná:ma ‘They buy meat’

βá kúmá jí-lámbétwá:na ‘They are getting a cooking pot’

βá tísa jí-hóntzóβí:la ‘They bring a giant’

- b. Verb is the sponsor of an H tone, after a toneless subject /ni/ ‘I (conjoint)’

ni láβá ngúlú:ve ‘I want a pig’

ni βóná jí-hóntzóβí:la ‘I see a giant’

ni dʒóndzísá jí-p<sup>h</sup>úkúp<sup>h</sup>ú:ku ‘I teaching a fool’**3.2 Blocking of unbounded H tone spreading****3.2.1 Constituent structure**

What is interesting in Xitsonga is that the unbounded H tone spreading can be blocked due to the size of a constituent (cf. Kisseberth 1994, Selkirk 2011). In (20), the object of a sentence has a noun followed by a modifier. If H tone spreading were always unbounded, we would expect a spreading of H tone into the nominal head of a noun phrase (bold in examples and glosses). However, the spreading does not go beyond the noun, suggesting that the binary constituent structure is potentially the reason why the spreading is blocked.

(20) Blocking of H tone spreading: the object is a toneless noun followed by a modifier

βá fǎβá	<b>m̂ɔŋgolo</b>	ʼjá-we:ʼná	‘They buy your <b>donkey</b> ’
βá tíśá	<b>ŋguluβe</b>	ji-ʼntsó:ŋgó	‘They bring a small <b>pig</b> ’
βá láwúlá	<b>m̂elembe</b>	ʼjá-krú:ga	‘They prefer a <b>rhino</b> of Kruger’
ni βóná	<b>komponi</b>	ʼjá-we:ʼná	‘I see your <b>compound</b> ’
fi láfá	<b>lambeto</b>	ji-ʼntsó:ngó	‘We want a small <b>cooking pot</b> ’
ni pʰásá	<b>tuβa</b>	ʼrá tʰofoja:ndou	‘I catch a <b>dove</b> of Thohoyandou’

### 3.2.2 Depressor consonants

The second type of blocking of H tone spreading is found in examples with a depressor consonant. When H tone spreads to an LH tone word, a falling contour tone is created as in (21).

(21) H tone spreading (Baumbach 1987: 50, Lee 2008: 29)

- |                       |       |   |          |                          |
|-----------------------|-------|---|----------|--------------------------|
| a. fricatives         | βóná  | → | fí βóná  | ‘it is they’             |
| b. voiceless stops    | kombé | → | í kômbé  | ‘it is an ousted impala’ |
| c. nasals             | miná  | → | fí mîná  | ‘it is me’               |
| d. prenasalized stops | mbítá | → | fí mbítá | ‘with a pot’             |

The spreading of H tone, however, is blocked when an LH word begins with a depressor consonant; a consonant that is voiced, breathy voiced, or aspirated as in (22).

(22) Depressors blocking H tone spreading (Baumbach 1987: 53-5, Lee 2008: 30)

- |                  |       |   |         |                                       |
|------------------|-------|---|---------|---------------------------------------|
| a. Breathy voice |       |   |         |                                       |
|                  | naŋgá | → | í nàŋgá | ‘it is a hut for unmarried girls’     |
|                  | ɾoβá  | → | í ɾòβá  | ‘it is a flat cake’                   |
| b. Voiced        |       |   |         |                                       |
|                  | bujǎ  | → | í bùǎ   | ‘it is a hen which eats its own eggs’ |
|                  | fomú  | → | í fòmú  | ‘it is a beast’                       |

## c. Aspirated

t<sup>h</sup>urí → í t<sup>h</sup>urí ‘it is a mortar’

k<sup>h</sup>oswá → í k<sup>h</sup>òswá ‘it is a half portion’

As a follow-up study, Lee (2014, 2015) argues that the effect of depressors is not as global as it seemed to have been described in Baumbach (1987). Examining H tone spreading patterns in other Xitsonga words that were not part of Baumbach’s description shows that depressor consonants may allow the spreading of a phonological H tone.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has provided an overview of the tone system in Xitsonga. While the tonal contrast in Xitsonga is H versus toneless, the tone system is not simple. In section 2, tonal contrasts in various parts of speech were presented, which showed that tonal complexity focuses on nouns, while verbs and adjectives adhere to the 2-tone system of the language. Section 3 presented H tone spreading and conditions that result in the blocking of H tone.

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