

A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF DELETION PROCESSES IN ÌYÀYÚ DIALECT OF EDOID LANGUAGE IN ONDO STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated deletion, a phonological process, in Ìyàyú dialect of Edoid Language. There are six quarters in Ìdó-Àní. Ìyàyú is one of the six quarters. Ìdó-Àní town is one of the towns in O`ṣe` Local government area of Ondo State. It is a distinct quarter whose dialect is not mutually intelligible with other five quarters and has little or no affinity with Yorùbá Language. The study described the operations of phonological processes in focus in the dialect. Generative Theory which was propounded by Chomsky was used to account for the segmental features. The population of the study was made up of adults whose ages are between 60 years and 80 years and have lived in the quarter for about 50 years. Five language helpers (sample) made up of two men and three women, were purposefully selected for data collection. The language helpers supplied data based on the instrument constructed by the researchers to elicit responses for the study. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) wordlist was adapted as a guide to generate the word items with consideration for local contents of the culture and environment of the study area. The respondents were asked to pronounce the words in their regional linguistic repertoire; which were recorded with Techno 10D ipad which enabled the researchers to replay the data several times in order to get the correct pronunciations of the word items. The data collected were presented and analysed. The study revealed that vowel deletion manifest in three different constructions across morpheme boundary in Ìyàyú dialect. They are noun + noun, verb + object noun and preposition + noun constructions. The study also showed that consonant deletion is not robust and that there were few exceptions in verb + object noun construction where vowels are retained and there is no deletion. We also found that in most of the elided vowels that occur in the dialect, V₁ is the candidate of deletion and such vowels are deleted with their tones in all the three constructions.

Key words: Dialectology, Edoid Language, Ìyàyú Dialect, Deletion.

Introduction

Dialectology is the study of the way by which sounds, words and grammatical forms vary within a language. A dialect is a substandard of a language. Dialect can also be referred to as a variation of a language. O`Grandy and Archibald (2000) define dialect as “a regional or social variety of a language characterised by its own phonological, syntactical, and lexical properties”. Thus, no human language is fixed, uniform or unvarying, all

languages show internal variation. Akmajian, Demers, Farmer, and Harnish, (2012) note that the dialect variation is a distinct form as a language spoken in a certain geographical area.

Every language has its varieties and dialects. Fromkin and Rodman in Atúramú (2024) remark that dialects of one language are versions of the same basic grammar with systematic differences in grammatical structure at different levels of grammar. It is

therefore possible to infer that dialect of any language would normally differ in the area of sound, phonological processes and morphological rules. Scholars in the field of dialectology such as Olúmúyìwá (1997), Abíó́dún (2005), Chitsuko (2019) and Yu-An (2019), among others affirm that different languages have variety of dialects. Thus, Ayéomomi (2011) reports that language all over the world are noted for variation pervasiveness. For instance, English has so many variations which include British English, American English, Australian English, South-African English, Nigerian English, among others. The author notes that American English is noticeably different from that of the British, and that speeches of these two groups are distinct from Australian English. When speakers of a particular language speak different versions of the language, they are said to be speaking different dialects of the language. Atúramú (2024) notes that every language is known to have dialects - regional dialects, socio-dialects and occupational dialects. By this, McGregor (2009) claims that there is no language with a reasonable number of speakers spread over a relatively wide territory will have completely homogenous system. This means that any given language would normally have varieties, technically referred to as dialects.

A dialect refers to a group of people's unique way of speaking a language that differs from the standard, (Chineze, Chinyere, & Nwike, 2021). Also, Ayéomomi (2011) defines a dialect as a distinct form or a variety of a language, which is associated with a recognisable regional, social or ethnic group, different from other forms of the language by specific linguistic features such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar or any combination of these. In their contribution, Akmajian et al.

(2012) remark that the term dialect refers to a form of a language that is regarded as substandard, incorrect or corrupt, as opposed to the standard, correct or pure form of a language. From the foregoing, it can be inferred that any language all over the world has its own variations, which may be in form of differences in sound, lexicon, morphology, syntax and phonology. Scholars in the field of linguistics have demonstrated that there is difference or variation in the grammatical structures of dialects of Yorùbá such as Ào spoken in Ondo State, Mọ̀bà spoken in Ekiti and Kwara States, Òyọ́ spoken in Òyọ́ State, Yewa spoken in Ògùn State and Ìgbómìnà, spoken in Òsun and Kwara States, among others. Also, Nordquist (2015) reports that in the USA, regional dialects include Appalachian, New Jersey and Southern English; and in Britain, Cockney, Liverpool English and Geordie (New Castle English), among others.

According to Èlugbè in Àiná-Adébáyò (2019), Ìyàyú is one of the six quarters that makes up of Ìdó-Àní in Òsé Local Government area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Other quarters are Àmúsigbò, Àkọ̀, Ìsèwà, Ìsùré and Owáàní. Ìyàyú belongs to the North Western Edoid a sub-group of the Edoid family language in Ìdó-Àní in Ondo State. This scholar classified the Edoid language into four sub-groups, which are Delta Edoid, South-Western Edoid, North Central Edoid, and the North Western Edoid. Other scholars, who have worked on Edoid language include, Elugbe and Ohiomanhe (1989), they worked on genetic classification of Edoid family tree, Egbokhare (1990) examined the phonology of Emai, a sub-group of North Central Edoid family, Ìkọ̀ tún and Sóyoyè (2002) conducted a research on "Will multilingualism survive, in Ìdó-Àní community?" and

Owóyelé (2016) carried out a study on a comparative analysis of phonological systems of Uhanmi and Ukwe of Akoko South East, Ondo State, which also belong to the North Western Edoid subgroup of the Edoid family language, among others. A close observation of available related studies revealed that there seems to be dearth of empirical studies on the phonological processes of Iyayu dialect, which is a sub-group of the North Western Edoid language. It is on this premise that this study examines deletion as one of the phonological processes in Iyayu dialect in order to contribute to the existing knowledge on the phonological process of the Edoid Language. This study is based on Generative Theory, propounded by Chomsky as reported in Al-Hindawi and Al-Aadili (2018), who reported that the organization of Generative Theory are of two levels, which are systematic phonemic level and systematic phonetic level.

The People and Dialect of Ìyàyú

Ìyàyú quarter is one of the six quarters that made up Ido-Ani in O`se` Local Government area of Ondo State. Ìyàyú is a distinct quarter with her own speech form, different from other five quarters. Thus, Ìyàyú is not mutually intelligible with other quarters such as Àmúsigbò, O`wààní and Àkò` among others. Thus, Ìkò` tún (ibid) reported that Ìyàyú seems to be a distinct community as the dialect spoken by the indigenes is not regarded as a dialect of Yoruba language unlike other quarters. The dialect spoken by indigenes of Ìyàyú quarter is also called Ìyàyú dialect; (just like when Ekiti people speak Ekiti dialect) some changes are noticed which are referred to as phonological processes. Abíódún (2010) remarks that in normal speech, sounds are not produced in isolation rather morphemes and words are

dè` (buy) + úkó (cup) - d-úkó

joined together in a string to make meaningful utterances; and that as words and morphemes are combined, sounds are influenced by their environments thereby undergoing some adjustments. These changes are technically known as phonological processes, one of which is deletion.

Deletion Process

Deletion is a phonological process whereby what is present in the underlying representation get lost at the surface level. O`Grady and Archibald (2000) define “deletion as a process that removes a segment from certain phonetic contexts”. Also, Oyèbádé (2008) defines deletion as a process which involves the loss of a segment under some languages. Language scholars, such as Egbokhare (1990), Oyèbádé (2008), Abíódún (2010), Owóyelé (2016) among others reported that, this could involve vowels or consonants and that deletion that involves vowels is referred to as elision.

Vowel Deletion

In his contribution, Abíódún, (2010) defines vowel deletion as the loss of a vowel in a word, or across morpheme or word boundary. He notes that the phonological process occurs across morpheme and word boundaries in the majority of Nigerian languages. Casali (1996) notes that languages differ in the vowel they elide; and that there are some languages which delete the first vowel and others that delete the second vowel.

For example: $CV_1 V_2 CV \longrightarrow CVCV$

This process is a common phenomenon in many Nigerian languages. In Urhobo Language, Aziza (2010) also reports that vowel elision is a common phonological process that affects one or two vowels that follow each other in a sequence. The author gave the following examples:

-- dúkó = ‘buy a cup’

sá (shot) + ε`vé (goat) - s-ε`vé -- se`vé = 'shota goat.
 ògó (bottle) + óbiébi (black) - ọ̀g- óbiébi -- ọ̀g`gobiébi = 'a black
 bottle'

The sequence of vowels may be within the word or across word boundaries and that V₂ elision is less common. He notes that vowels which plays no real grammatical function are deleted.

Thus, Owóyelé (2016) reports the following deletion in Ûkwè and Ùhànmì respectively:

(a) Ûkwè					
	Noun		Noun		Surface Structure
i.	oyàní` owner	#	ebìrì oil	→	oyanebìrì 'owner of oil'
ii.	ode house	#	ovie king	→	odovie 'king's palace'
iii.	ùnú` mouth	#	odídé` road	→	nuodídé` 'entrance'
iv.	enã`mĩ` meat	#	èjì body	→	enã`mèjì 'flesh'
(b) Ùhànmì					
	Verb		Noun		Surface Structure
i.	mĩ`nē see	#	ēda money	→	mĩ`nēda 'see money'
ii.	kàyò go	#	oyĩ`mĩ` farm	→	kayoyĩ`mĩ` 'go to farm'
iii.	nē pass	#	isɔ feaces	→	nīsɔ 'pass feaces'
iv.	fē` wash	#	εvε cloth	→	fēvε 'wash cloth'

In the examples above, the V₁ is deleted in both the noun + noun and verb + noun constructions. Also, the nasal sound in noun + noun construction was deleted alongside the deleted vowel in Ukwè while the nasal sound is retained in verb + noun construction in Uhanmi. Vowels are usually deleted when two or more vowels occur across morpheme boundary. When such an occurrence is introduced by morphological processes, the language or the dialect may choose to drop the first or the second of the contiguous vowels.

Welmers in Owóyelé (2016) reported that in a vast number of Edoid utterances containing transitive verbs, the final vowel simply does not appear. Also, Egbokhare (1990) notes that after a considerable amount of elicitation, an investigator may wonder how a native speaker of Edo knows what the final vowel of a given verb actually is. The issue of which vowel should be deleted across the morpheme boundary is clear, because the deletion is either at V₁ in certain constructions or V₂ in some other constructions across the morpheme boundary. By this, it means that in a V₁ # V₂ structure, V₁ is normally deleted to give room for V₂. This is an example of deletion across

Vowel Deletion in Edoid Language

morpheme. Thus, scholars such as Aziza (2010) in Urhobo, Egbokhare (1990), Emai, Abíódún (2002) in Ukaan have shown evidence for the V₁ deletion, while it was reported that consonant deletion is not robust Edoid Language.

(a) r-deletion:

: èkùró	-	èkùó	=	‘palm kernel’
àdùrà	-	àdúà	=	‘prayer.
dára	-	dáa	=	‘be good’
oló’run	-	oló’un	=	‘God’

(b) w-deletion:

ewúré	-	eúré	=	‘goat’
kéwú	-	kéú	=	‘Arabic script’
jòwó	-	jòó	=	‘please’

In (a) above, the author notes that consonant /r/ can be deleted when it occurs as the last consonants (between vowels) in a disyllabic or trisyllabic words. Also, in the (b) examples, /w/ can be deleted between two vowels if one of them is rounded, but may also manifest between a front unrounded vowel and a low vowel such as: igba + èwá - egbàá = ‘two thousand’.

Consonant Deletion

Oyebade (2010) remarks that in Yoruba Language, consonant or vowel can be deleted in different environments. The author gave the following examples:

He noted that sometimes the condition for consonant deletion may be that the language prefers that final syllables should be open. If a closed syllable occurs in final position, the process of consonant deletion is introduced to obliterate the arresting consonant and hence to open the syllable as demonstrated in (a) and (b) above. In English Language, consonant deletion also manifested in some words as presented below:

(c) desk top	-	des(k) top
hard disk	-	har(d) disk
first time	-	firs(t) time
want to	-	wan(t) to

From the (3.3c) above, it can be observed that only the last consonant in the first morpheme can be deleted across the boundary in English language.

Statement of the Problem

Some studies have been carried out by different scholars in Ìdó-àní, (Ìkò tún and Sòyoyè, 2002, Ìkòtún, 2006 and Oláiyá, 2012), Emai, (Egbokhare, 1990), Ùkwè and Ùhànmì (Owóyelé (2016) which are classified as

Edoid family languages, among others, (See Èlugbè and Ohiomanhè, (1989).

However, a close observation of these previous studies revealed that none of the researchers has worked on the deletion processes in Ìyàyú dialect. This study therefore, is to fill the existing gap and contribute to related empirical studies in the broad field of linguistics. It is on this premise that the researchers examined the linguistic analysis of deletion processes in Ìyàyú

dialect of Edoid Language in Ondo State.

Objective of the Study

This study examined deletion, one of the phonological processes, which has been widely reported in different languages of the world. However, available literature and studies seem to reveal that phonological processes, with particular reference to deletion in Iyayu dialect has not been adequately covered in the field of dialectology and phonology by linguistic scholars. Specifically, the study investigated deletion in noun + noun construction, verb + noun construction and preposition + noun construction.

Research Method

The design of this study was a survey research type that examines and describes the operation of deletion as a phonological process in Ìyàyú dialect. The entire adults between 60 and 80 years of age, who had lived a minimum of 50 years in the quarter, formed the population of the study. The researchers travelled to Ìyàyú quarter on three different occasions for data gathering. Five language helpers (two men and three women) were purposefully selected as the sample for the study. The research is based on interview, using prepared wordlist by the researchers to collect relevant data. The instrument was adapted from the 1700 wordlist of the Summer Institute

of Linguistics (SIL) which was modified to include local words and culture of the people which may allow the speakers of the dialect bring out relevant words. The instrument was used as a guide for the interview from where the samples were asked to pronounce the words in their native Ìyàyú dialect. Techno 10D ipad was used to record the utterances as the words or phrases are being pronounced by the informants. This helped the researchers in having the opportunity to replay the data collected several times in order to get the correct pronunciation for accurate transcription and to validate the instrument. In addition, the GSM number of one of the informants was collected for possible interaction in the course of carrying out the study; which was also very helpful as it saved the researchers the cost and time of travelling to the study area for many times.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The analysis of data collected on Noun + Noun, Verb + Object Noun, Preposition + Noun constructions in Ìyàyú dialect are hereby presented and analysed below:

Vowel Deletion in Noun + Noun Construction in Ìyàyú

The data presented below are examples of V₁ deletion in noun + noun construction where the second noun is also a vowel initial in the dialect.

Noun			Noun	Surface	Structure	Type	of
1.	avĩ̀ ^h house	#	ovìè king	→	avovìè king's house (palace)	V ₁	
2.	ɔ̀bidi black	#	avĩ̀ ^h house	→	ɔ̀bidavĩ̀ ^h black house	V ₁	
3.	esɔ̀ ^h V ₁ ear	#	etĩ̀nĩ̀ ^h fish	→	esetĩ̀nĩ̀ ^h fish ear		
4.	odúdí V ₁ baby	#	asĩ̀nĩ̀ ^h back	→	odudasĩ̀nĩ̀ ^h baby's back		
5.	áfɛ V ₁ birds	#	edʒɛ̀ ^h blood	→	afedʒɛ̀ ^h birds' blood		
6.	ɛ̀dã money	#	avĩ̀ ^h house	→	ɛ̀davĩ̀ ^h house money (rent)	V ₁	
7.	úhɔ̀ ^h V ₁ Snail	#	odàmĩ̀ ^h soup	→	úhodàmĩ̀ ^h snail soup		
8.	ofòfò white	#	ɛ̀sĩ̀nɛ beans	→	ofòfɛ̀sĩ̀nɛ white beans	V ₁	
9.	ɛ̀dè Food	#	ùpè festival	→	ɛ̀dùpè food festival	V ₁	
10.	odé V ₁ Cloth	#	ɔ̀ ^h dɛ hunter	→	odɔ̀ ^h dɛ hunter's cloth		
11.	ɔ̀wã ^h sĩ̀ ^h V ₁ man	#	enũ̀mĩ̀ ^h meat	→	ɔ̀wã ^h senũ̀mĩ̀ ^h man's meat		
12.	eésì pig	#	obì oil	→	eésobì pig oil	V ₁	
13.	ofugbo V ₁ bush	#	enũ̀mĩ̀ ^h meat	→	ofugbenũ̀mĩ̀ ^h bush meat		
14.	ɔ̀bidi black	#	ugbã̀ ^h calabash	→	ɔ̀bidugbã̀ ^h black calabash	V ₁	

13. wε̣` ugbèñĩ` → wugbèñĩ` - say salt
 say salt

From the data above, it can be observed that only the last vowel of the verb is deleted; that is V₁. The data also revealed that all the vowels (V₁) are deleted with their tone, which is an autosegmental feature.

Vowel Deletion in Preposition + Noun Construction

The analysis of the data collected showed that vowel deletion can be found between preposition and noun grammatical construction. The following are some of the examples:

	Preposition	Noun		Surface Structure
Gloss				
1.	dí at	Ìkàré Ikare (a town)	→	díkàré - at Ikare
2.	dí market in	okì market	→	dokì - in (the)
3.	dí farm in	ɔhã`mì farm	→	dɔhã`mì - in (the)
4.	dí at	avĩ` home	→	davĩ` - at home
5.	dí at Epinmi at	Epĩ`mĩ` Epinmi	→	dépĩ`mĩ` -
6.	dí in	ovia room	→	dovia - in the room
7.	dí in	ugbàkẽ` lake	→	dugbàkẽ` - in the lake
8.	dí roof on	ukìmũ` roof	→	dukìmũ` - on the
9.	odé outside	avovière palace	→	odavovière - outside the palace
10.	odé outside	avĩ` house	→	odavĩ` - outside the house
11.	dí on	etã` tree	→	detã` - on the tree
12.	dí on	odè cloth	→	dodè - on the cloth
13.	odé toilet	ugbágbε`se` toilet	→	odugbágbε`se` - outside the

	outside	toilet			
14.	dí	akũ`nũ`	→	dakũ`nũ`	- on the hill
	on	hill			
15.	dí	ukpò	→	dukpò	- in the river
	in	river			

A careful observation of the data above showed that V₁ are normally deleted while the V₂ are retained across the morpheme boundary. Thus, the process of vowel deletion in Ìyàyú dialect is governed by the following rule:

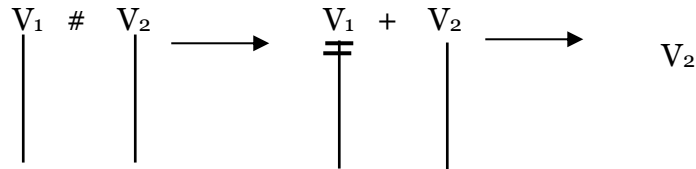


Fig.1: Rule Ordering

The rule, according to Abíódún (2010) is the loss of a vowel in a word, or across morpheme or word boundary. Like Owóyelé (2016) observes in Uhanmi and Ukwe dialects, it was

noticed that vowel with a high tone in all the cases of vowel deletion discussed so far in Ìyàyú survives deletion and realigns itself with another contiguous vowel.

- | | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 1. | wõõ + égbà = wõõ égbà |
| | carry stone carry stone |
| 2. | kɔɔ + ikpákí = kɔɔ ikpákí |
| | plant cassava (To) plant cassava |
| 3. | wõõ + isã` = wõõ isã` |
| | carry faeces carry faeces |
| 4. | gbɔ̀ + okì = gbɔ̀ okì |
| | look market look (at) market |
| 5. | gwɔ̀ + ukìmũ` = gwɔ̀ ukìmũ` |
| | open roof open roof |

A close observation of the data analysed above showed that this rule is not absolutely as there are few cases where the vowels are retained and the data violate the deletion rule in the verb + object noun construction. The analysis of the data collected revealed that consonant deletion is not robust in Iyayu dialect. This might be as a result of lack of affinity of the dialect with Yorùbá Language, where there are evidences of consonant deletion.

Conclusion

Based on the data presented and analysed in this study, it is concluded that elision of V₁ across morpheme

boundary is very productive in Ìyàyú dialect in the three constructions and that consonant deletion is not robust in the dialect. Also, it concluded that the tones of the deleted vowels are also affected.

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