

Hieber, Daniel W. 2017. Prosody and cohesion in Ékegusií (Kisii) narrative. Talk presented at the 26th Annual Linguistics Symposium, April 12, 2017 at California State University, Fullerton.

Prosody and cohesion in Ékegusií (Kisii) narrative

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What is prosody?

- intonation
 - tempo / rhythm
 - loudness
 - pause
 - syllable structure
 - voice quality / phonation
- What do these things have to do with one another?

What goes on the list?

“there is no way of knowing ahead of time how the phonetic features loosely referred to as “prosodic” – pitch, duration, and so on – are going to be put to phonological use in any given language.” (Himmelman & Ladd 2008: 253)

The phonetic cues that signal phonemic distinctions in one language may have purely prosodic functions in another, and vice versa.

How does one decide when a given linguistic feature is functioning prosodically or not?

Prosody

The set of phonetic and phonological cues that speakers use to give cohesion to their discourse, by signaling the transitions from one unit of discourse to the next, the relations that hold between those units, and their relative prominence.

- Prosody is fundamentally a discourse phenomenon
- Prosody is a tool that speakers use to structure their speech
 - (but not the only tool – works in tandem with morphosyntax)

EKEGUSII DICTIONARY

ENDABARO ENDABASIA

Y'EKEGUSII

First Edition

EBWATE

Endabaro/Endabasia | Emebayeno | Chimbachero |
Chinkwana | Obogima bw'Omogusii

INCLUDES

Ekegusi-English Dictionary | English Index | Popular
Proverbs, Idioms & Sayings | Riddles | Lives and Times
of Omogusii | Common Phrases & Expressions



K. M. Bosire



G. K. Machogu

The Ekegusi Dictionary has been published at a historic time in Kenya's social and political life. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 strengthens the value of language and culture in the advancement of national cohesion and development. It calls on the state as well as citizens, to promote the use of indigenous languages. This dictionary thus gives a sharp edge to various constitutional principles and values that define the historic transformation that Kenya has undergone.

It is particularly inspiring that the dictionary will be designed online and is set to be disseminated worldwide for the benefit of various users and learners of Ekegusi language and culture. The extensive ground covered in this work and its wide scope of documentation is a monumental step towards preservation and revitalization of Ekegusi language and culture.

Hon. Gladys Nyachwaya, Chairman CJC

The publication of the first ever Ekegusi dictionary is truly historic. It's a major intervention in the growing interest by African intellectuals to the rich heritage of their languages, not to draw from them to enrich English and French, but to add to them by drawing from modern technology and the example of others. I hope that this step will inspire others to re-engage with their languages. There is a real creative conversation among languages in Africa and this is an excellent example of this process.

This correspondence by Ekegusi Knowledge Project while production of their first great work, the dictionary of Ekegusi, with notes that will be of immense value to the Ekegusi people and other speakers of African languages, historical linguists interested in comparative African studies, and sociologists, and any others wanting to explore the richness of East African cultures.

Under the able leadership of Kenneth Bosire, with the able assistance of Gladys Machogu, the project team were all concerned about an apparent decline in speakers of the Ekegusi language. This work is especially impressive as an example of the high quality product that can result from an inspired and dedicated group of thoughtful individuals, women and men, in honoring those who have gone before, finding a way to preserve and share their knowledge and wisdom, and ensuring the future of the Ekegusi people.

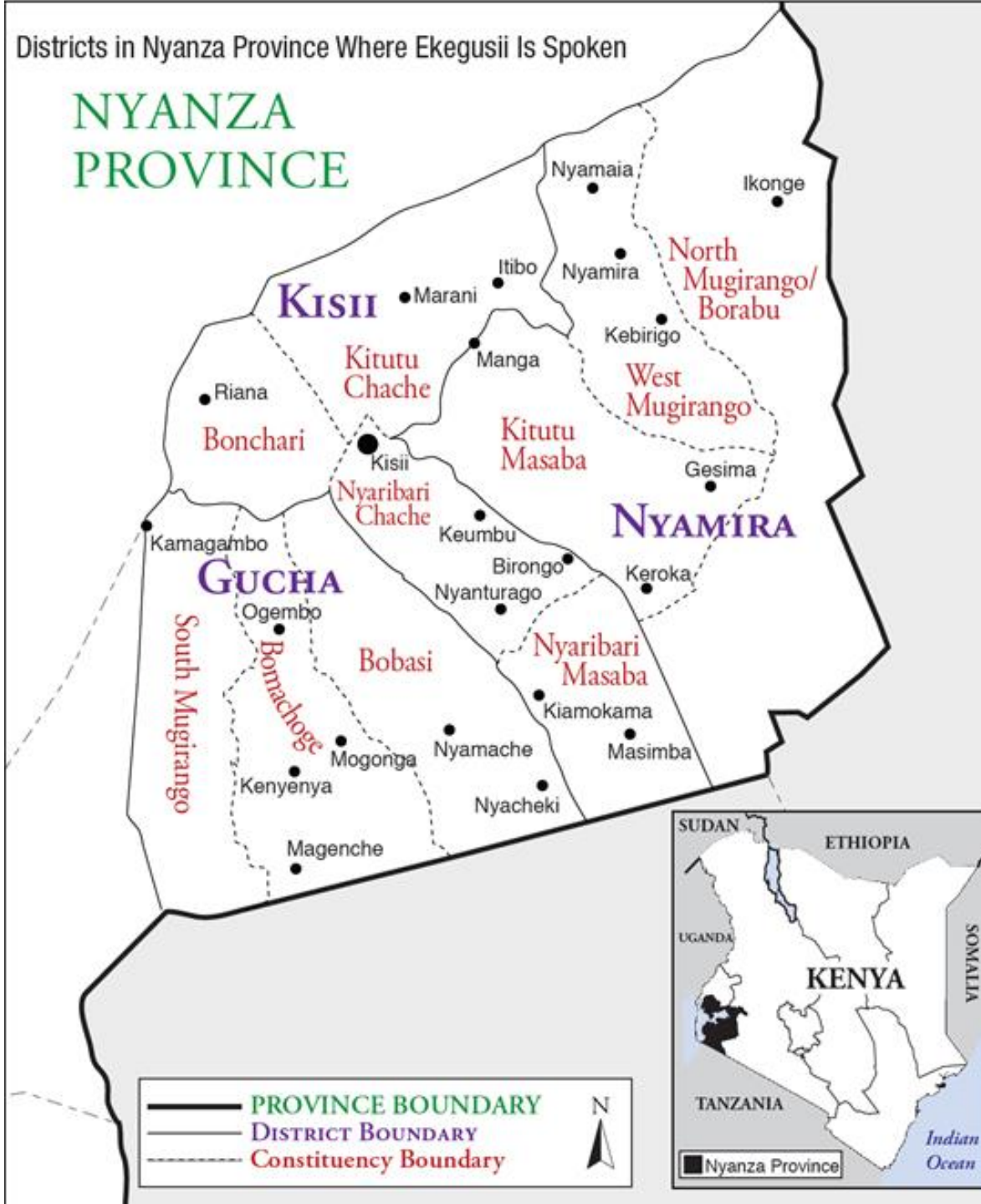
Compiling a dictionary is no simple task, and it has been my pleasure to follow the progress of both Bosire and Machogu as they stood as an example to us all that learning is never at an end, and that perseverance will allow us all to realize our goals.

Carol Genetti, Texas and Professor of Linguistics, UC, Santa Barbara

Ékegusií (Kisii)

Bantu, Niger-Congo

Districts in Nyanza Province Where Ekegusii Is Spoken



Map taken from Nash (2011)

Ékegusií (Kisii; Bantu, Niger–Congo)

- Endangered language of southwest Kenya
- Few speakers under 30
- 2.2 million ethnic Gusii people, ~600,000 speakers
- Surrounded by Nilotic languages
- Tonal: H vs. L tone (L orthographically unmarked)
- Data: 24 folktales; lexical database with audio (14,000 words)

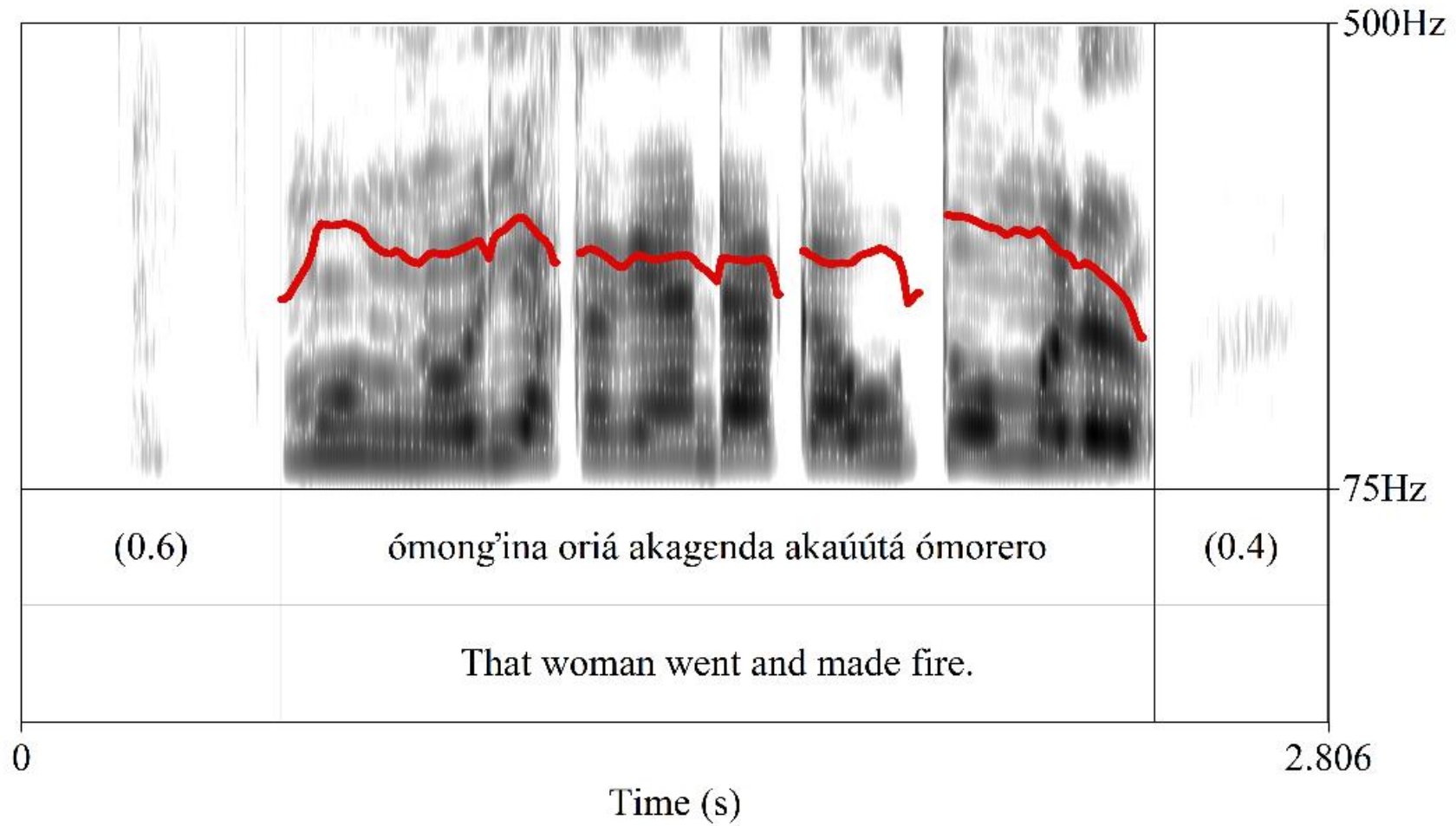


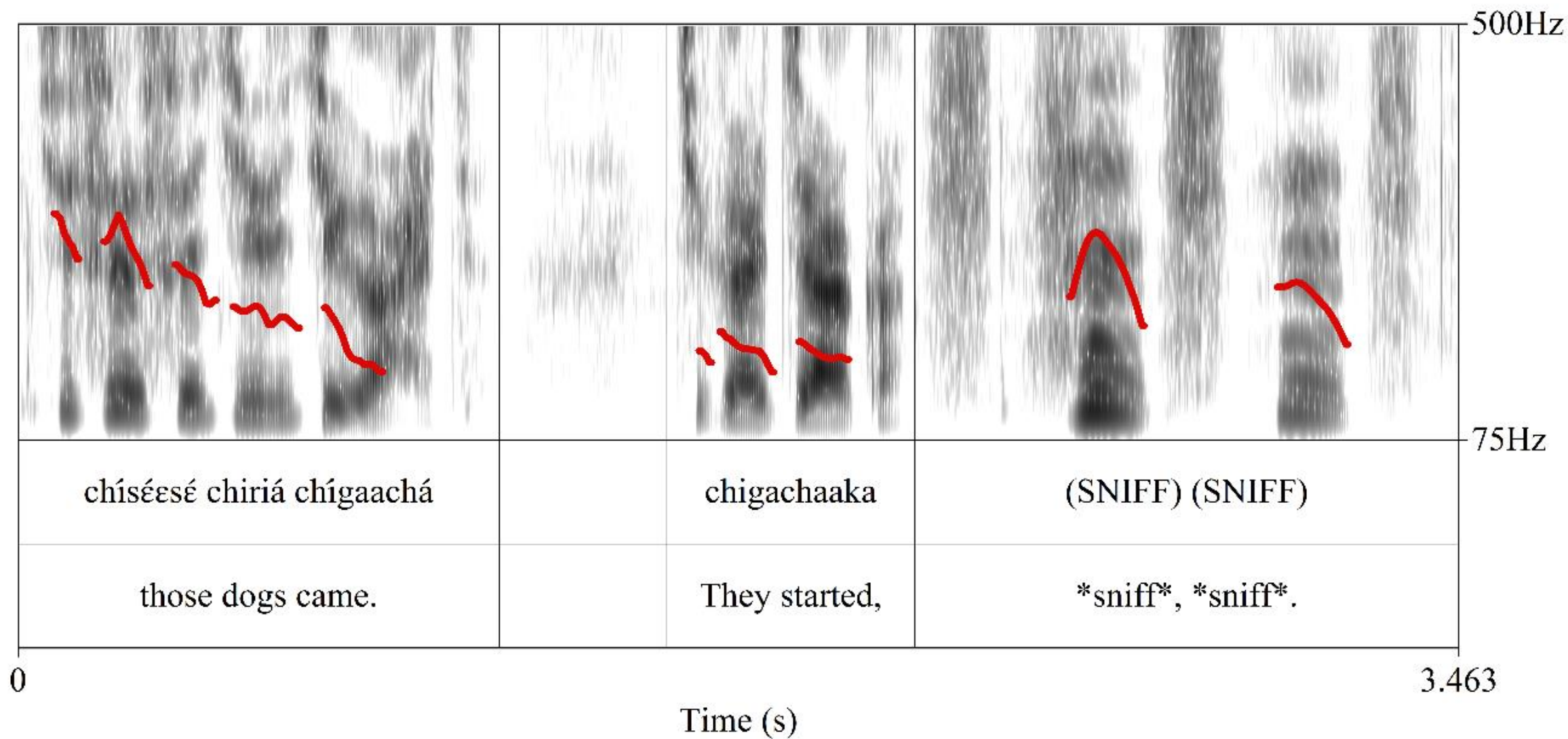




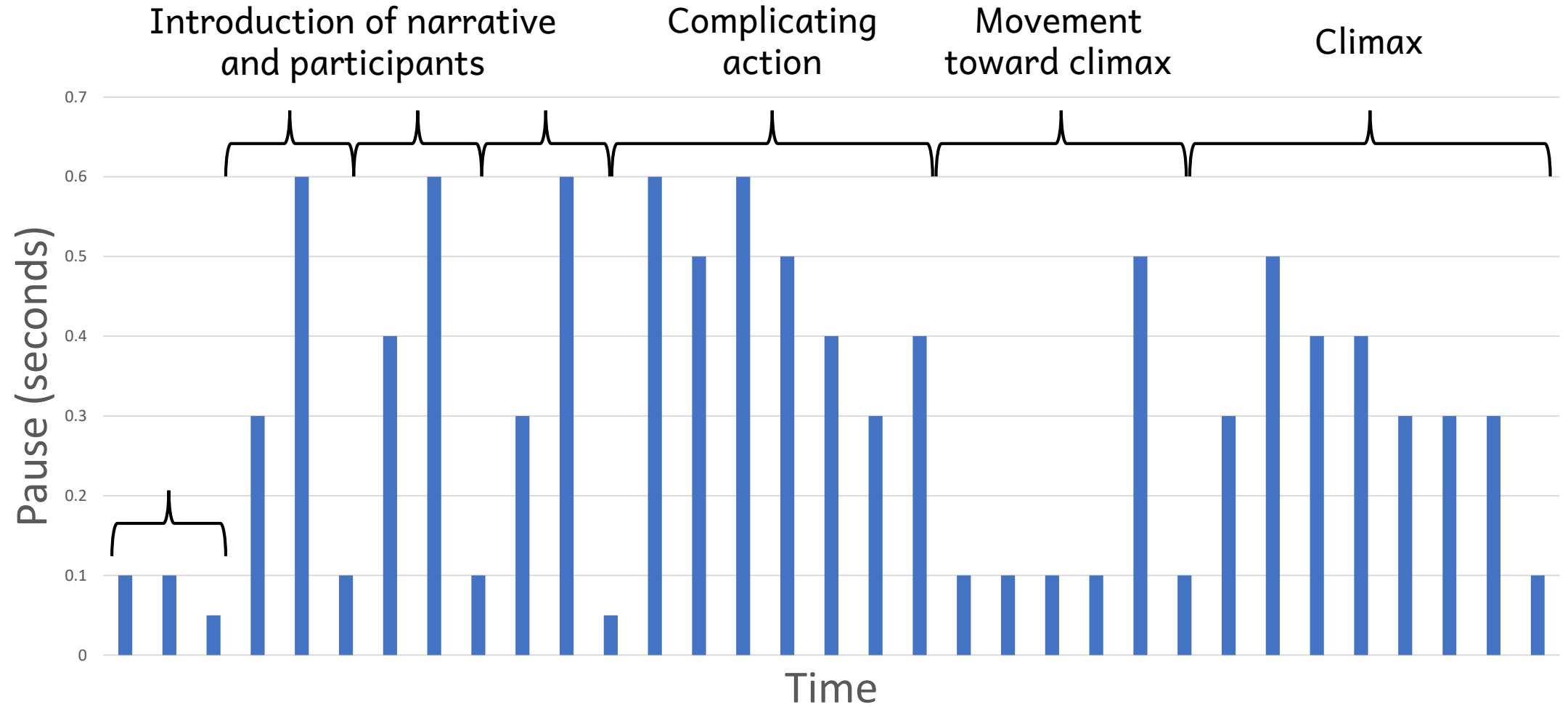


Pause





Pauses in a single text



Vowel elision



| | | | | | | |
|------|----------|-------|-----|------------|---------|--------|
| éndo | égatéebá | ρεεɾɔ | ígo | íngóóchá | kógenda | íntégé |
| lion | it.said | today | so | I.am.going | to.go | I.trap |

[éend#éɣatéeβá ρεεɾó#ɣó#ónɣóótʃá kɔɣɛendá#ántéɣé]

‘The lion said, “Today I’ll go and lay a trap.”’

Vowel elision

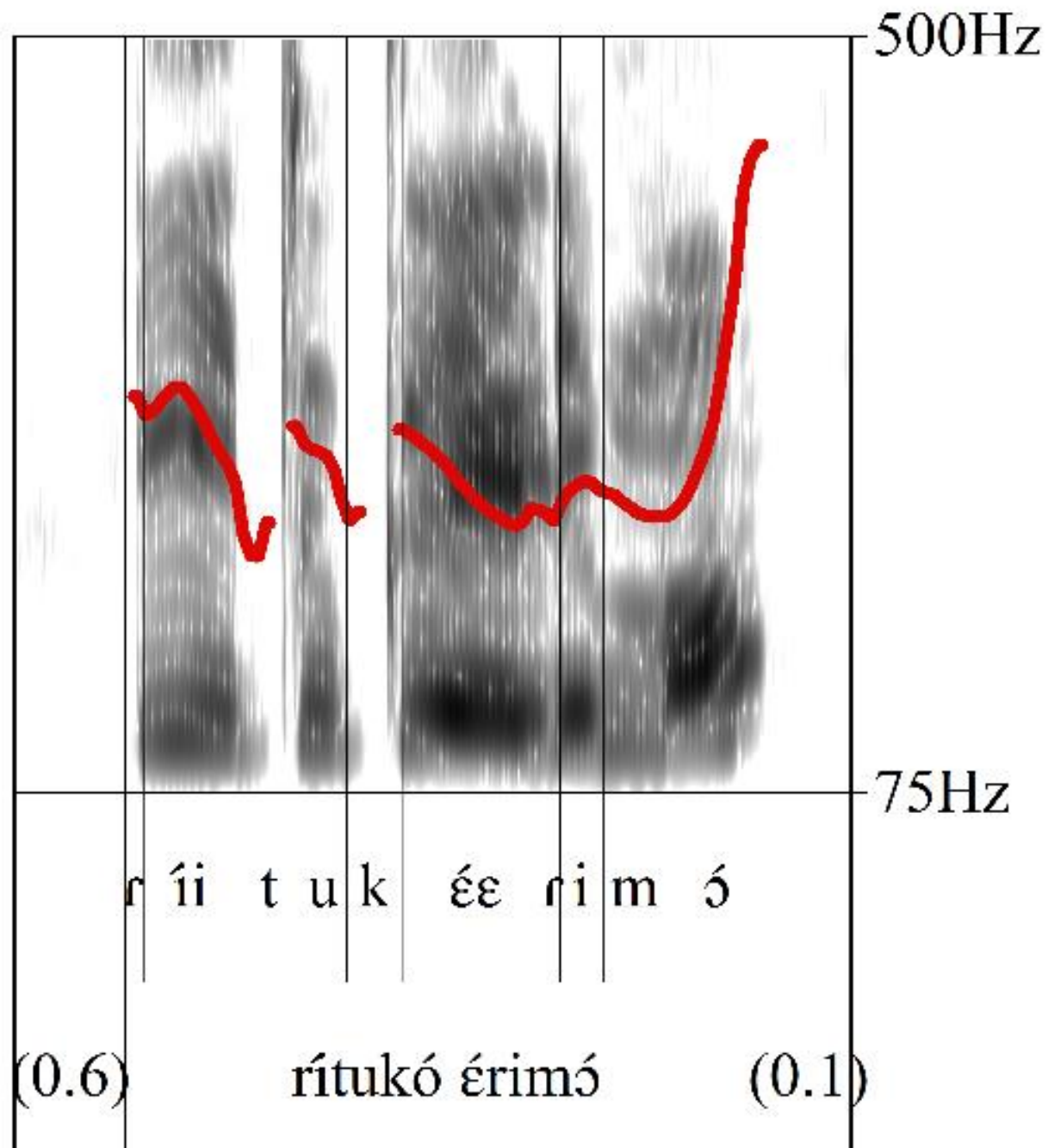


| | | | | | |
|--------|--------|----------|--------|-------------|--------|
| índoré | ómontó | ógoochá | ória | chínchúgú | chíáné |
| I.see | person | who.goes | to.eat | ground.nuts | my |

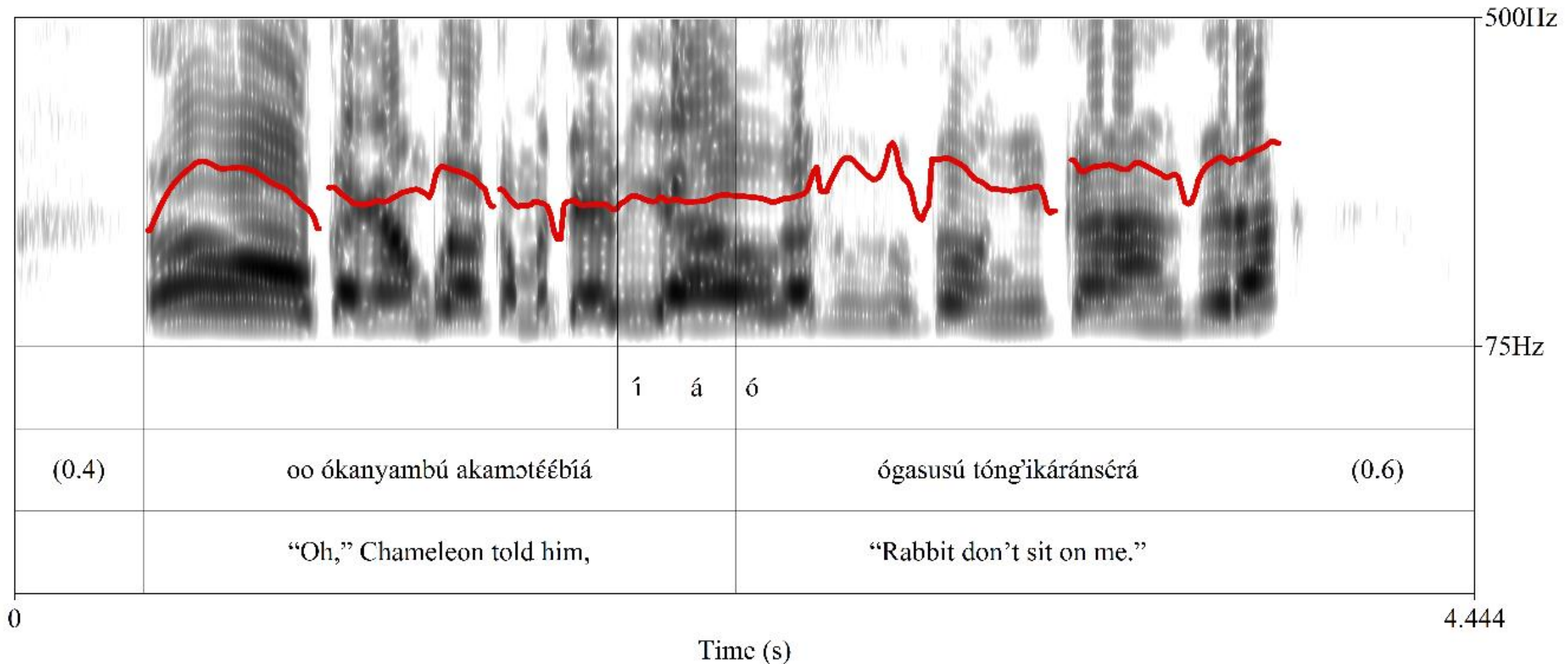
[índór#ómoont#óɣootʃ#óri#tʃíintʃúyú tʃíáné]

‘[...] so that I see who comes to eat my ground nuts.’

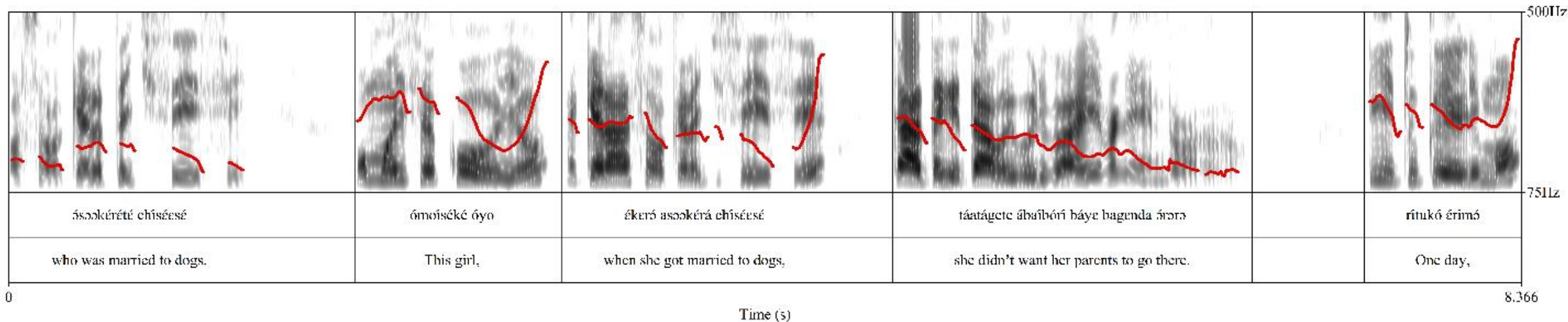
Vowel elision



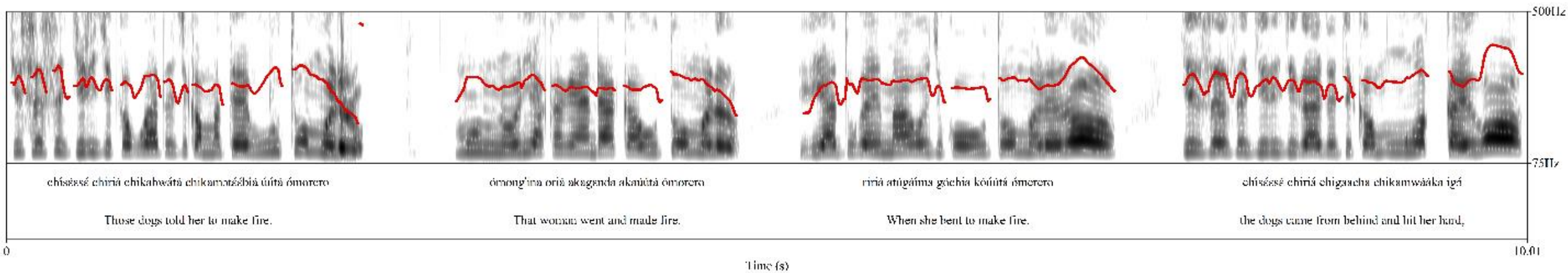
Lack of vowel elision at transition into reported speech



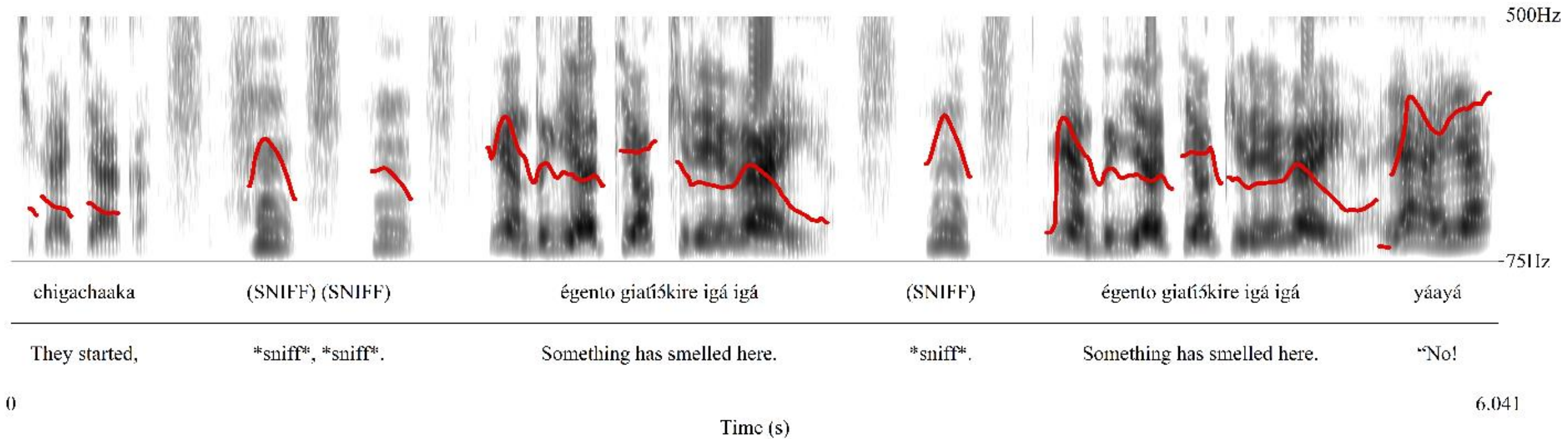
Pitch Reset



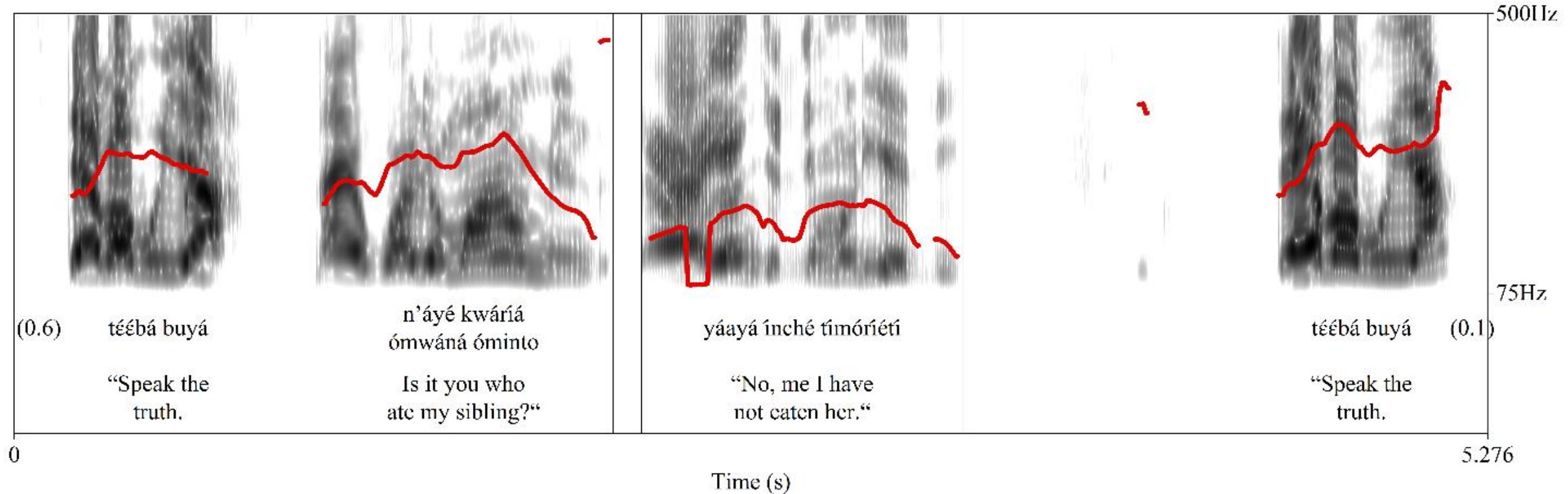
Lack of pitch reset indicating narrative continuity



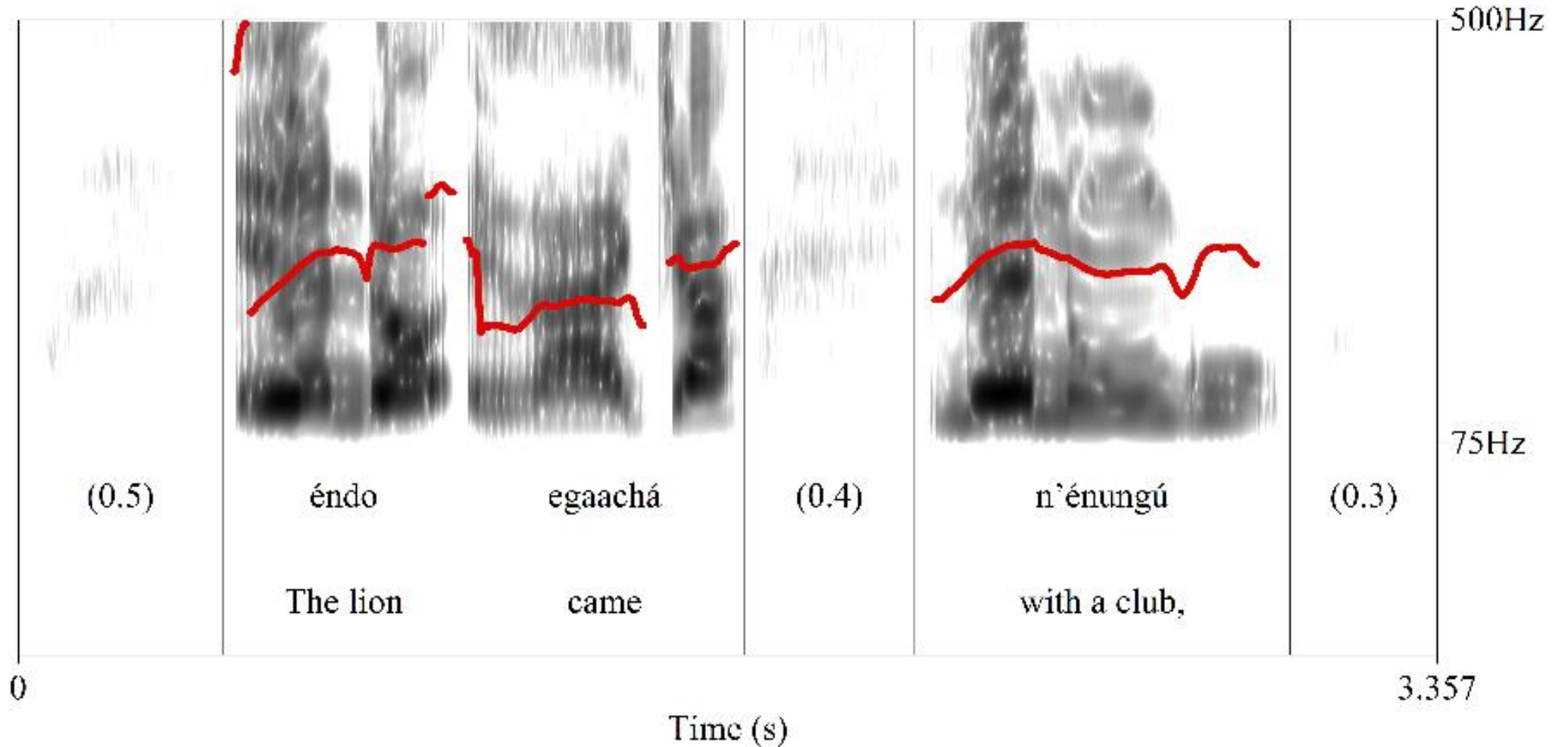
Isotony



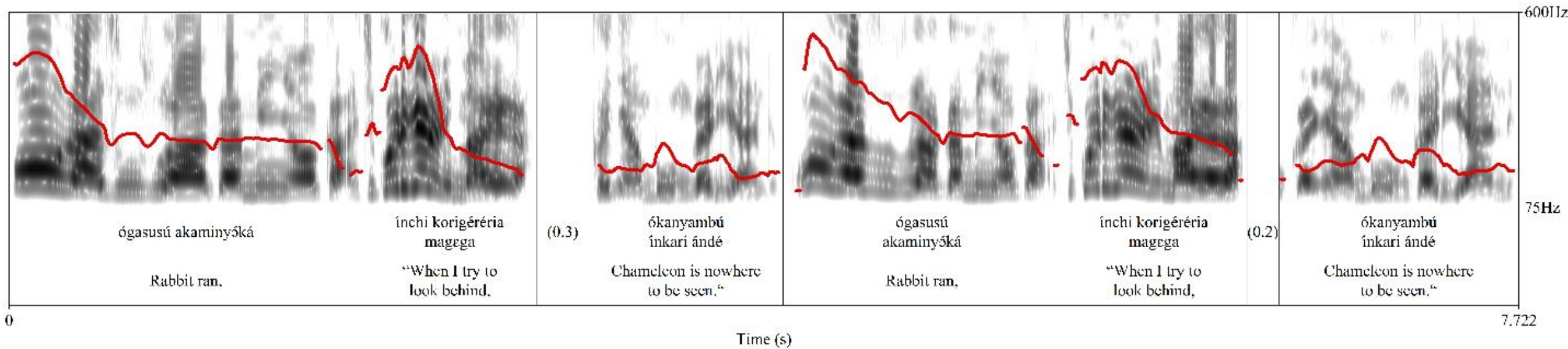
Lexical repetition without isotony



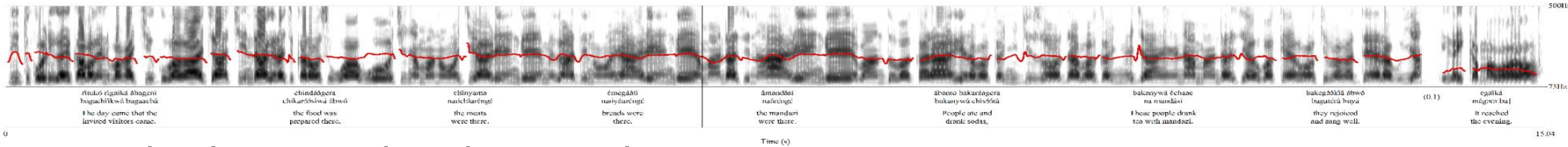
Isotony without lexical repetition



Isotony across multiple phrases



High Register



- The day came that the invited visitors came.
- The food was prepared there.
- The meats were there.
- The breads were there.
- The mandazi [donuts] were there.
- People ate and drank sodas.
- These people drank tea with mandazi.
- They rejoiced and sang well.
- It reached the evening.

Prosody as Cohesion

- Avoids problems with the list approach
- Offers a language-general functional definition of prosody which helps identify when a phonetic feature is being used prosodically, and when it is not
- Provides a framework for future typological studies of prosody

References

- Himmelman, Nikolaus P. & D. Robert Ladd. 2008. Prosodic description: An introduction for fieldworkers. *Language Documentation & Conservation* 2(2). 244–274.
<http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/4345>.
- Nash, Carlos. 2011. *Tone in Ekegusii: A description of nominal and verbal tonology*. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Linguistics, University of California, Santa Barbara.