



Àkùngbá Journal

of

LINGUISTICS

and

LITERATURES

No 9. (Special Edition) 2018

ISSN 2141-5420

ÀKUNGBÁ JOURNAL Of LINGUISTICS

And LITERATURES

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No 9. Special Edition, April 2018

ISSN 2141-5420

Akungba Journal of Linguistics and Literatures, No 9, Special Edition 2018

©Àkùngbá Journal of Linguistics and Literatures 9 (Special Edition) 2018
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Àkùngbá Journal of Linguistics and Literatures is published annually. However, the Editorial Board of the Journal has decided that the Journal will now have two issues per year due to the large numbers of quality papers received annually. Its focus is on the publication of recent findings in African Linguistics, Literatures & Cultures. Papers could be written either in quality English or Yorùbá language.

Authors are encouraged to submit their papers online to the Managing editors. The manuscripts should contain original material that has not been published in any form elsewhere. Manuscripts should be double-spaced and on single sides, with ample margins and bear the title of the contribution and the name(s) of the author(s) on a separate sheet of paper. The full postal address/phone/email details of each author including a short biographical note should be provided. The manuscripts should be in 12-point Time New Roman. Contributions should normally be between 10 (ten) and 15 (fifteen) pages. Any paper grossly exceeding this guideline will be subjected to an extra-charge. The manuscripts should include an abstract of not more than 200 words. The journal uses note where necessary. Footnotes are discouraged only endnotes are allowed. Endnotes are signaled in the text by superscript. Papers should contain

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Editor, *Akungba Journal of Linguistics and Literatures*

(April 2018)

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SYLLABLE AND SOUND SYSTEM OF STANDARD YORUBÁ AND ÒNKÒ DIALECT

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Abstract

This paper presents the phonology of Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect with the main objective of finding the area of convergence and divergence in the distribution of their phonemic segments as well as the syllable structure. In essence, the study examines the syllable and sound system in the two speech forms with a view to finding the similarities and differences between them. The research methodology adopted for this study is the comparative study. The theoretical framework adopted is the taxonomic phonemics. The thrust of this theory is speech sound identification and the function accorded the segments. This approach makes for what individual languages attest in terms of sounds. In doing this, so many theoretical tools are used to determine status of segments. The sounds so identified, according to the theory impact immensely on acquisition, speech error and foreign accent. The data for the study were collected from the native speakers of the language and the dialect under consideration. The research instrument used is the Ibadan four hundred wordlist of basic items. We discovered that there are some sounds in Standard Yorùbá which are not attested in Ònkò Dialect. Also, the phonological constraints imposed on their distribution account for the difference in the accent of the speakers. The study concluded that the area of convergence between Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect is more than the area of divergence, which further established the language-dialect relationship. The study therefore recommended a similar linguistic research on other dialects of the language.

Keywords: Convergence, Divergence, Sound system, Syllable, Ònkò Dialect, Standard Yoruba

1.1 Introduction

The concept of convergence and divergence can be defined as the increase and decrease in similarity between dialects. (Crystal 1985, p. 74) defines convergence as a process of dialect change in which the dialect becomes more like each other and divergence as a process of dialect change in which a dialect becomes less like another (Crystal, 1985, p.100). The process of divergence happens in the absence of geographical and social link between the populations within a speech community, while convergence involves the linguistic unification, divergence is the amount of linguistic diversification.

Phonology is a branch of linguistics that studies the systematic organization of sounds in language. It is concerned with the ways in which speech sounds form systems and patterns in human language. Phonology studies the speech sound that have been identified and studied with a view to establishing their function and distributional patterns.

The aim of this paper is to examine the phonology of Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect with the objective of finding the area of convergence and divergence between the language and its

dialect. This paper limits its area of study to Ìwájòwà Local Government Area because it has greater deviation in the aspects of segmental features compared with that of Standard Yorùbá.

1.1.1 Yorùbá language

Yorùbá is genetically classified as belonging to Kwa sub-group of Niger-Congo (Greenberg, 1963). Yorùbá has numerous dialects spoken in different areas of Nigeria. Within Nigeria the language is spoken in the areas of Òyó, Ògùn, Òndó, Òsun, Kwara, Lagos, Èkiti, Edó and the western part of Kogí State. There are other dialects found all over West Africa. In the Republic of Benin, Yorùbá dialects include Ketu, Nago, Ije, Ajase, Idaita, Tsabe; while Ana and Itsa are two of the dialects found in Togo. Some Yorùbá dialects are also found in the African Diaspora, especially the Caribbean. The dialect of Yorùbá used in Brazil is called Nago, while the one used in Cuba is referred to as Lucumi.

Bamgbose (1966) says "Yorùbá is a dialect continuum including several distinct dialects". The estimates of the total number of Yoruba dialects vary from twelve to twenty-six (Adetugbo, 1982 and Oyelaran, 1978). The speakers of these dialects are referred to by their sub-group labels. Researchers used many parameters to classify Yorùbá dialects chief among them are: sociological and linguistic evidence.

However, Adetugbo (1967) classifies Yoruba dialects into three major dialect areas:

- (a) South-East Yorùbá (SEY): Ìkálẹ̀, Òndó, Òwò, Rẹ̀mo, Ìjẹ̀bú, Èpé.
- (b) Central Yorùbá (CY): Ìjẹ̀shà, Ifẹ̀, Èkiti, Àkúrẹ̀, Èfòn, Ìlá.
- (c) North-West Yorùbá (NWY): Shákí, Ògbómòshó, Òyó, Òsun, Ìbàdàn.

1.1.2 Ònkò Dialect

Òkè-Ògùn is the homeland of the Ònkò dialect speakers in Òyó State, it is located on the northern axis of Òyó State. It comprises ten Local Government Areas which are: Ìrẹ́pó, Ìsẹ́yin, Kájọ̀là, Sákí West, Sákí East, Ìtẹ̀síwájú, Ìwájòwà, Òlórúnso, Orelópé and Atisbo.

Oyelaran (1978) and Adetugbo (1967 and 1982) divide the Yorùbá dialects into three major linguistic groups viz: North-western Yorùbá (NWY), South-eastern Yorùbá (SEY) and Central Yorùbá (CY). By their classification, the Ònkò dialect is classified under North-western Yorùbá.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

There are several phonological theories namely, lexical, metrical, stratificational, optimality among others. However, the work adopted taxonomic phonemics because of the focus of this work.

2.1.1 Taxonomic Phonemics

Taxonomic phonemics is the oldest theoretical orientation in phonological study. In other words, it predates the current theories of phonology. The thrust of this theory is the identification of sounds in language (Oyebade, 2008, p.3). The theory further states that even though two or more languages may share the same number of sounds the use to which they put them may differ. Also, the family of sounds these sounds have may vary depending on the phonological constraints of the sounds.

To show if a sound is distinctive, allophonic or analogous, some theoretical tools were introduced by the theory namely, complementary distribution, free variation, minimal pair or analogous environment. For example, if two sounds are mutually exclusive, the judgement is that they belong to the same class of sounds; however, if they share the same distributional pattern they are distinctive.

Taxonomic phonemics is favoured because the speech forms under study particularly Ònkò dialect manifests some sounds which make the speakers of the dialect unique. For example, an Ònkò dialect speaker will pronounce *iná* 'fire' as *iné*. While [a] is attested in the SY and OD, the pattern of distribution of this sound differs. This among others is what classical or taxonomic phonemics set out to do in language.

Further still, distinctive sounds having been so judged are the major components of the syllable and at a larger level, meaningful words. The sounds so identified are determined through their occurrence in syllables.

3.1 The Sound System of Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect

3.1.1 The Consonant System

Consonants are sounds produced with little or total blockage of the air coming from the lungs. Yusuf (2010, p.19) describes consonants as sounds produced by obstructing the air flow totally or partially at some point in the oral tract. There are 18 consonants attested in the language and the dialect under investigation. The obvious difference at the point is that while Standard Yorùbá (SY henceforth) has voiceless palatal-alveolar fricative [ç] Ònkò dialect has voiceless palatal-alveolar affricate [tʃ]. The chart is presented in table 1.

Table. 1 Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect consonant table

	Bilabial	Labial Dental	Alveolar	Palatal Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labial Velar	Glottal
Stop	b		t d			k g	kp gb	
Fricative		F	S	(ʃ)				h
Affricate				(tʃ) dʒ				
Nasal	m		n					
Lateral			l					
Trill			r					
Approximant					j		w	

3.1.2. Distribution of the Consonants

Consonants can occur in different positions in a word in languages. They can occur in word-initial position, word-medial position and word-final position. In Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect, consonant can occur only in word-initial position and word-medial position, they don't occur in word-final position. Example (12) shows the phonotactic constraint imposed on the distribution of consonants as exemplified by voiced alveolar stop in Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect:

(12a) Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect

Word initial

[dé] 'cover'

[dáné] 'cook'

[dĩ] 'fry'

[dò] 'sweet'

Medial position

[àdà] 'cutlass' [àdè] 'bat'

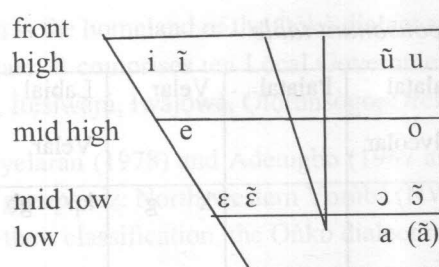
[adé] 'crown'

[odò] 'river'

3.1.2 Vowel System

Yusuf (2010, p.31) says "Vowels are sounds produced with very little obstruction to the air passage in the vocal tract. None of the articulators come close enough to impede air flow". Standard Yorùbá attests seven oral vowels and five nasals; Ònkò Dialect attests seven oral vowels and four nasals.

fig. 2 oral and nasal vowels of Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò Dialect



3.1.3. Distributions of the Vowels

All oral vowels except [u] in Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò Dialect can occur in word-initial position, word-medial position and word-final position. [u] can only occur in word-medial and word-final positions. Examples in (13):

(13a) Standard Yorùbá

Word initial

[igò] 'bottle'

[èlò] 'ingredient'

Medial position

[ògiri] 'wall'

[ilera] 'good health'

Word Final

[òrí] 'shell butter'

[olè] 'thief'

[olùkɔ́] 'teacher'	[àwòdì] 'kite'	[ago] 'clock'
[èwà] 'beans'	[àgbèdè] 'blacksmith'	[alé] 'night'
[ɔdʒà] 'market'	[àkólé] 'title'	[àròkɔ] 'essay'
[àkpò] 'bag/pocket/sack'	[idʒágbɔ̃] 'chin'	[ikà] 'wicked'
[òkúta] 'stone'	[ilú] 'town'	

(b) Ònkò Dialect

Word initial	Medial position	Word Final
[imó] 'nose'	[fihè] 'show'	[obì] 'kolanut'
[ewé] 'leaf'	[àlejò] 'visitor'	[pè] 'call'
[omi] 'water'	[ndodo] 'navel'	[jéro] 'millet'
[èhù] 'fear'	[itèsò òhù] 'sunshine'	[ntfè] 'work'
[ɔmó] 'breast'	[àádòta] 'fifty'	[amò] 'water pot'
[àne] 'in law'	[gbàgbé] 'forget'	[àfá] 'eagle'
[ifú] 'yam'	[fubú] 'fall'	

In Standard Yorùbá, nasal vowels other than [ɛ̃] can occur in word-medial and word-final positions, [ɛ̃] occurs in word-final position. Examples in (14a):

(14a) Standard Yorùbá

Medial position	Word Final
[idʒìlè] 'deep meaning'	[ɛ̃fɪ] 'horse'
[ɔkùrì] 'man'	[ikù] 'stomach'
[kɔ̃ga] 'well'	[ahɔ̃] 'tongue'
[erāko] 'animal'	[erā] 'meat'
[jè] 'that'	

In Ònkò Dialect, nasal vowels occur in word-medial and word-final positions. Examples in (15b)

(15b) Ònkò Dialect

Medial position	Word Final
[méjílá] 'eleven'	[dí] 'fry'
[òhúrò] 'dawn'	[sokù] 'to cry'
[eèkéné] 'nail'	[yè] 'roast'
[kólé] 'kneel down'	[ɔdò] 'year'

3.2 Sounds Substitution

Some sounds in Standard Yorùbá are replaced with another sounds in Ònkò Dialect. Examples in (16):

(16) Standard Yorùbá	Ònkò Dialect
(a) [f]	[ɸ]
[fu]	[ɸu] 'defecate'
[afɔ]	[aɸɔ] 'clothe'
[fe]	[ɸe] 'do'
(b) [r]	[h]
[èrù]	[èhù] 'fear'
[ìrù]	[ìhù] 'tail'
[òrò]	[òhò] 'words'
(c) [a]	[ɛ]
[àna]	[àɛ] 'in law'
[iná]	[iné] 'cook'
[òna]	[òɛ] 'road'
(d) [u]	[ɔ]
[àmù]	[àmò] 'water pot'
[inú]	[inó] 'inside'
[emu]	[emɔ] 'palmwine'
(e) [i]	[ĩ]
[jípo]	[yípo] 'turn around'
[ìdòtí]	[ìdòtĩ] 'dirty'
[otí]	[otĩ] 'wine'
(f) [ã]	[ẽ]
[erã]	[erẽ] 'meat'
[itã]	[itẽ] 'story'
[erãko]	[erẽko] 'animal'
(g) [ũ]	[õ]
[orũ]	[orõ] 'neck'
[odũ]	[odõ] 'year'

[kú]

[kǒ]

'full'

Note: Ònkò Dialect attests to [r, a, u, ũ, ɪ] sounds.

4. Syllable Structure

A syllable is defined as a unit of pronunciation made up of a cluster of segments defined by sonority peak (Roca and Johnson, 1999, p.148). The sonority peak is always a vowel, though it is possible for consonants such as nasal, lateral and glides to function as sonority peak. All vowels in Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò Dialect are capable of constituting the syllable peak. Examples in (17):

(17a) Standard Yorùbá

Ònkò Dialect

[i-wà] 'character'

[i-mó] 'nose'

[o-rí] 'head'

[o-mi] 'water'

[a-pá] 'hand'

[à-nɛ] 'in law'

[ɛ-nu] 'mouth'

[è-hù] 'fear'

[e-tí] 'ear'

[e-wé] 'leave'

[ò-tá] 'enemy'

[ɔ-mó] 'breast'

In Ònkò Dialect, the syllabic nasal [n] can constitute the peak at the beginning of words. Examples in (18):

(18) [n-lé] 'house'

[n-lè] 'ground'

[ŋ-gbé] 'feaces'

[ŋ-gbà] 'time'

[n-ǵé] 'work'

6. Findings

The findings from this study are listed below:

- i. Standard Yorùbá has 18 consonants including the [ɟ] sound but excluding [ʝ] sound while Ònkò dialect has 18 consonants including the [ʝ] sound but excluding the [ɟ] sound.
- ii. Standard Yorùbá has five nasal vowels while Ònkò dialect has four nasal vowels.
- iii. Some sounds in Standard Yorùbá are replaced with other sounds in Ònkò Dialect.
- iv. Syllabic nasal [n] can constitute the peak at the beginning of words in Ònkò Dialect.
- v. In Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect, vowels /e/ and /o/ are nasalized via the deletion of a preceding nasal vowel occurring at the morpheme boundary.

6. Conclusion

This paper examined the phonology of Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect with the objective of finding the area of convergence and divergence between the language and its dialect. It was discovered that

there are some sounds in Standard Yorùbá which are replaced for other sounds in Ònkò Dialect also, vowels /e/ and /o/ are nasalized via the deletion of a preceding nasal vowel occurring at the morpheme boundary in Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect. The study concludes that the area of convergence between Standard Yorùbá and Ònkò dialect is more than the area of divergence.

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Abstract

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