

## PHONOLOGICAL CHANGES IN IJESA DIALECT OF YORUBA

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### **Abstract**

Existing scholarly works on Ijesa focus mainly on the syntactic aspect of the dialect with little or no attention to the phonological aspect. Given the fundamental nature of the sound system of human languages, the objective of this work is to study the phonological feature in Ijesa dialect of Yoruba and compare it with the phonological features of 'standard' Yoruba. The paper examines some common phonological components and phonological processes like assimilation, elision and vowel harmony. The study employs both primary and secondary data. The primary data comprised the collection of the four hundred words collection of University of Ibadan in Ijesa dialect. The data were collected from Ijesa community from the informants that were above forty years of age. The secondary data comprised thesis, textbooks, academic journals articles that contain the works of existing scholars. The study concludes that the Ijesa dialect of Yoruba language has distinct phonological features which mark it differently from the standard Yoruba language.

**Keywords:** Phonology, Sounds, Modification, Ijesa dialect

### **Introduction**

Owolabi (1989, p.172) observe some processes that usually occur during the speech production. These processes cause some notable changes to some units of words in utterances to make communication easier. These kinds of processes that relate to speech sound is what can be referred to as phonological processes. Thus, in this work, sound modification is part of the phonological processes identified for characterization and description. These processes may occur if the utterance production is taken slowly. This is based on the argument of Oyebade (1998, p.56) in the following words:

Phonological processes are sound modifications motivated by the need to maintain euphony in a language or rectify violations of well-formedness constraints in the production of utterance.

The focus of this paper is on a dialect of Yoruba language. The reason for choosing a dialect of Yoruba language is based on the observation of Awobuluyi (1992) that:

...dialects deserve to be studied in their own right and thereby preserved in written record for posterity...they have further potential of helping to clarify issues or points that are likely otherwise to remain obscure in the standard variety of the language. It will be dereliction of duty for us not to work on them as a preliminary to carrying out analysis of the points or issues of interest in the standard form of the language.

Awobuluyi's (1992) view quoted above draws attention to the fact that dialects may not necessarily have same linguistics units with the 'core'. Therefore, further study and understanding of a dialect will not only promote the dialect into but help in solving some linguistic problems in the core language. The concerned Yoruba dialect in this study is Ijesa dialect, a dialect spoken in some parts of Osun State of Nigeria.

The phonological processes in Ijesa dialect that will be examined in this paper are elision, assimilation and the vowels harmony. For clear illustration, a comparison of phonological processes in Ijesa dialect and standard Yoruba language.

### **The Ijesa People**

The Ijesa people are found in Osun East in Osun East Nigeria. These people are not only found in Ilesa as many people think. Many believed that it is only people that comes from Ilesa is being called Ijesa not knowing that they were scattered within the state of Osun. There are six local government in Ijesa

land and all these local government speaks Ijesa dialect. That is not only Ilesa people that speak Ijesa dialect. Ilesa is just a town out of the six local government that speak Ijesa dialect in Osun State. The six local government that speak Ijesa dialect fluently are:

- Oriade Local Government with her headquarters in Ijebu-Ijesa
- Obokun Local Government with her headquarters in Ibokun
- Ijesa East Local Government with her headquarters in Ereje Street in Ijesa
- Ilesa West Local Government with her headquarters in Iyemogun Street in Ilesa
- Atakumosa East Local Government with her headquarters in Iperindo
- Atakumosa West Local Government with her headquarters in Osu

Research have shown that the Ijesa dialect spoken in Ilesa is watered, coloured and adulterated due to civilization or western education.

### Methodology

The method adopted in this study is descriptive within the frame of qualitative design. The primary data comprised the collections of the four hundred words collections of the four hundred words collection of the University of Ibadan in Ijesa dialect. The data were collected from Ijesa community from the informants that were above forty years of age. The secondary data comprised theses, textbooks, academic journal articles that contain the works of existing scholars. The data collected were transcribed and analyzed using provisions in the theory of Transformational and Generative Grammar (TGG) as propounded by Chomsky and Halle (1968).

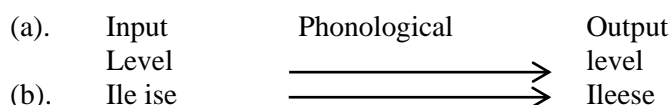
### Theoretical Framework

There are many phonological theories. The theory in study is the phonological component of theory of Transformational and Generative Grammar (TGG) as propounded by Chomsky and Halle (1968). Phonology simply means the study of combination of sounds and the rules that govern them in a syllable, word or utterance. Sommerstern (1977,p.4) affirms this by saying that, it is principles that determine the pronunciation of the words, phrases and sentences of language.

The Transformational and Generative Grammar (TGG) holds that each phoneme is a bundle of distinctive features. This means that a sound is not necessarily the smallest unit of the utterance, because it can be sub-divided into its combined components, meaning that any of these components can differentiate one sound from the other in speech context.

Chomsky and Hale (1968) present some features to give a full description of a sound either consonant or vowel. Features that are captured in Chomsky and Hale (1968) are as follows: ( $\pm$ Consonant), ( $\pm$ Syllabic), ( $\pm$ Sonarant), ( $\pm$ Fricative), ( $\pm$ Anterior), ( $\pm$ Corona), ( $\pm$ Voiced), ( $\pm$ Labial), and ( $\pm$ Nasal). These features are the concrete components of phonemes in the languages. If a sound has any of the features, it will be marked with positive (+) denoting presence of that phonetic property: whereas sounds without such feature will be marked (-). For example, if we are to describe sound /b/, it will contain the following components: +Consonant, -Syllabic, -Sonarant, -Fricative, +Anterior, +Coronal, +Voiced, +Labial and -Nasal.

By using the above features, it will help to identify the differences and similarities of one sound from the other. The theory of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) can be divided into two major levels. They are input level and output level, and their work based on phonological rules. It is as shown below:

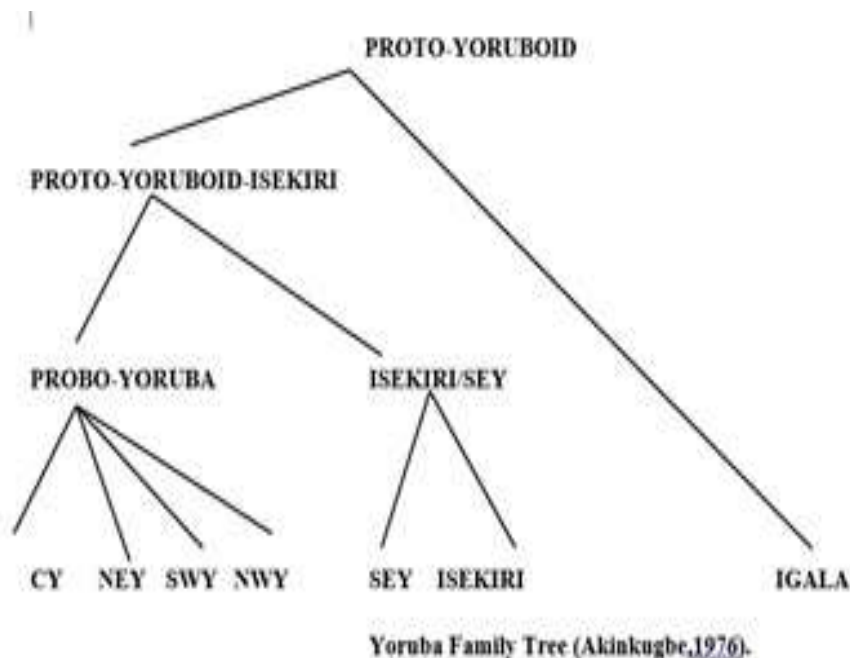


(Phonological rules changed Ile ise (input) to Ileese (output))

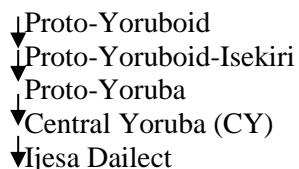
### Review of Relevant Literature on Yoruba Dialect

The major work of early scholars like Forde (1951), Abraham (1958), Delano (1958) and Ellis (1974) on Yoruba dialect focused mainly on identification of Yoruba dialect in their works without working on the classification of the dialect spoken in each town. But Bowen (1958) took a place further in the

classification of the Yoruba dialect. He classified Yoruba dialect into four, these are East, West, North and South. The seven towns were also mentioned as Yoruba dialect speaking towns. They are: Ketu, Eko, Egba, Ijebu, Ijesa, Efon, Ilorin. Akinkugbe (1976) classified Yoruba dialect from purely linguistics perspective. He used the phonology and the word meaning as paradigms. The classification of Yoruba dialects is shown in the figure that follows:



In the above dialectal diagram of Yoruba family, the Ijesa dialect which is the focus of this study falls under Central Yoruba. We can use the diagram to indicate the position of Ijesa dialects in Akinkugbe's (1976) classification:



Oyelaran (1976) observes the relationship among Yoruba dialects. He therefore, classified Yoruba dialect into four categories as follows:

- (A). Northwest Yoruba (NWY)
  - a. Oyo, Ibadan
  - b. Upper Ogun (Oke Ogun)
  - c. Saki, Ijio
  - d. Ketu, Sabee
  - e. Bene ati Togo
- (B). South East Yoruba (SEY)
  - a. Ondo, Owo,
  - b. Ijebu
  - c. Ikale, Ilaje
- (D). Central Yoruba (CY)
  - a. Ile-Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti
- (E). North Eastern Yoruba (NEY)
  - a. Igbomina, Kakanda, Igbolo,
  - b. Jumu, Bunu, Oworo, Owe, Egbe.

Oyelandan's (1976) work on Yoruba dialect shows that understanding reduction always occur between one Yoruba dialect and another based on the distance between one settlement and another. Oyelandan (1976) also explains that difference could be phonological, semantic or grammatical. Adetugbo (1976, 82.) observes that despite the fact that dialect can be linked to a single proto-language. They are shall different from one another Anugbo (1982) classifies Yoruba dialect thus,

- A. Northwest Yoruba (NWY)  
Oyo, Egba ( Abeokuta, Ilaro, etc) and Osun (Oshogbo, Ogbomoso, Ede etc.)
- B. South East Yoruba (SEY)  
Ondo, Owo, Ijebu and the dialect of people from Okitipupa, Ikale, Ilaje, Ijo-Apoi etc
- D. Central Yoruba (CY)  
Ife, Ijesa and Ekiti.

It is obvious that Ijesa dialect under Adetugbo's (1982) classification falls under central Yoruba language and it shares the same category with Ife and Ekiti dialects. Awobuluyi (1998) also places Ijesa dialect under Central Yoruba in his classification of Yoruba dialect. This is shown in the table below:

<b>North-West Yoruba</b>		<b>North-East Yoruba</b>
Eko, Awori, Egbado, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ibolu, Igbomina		Iyagba, Ijumu, Oworo, Owe
	<b>Central Yoruba</b>	
	Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti, Moba	
<b>South-West Yoruba</b>		<b>South-East Yoruba</b>
Saabe-Ketu (Ango), Ife (Togo)		Egba, Ijebu, Ilaje, Ikale, Ondo, Owo, Oba-Ikaro

From the foregoing examination of the existing studies, it is clear that Ijesa dialect is not an obscure dialect of Yoruba language. This is because their works identified Ijesa dialect as one of the prominent and major Yoruba dialects. Also, in the area of Yoruba dialect classification, there is no argument on the position of Ijesa dialect. The scholarly works on the Yoruba dialect classification like Akikugbe (1976), Oyelandan (1976), Adetugbo (1982) and Awobuluyi (1998) appear unanimous in classifying Ijesa dialect under Central Yoruba which shares the same position with Ife and Ekiti expect Awobuluyi (1998) who also classified Moba dialect under Central Yoruba.

### **Ijesa Dialect Sounds Modifications**

The phonological processes that will be examined in this study as sounds in Ijesa dialects as stated earlier are elision, assimilation and vowel harmony. The processes and phonological rules that govern them in speech context will be also examined.

#### **Elision**

Scholars like Bamgbose (1965), Owolabi (1989) and Olumuyiwa (1994) examined the concept of elision in Yoruba language. The elision occurs while two sounds meet and one disappear for the other. This can occur either in a single word or in a collection of words. For example,

1. (a). Ekuro - ekuro (r)
- (b). Omoluwabi - Omoluabi (w)
2. (a). Kao wo - kawo (o)
- Count money - count money
- (b). Gbe odo - gbodo (e)
- Carry mortal - carry mortal

#### **Vowel Elision**

A vowel sound can be deleted in a structure after one or two contiguous vowels is deleted, contraction will also occur which reduces two words into a single word. The result of such utterances is contraction. The example (3) below shows cases of vowel elision:

3. (a). Idi-oko - oko idiko (vowel sound /o/ is elided)

	place + motor	-	motor park
(b).	eti + odo	-	etido (vowel sound /o/ is elided)
	side + river	-	river bank
(d)	Iron + agbon	-	irungbo (vowel sound /a/ is elided)
	hair + chin	-	chin hair (beared)
(e).	eti + ile	-	etile (vowel sound /i/ is elided)
	Near / side + house	-	nearby
4. (a).	Oni + ile	-	onile (vowel sound /i/ is elided)
	owner-house	-	landlord
(b).	oni + isu	-	onisu (vowel sound /i/ is elided)
	owner-yam	-	yam owner
5. (a).	ka + owo	-	kawo (vowel sound /o/ is elided)
	count money	-	count money
(b).	te + iwe	-	tewe (vowel sound /i/ is elided)
	type book	-	typing
(d).	yin + eni	-	yinni (vowel sound /e/ is elided)
	praise someone	-	praise someone
(e).	gba + epo	-	gbapo (vowel sound /e/ is elided)
	heat palm oil	-	heat palm oil
6. (a).	Ka + eja	-	keja (vowel sound /a/ is elided)
	Package fish	-	package fish
(b).	gbe + odo	-	gbodo(vowel sound /e/ is elided)
	Dig well	-	dig well
(d).	bu + omi	-	bomi (vowel sound /u/ is elided)
	Take water	-	take water
(e).	fe + omo	-	fomo (vowel sound /e/ is elided)
	Marry/love	-	child marry/love child
(e).	ko + egungun	-	kegunun (vowel sound /o/ is elided)
	Pack bone	-	pack bone

The example (3a-d) above show the vowel elision that occurs in noun phrases (this kind of phrase involves two nouns). The vowel elision that occur in (4) is between ‘oni’ (owner/seller) and a noun while examples in (5) occur in verb phrase. The example 5 (a) shows that we can delete the initial vowel sound of the noun structure and 5 (b) shows that verbs structure can be elided.

In Ijesa dialect, vowel elision occur when two-words co-occur to be collapsed into a single word. The examples in ( 7) below shows how elision can occur in Ijesa dialect.

7. i.	ubi + udo	-	ubudo (vowel sound i/ is elided)
	place + standing	-	station
	ubi ugbe	-	ubugbe (vowel sound /i/ is elided)
	place+living	-	house
ii.	udi oko	-	udiko (vowel sound /i/ is elided)
	place + motor	-	motor park
	eran oko	-	eranko (vowel sound /o/ is elided)
	animal + farm	-	bush farm
8. i.	gbe odo	-	gbodo (vowel sound /e/ is elided)
	carry mortal	-	carry mortal
	je uyan	-	juyan (vowel sound /e/ is elidd)
	eat pounded yam	-	eat pounded yam
	se use	-	suse (vowel sound /e/ is elided)
	do work	-	do work
	ran owu	-	ranwu (vowel sound /o/ is elided)
	weave cotton	-	weave cotton
ii.	sin uto	-	sinto (vowel sound /u/ is elided)
	spit saliva	-	spitting saliva
	gbe odo	-	gbedo (vowel sound /o/ is elided)

carve mortal	-	carve mortal
pa eniyan	-	paniyan (vowel sound /e/ is elided)
kill human	-	murder
ni epo	-	rupo (vowel sound /o/ is elided)
carry palm oil	-	carry palm oil

From example (7) above, it is clear that elision occurs in Ijesa dialect within noun phrase. This observation shows that the initial vowel of the second noun can be elided before the occurrence of contraction. Also the last vowel sound of the first noun can also be elided. Example (8) illustrates elision in verb phrase. It may either be the last vowel sound of the verb or the initial vowel of the noun that will be skipped, resulting into contraction. If we compare the examples in (3) and (6), we will observe that the elision in noun phrase and verb phrase can occur in Ijesa dialect just as it is in standard Yoruba. If we examine the state of elision in noun phrase and verb phrase either in Ijesa dialect or standard Yoruba, we will see that there is no difference. It shows in example (3) and (6) that there is no specific rule that governs vowel sound to be elided, either the initial or the last vowel in noun phrase and verb phrase. The views of scholars like Bamgbose (1965, 1990), Oyelara (1972), Badejo (1980), Awobuluyi (1980) are in line with what is observed here. Most of them agreed that there are certain rules that guide the elision in noun phrase and verb phrase. This is why Awobuluyi (1988, P. 75) says thus: "In contemporary standard Yoruba...this phonological phenomenon operates in an unpredictable manner".

As it is difficult to predict the manner of elision in standard Yoruba, we cannot also predict its manner in Ijesa dialect. Hence, the formal rules of elision in the Yoruba phonology is that both consonant and vowel sounds can be elided in a word. Vowel elision can occur at the initial, middle and end.

**Consonant Elision in Standard Yoruba and Ijesa Dialects**

In standard Yoruba, Owolabi (1989) observes that the consonant sound can be elided in an utterance, to produce an acceptable utterance. The example (8) below shows consonant sounds that can be elided.

9. Ekuro (palm kernel)	-	ekuro (r)
Adura (Prayer)	-	adua (r)
Dara (good)	-	daa (r)
Omoluwabi	-	omoluabi (w)
(good child)	-	omo dada
Jowo (please)	-	joo (w)
Gbariye (Idiophone)	-	gbarie (y)
Alupayida (magic)	-	alupaيدا (y)
Olakiitan (name)	-	olaitan (k)

In Ijesa dialect, the words that exhibit consonant elision are shown in the following example (8):

10. Agogo (gong)	-	Aogo (g)
Otito (truth)	-	oito (t)
Oruko (name)	-	ouko (r)
Owuro (morning)	-	ouro (w)
Owo (hand)	-	oo (w)
Ewure (goat)	-	eure (w)
Owu (cotton)	-	ou (w)

The example 9 above shows the consonant sounds that can be elided in Ijesa dialect. It shows that labio-velar approximant sound /w/ can be elided in standard Yoruba and Ijesa dialects. It can however be noticeable that the elision of labio-velar approximant sound /w/ is more pronounced in Ijesa dialect than in standard Yoruba. This observation is instantiated in words like "agogo" "otito" in Ijesa dialect where "aago" and "otito" change to "aogo" and "oito" through elision. It should be added that the process that converted "agogo" and "otito" to "aago" and "oito" is not only elision, assimilation also occurs. Let us consider examples (10) and (11) below:

**Standard Yoruba**

- |     |               |   |      |   |      |
|-----|---------------|---|------|---|------|
| 10. | Agogo (gong)  | - | aogo | - | aago |
|     | Otito (truth) | - | oito | - | ooto |

**Ijesa Dialect**

- |     |                |   |      |   |  |
|-----|----------------|---|------|---|--|
| 11. | Agogo (gong)   | - | aogo | - |  |
|     | Otito (truth)  | - | oito | - |  |
|     | Akika (animal) | - | aaka | - |  |
|     | Otita (stool)  | - | iota | - |  |

Example (10) is of standard Yoruba while example (11) is from Ijesa dialect. In Ijesa dialect, velar stop sound /g/ is directly elided to modify “agogo” to “aogo” and the alveolar stop /t/ is elided to modify “otito” to “oito”. However, in example (10), the velar stop sound /g/ and alveolar stop /t/ have been elided from “agogo” and “otito”, thus resulting into “aogo” and “oito” respectively and the central open oral sound /a/ later assimilate close-mid back oral sound /o/ and close mid back and oral sound /o/ assimilate front close oral sound /i/. This is why we can have “aago” and “ooto” in standard Yoruba modification.

**Assimilation**

Owolabi (1989) sees assimilation as a phonetic influence that one sound has over adjacent sound to modify by replicating itself in the position of the neighbouring sound. According to Owolabi (1989), assimilation are of two major types. They are progressive assimilation and regressive assimilation. If the two sounds co-occur in words, the first sound of the last word changes the last segment of the preceding word to imitate itself. However, in Ile-iwe, /e/ a case of progressive assimilation in V<sub>1</sub> and /i/ in the second word is V<sub>2</sub>.

Progressive assimilation is the assimilation that occurs if the V<sub>1</sub> exert its influence on V<sub>2</sub> to modify the V<sub>2</sub> into its sound. For example:

- |     |         |   |        |   |  |
|-----|---------|---|--------|---|--|
| 12. | Ile-iwe | - | ileewe | - |  |
|     | A o wa  | - | a a wa | - |  |

Regressive assimilation is the assimilation that occurs if the V<sub>2</sub> exert its influence on V<sub>1</sub> in which case V<sub>1</sub> is now rendered in the true likeness of V<sub>2</sub>. For example.

- |     |               |   |               |   |  |
|-----|---------------|---|---------------|---|--|
| 13. | Ara orun      | - | aroorun       | - |  |
|     | People heaven | - | heaven people | - |  |
|     | Ku ale        | - | kale          | - |  |
|     | Good evening  | - | good evening  | - |  |

**Vowel Assimilation in Standard Yoruba and Ijesa Dialect**

Assimilation can occur in different forms in standard Yoruba. The examples of forms of assimilation are shown in examples (13-16) as follows:

- |     |      |               |   |                      |   |  |
|-----|------|---------------|---|----------------------|---|--|
| 14. | (a). | Oni eja       | - | eleja                | - |  |
|     |      | Owner fish    | - | fish owner           | - |  |
|     | (b). | Oni aga       | - | alaga                | - |  |
|     |      | Owner chair   | - | alaga                | - |  |
|     | (d). | Oni ewe       | - | elewe                | - |  |
|     |      | Owner leaf    | - | leaf owner           | - |  |
| 15. | (a). | Aje Ijetan    | - | Ajeejetan            | - |  |
|     |      | Eat no finish | - | eat and not finish   | - |  |
|     | (b). | Alo ide       | - | Aloode               | - |  |
|     |      | Go not come   | - | go and not come back | - |  |
|     | (d). | Asun idake    | - | asunundake           | - |  |
|     |      | Cry non stop  | - | cry and not stop     | - |  |
| 16. | (a). | Agba ilu      | - | Agbaalu              | - |  |
|     |      | Elder town    | - | town elder           | - |  |
|     | (b). | Ara oko       | - | arooko               | - |  |
|     |      | People farm   | - | villagers            | - |  |
|     | (d). | ile iwe       | - | ileewe               | - |  |

17.	(a).	House book	-	school
		Ku ise	-	kuuse
		Good work	-	well done
	(b).	Ku ile	-	kuule
		Good house	-	well done
	(d).	ku abo	-	kaabo
		Good come	-	welcome
	(e).	Ku ale	-	kale
		Good evening	-	good evening

Owolabi (1989) observes that in some words in standard Yoruba, consonant will come before assimilation can occur. Instance of such realizations are shown below:

18.	Noun	Consonant Elision	Assimilation
	Eriru (ashes)	eiru ( r)	eeru
	Orisa (gods)	oisa ( r)	oosa
	Yoruba	Youba ( r)	Yooba (Yoruba tribe)
	Owuro (Morning)	ouro (w)	ooro
	Ayiye (life)	aiye (y)	aaye

Assimilation can also occur in Ijesa dialect in different forms. Examples of the forms in which assimilation can occur in Ijesa dialect are shown below:-

	Noun	Consonant Elision	Assimilation
18.	Edidu (charcoal)	- eidu	- eedu
	Esis (fly)	- eisi	- eesi
	Ogigun (drug)	- oigun	- oogun
	Orirun (scent)	- oirun	- oorun
19.	Aloride	- Aloide	- aloode
	(go and not come back)		
	Aserisetan	- aseisetan	- aseesetan
	(do and not finish)		
	Ajerijetan	- ajeijetan	- ajeejetan
	(eat and not finish)		
20.	Oni + ewe	- on+ewe	- elewe
	Owner leaf	prefix leaf	leaf owner
	Oni + eja	- on+eja	- eleja
	Owner fish	prefix fish	fish owner
	Oni + oko	- On+oko	- oloko
	Owner husband	prefix husband	husband owner
21.	ku + abo	- kaabo	
	Ka + ale	- kale	
	Ara + oko	- arookos	

The example in example (18) and (19) above shows that the two forms of assimilation in Ijesa dialect are progressive assimilation. If we compare examples (17) and (18), elision tends to will occur before assimilation. But in Ijesa dialect, it is evident that there are cases where consonant elision occurs before assimilation for example:

22.	Agogo (gong)	-	Aogo
	Otito (truth)	-	Oito

In 18, ‘esisi (fly)’ is modified to “esinsin” in standard Yoruba and “eesi” in Ijesa dialect, egungun, is modified to “egigun” in standard Yoruba and “egigu” in Ijesa dialect. It means that there is a phonological process in force at that point. This phonological process is denasalization. This calls for a further observation in Ijesa dialect.



In example (14) and (19), their structure is not different, two phonological processes occur in the listed words. The phonological processes are elision and assimilation. Let us consider analysis in 23:

23. (a).     ↓A           +     ↓lo           +     ↓i           +     ↓de-aloide-aloode  
                   ↓Afomo           ↓oro-ise           ↓iyisodi           ↓Oro ise
- Prefix                   verb                   negation                   verb
- (b).     ↓A           +     ↓lo           +     ↓ri           +     ↓de-aloide-aloode  
                   ↓Afomo           ↓oro-ise           ↓iyisodi           ↓Oro ise
- Prefix                   verb                   negation                   verb

(23) a above is of standard Yoryba, while 23 (b) is Ijesa dialect. Bamgbose (1990) and Awobuluyi (2008), did more works on derivative words in Yoruba language at the level of phonology. We will not need to go into this discussion here as this study is concerned with phonology and not morphology.

Regressive assimilation is what occur in (24) below:

24.     Oni eja (vowel elision) → on'eja (contraction) → oneja (assimilation) → eleja →  
           Owner fish                                   prefix fish                                   prefix fish                                   fish owner

In such words as the above example, vowel sound /i/ in “oni” which is a front close oral vowel sound, will first be elided and the alveolar lateral sound, /l/ will replace alveolar nasal, sound /n/. a close examination of the assimilation process in (16) and (21), reveals that there will be no difference in the explanation that will given to them. This implies that these phonological processes are the same in standard Yoruba and Ijesa dialect. Assimilation can also occur with syntactic implication in Yoruba language and Ijesa dialect. Let us look at the example in 26 below.

- |                  |   |             |   |                 |
|------------------|---|-------------|---|-----------------|
| 25. (a). A ko wa | - | a o wa      | - | a a wa          |
| We not come      |   | we not come |   | we did not come |
| (b). E sun won   | - | e sun on    | - | e sun un        |
| Not good         |   | not good    |   | is not good     |
| (c). E sun won   | - | e sun on    | - | e sun un        |
| Not good         |   | not good    |   | is not good     |
| (d). E ki won    | - | e ki on     | - | e ki on         |
| Greet them       |   | greet them  |   | greet them      |

Example 25(a) is an example of standard Yoruba while example 25 (b) is an example of Ijesa dialect. In both examples, the consonant elision comes before progressive assimilation. In example 25 (a) the central open oral sound /a/ is assimilated while back close oral sound /v/ is an assimilation receiver. In 25 (b). back close nasal sound /u/ is the giver of assimilation while back open-mid nasal sound /s/ is the receiver.

### **Vowel Harmony**

Vowel harmony is one of the important phonological processes. Many linguistic scholars have worked on this phonological process in Yoruba language. Such scholars are Adetugbo (1967), Bamgbose (1967, 1990), Awobuluyi (1967), Oyelaran (1973), Akinkugbe (1978), Pullyblank (1989), Owolabi (1989), Oyetade (1989), and Abiodun and Sanusi (1995) among others.

Owolabi (1984) perspective on a vowel harmony is that it is showing the co-occurrence of vowel sounds with the same feature in a single word in a certain language. Vowel harmony occurs in most of the African languages. Apart from Yoruba language, vowel harmony is still working in Akan language (Clement 1974), Ogori language (Chumbou 1982), Igede language (Abiodun 1991) and so on.

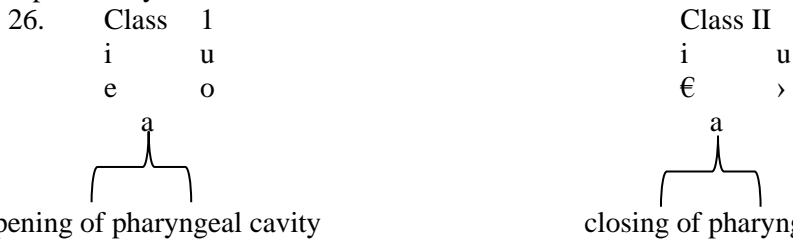
### **Vowel Harmony in Standard Yoruba Language and Ijesa Dialect**

Bamgbose (1990) observes that there are two pattern of Yoruba vowel harmony. He says thus:

Orisii batani ankoo faweli meji ni o wa ninu ede Yoruba. Batani kin-in-ni je mo fife tabi aife kaa ofun: batani keji je mo faweli iwaju tabi eyin.

(There are two patterns of vowel harmony in Yoruba language. The first pattern is open and close of pharyngeal cavity and the second patterns in front and back vowels).

The explanation above affirms that these two patterns of vowel harmony can occur when pharyngeal cavity is open. They are shown below:



opening of pharyngeal cavity

closing of pharyngeal cavity

Pharyngeal cavity of vowel harmony usually occurs in the syllabic pattern of consonant – vowel + vowel (CVC) and consonant-vowel+consonant-vowel (CVCV) as in the example below.

27.    Class I:                ade (crown), ile (house), epo (oil)  
       Class II:                oja (market), efo (vegetable), ile (land)

Bamgbose (1990) gives an account on vowel harmony of front and back vowels. Bamgbose further says that it is co-occurrence of two front vowels and the co-occurrence of two back vowels. The two classes are shown below:

- |                        |   |                 |
|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 28.    Class I (front) | - | Class II (back) |
| i                      |   | u               |
| e                      |   | o               |

Central open oral sound /a/ can occur with all vowel sounds in class I and II but this does not mean that central open oral sound /a/ is front and back vowel sound. Its form of vowel harmony can occur in CVCV and VCV syllabic patterns as in the following example:

29.    Front class:                giri, were, fila, agba, edo  
       Back class:                duru, dodo, pako, ode, odi ode.

Another feature that is observed by scholars and what is very important is the movement of back of the tongue. This is known as “Advanced Tongue Root” which makes the tongue to move back and (+ATR) or move forward (-ATR), (Clement, 1974; Abiodun & Sanusi, 1995 and Adekunle 2001).

- |                       |  |                 |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------|
| 30.    Class I (+ATR) |  | Class II (-ATR) |
| ii                uu  |  |                 |
| e                o    |  | ɔ               |

There are two types of vowel harmony as observed by Owolabi (1989) and Bamgbose (1990). They are full vowel harmony and partial vowel harmony. Full vowel harmony occurs where vowels in certain languages can be divided into two classes and the vowel that occurs in class does not occur in class II. Partial vowel harmony is the type when vowels can be classified into two but central open oral sound /a/ can occur in both classes.

There are nine oral vowel sounds in Ijesa dialect while nasal vowel sounds are seven. The vowel harmony in Ijesa dialect is presented and example (28) shows the two classes of their vowel harmony.

31.    (a).    Oral vowels.
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| i | u |
| ĩ | v |
| e | o |
| ɛ | ɔ |
| a |   |
- (b).    Nasal vowels
- |    |    |
|----|----|
| ĩ  | ũ  |
| ĩ  | ũ  |
| ɛ̃ | ɔ̃ |
| a  |    |

32.	Class I	Class II
	i      u	
	t      v	
	e      o	ɛ      ɔ
	a	a

Yoruba dialects that have nine oral vowel sounds like Ijesa has partial vowel harmony as shown in 33 below:

33. ugi (vgi) – tree  
 ulu (vlu) – drum  
 ule (vle) – house  
 ujo (vdze) - dance  
 uja (vdza) – fight  
 ade (ade) – crown  
 aja (adza) – dog  
 ado (ado) – gound  
 ejo (edzo) – snake  
 ejo (ed ɛ<sup>o</sup>) - case  
 ode (ɔ<sup>d</sup> ɛ) – hunter  
 oja (ɔ<sup>d</sup> ɛa) – market

Word with initial vowel /i/ in standard Yoruba language usually have the segment replaced with back close oral sound /u/ in Ijesa dialect.

Owolabi (1989) and Bamgbose (1990) differentiate between back close oral sound /u/ in Ijesa dialect and vowel sound /u/ in standard Yoruba because back close oral sound /u/ in Ijesa dialect can occur at the initial, middle or end while it cannot occur at the initial in standard Yoruba. Also, Owolabi (1989) and Bamgbose (1990) identify two types of front close oral sounds /i/ in Ijesa dialect. The front close oral sound /i/ that can occur everywhere except at the initial position and the front close oral sound /i/ but occurs at the initial vowel sound of Ijesa greeting word. For example:

i pele- /t kpele/ (well done)

Oral vowel sounds in Ijesa dialect are nine. It is observed is that the description of front close oral sound /i/ is the same with front close oral /i/ and the description of back close oral /v/ is also the same with back close oral sound /u/. If we compare “ulu (ulu)” with “ilu (ulu)”, it shows that it is the occurrence of one that stops the other which makes it a case of sound substitution. The question that will arise is that which one will be a variant, since standard Yoruba and Ijesa dialects are from the same source since Ijesa dialect is close to Yoruba proto-language, front close oral sound /i/ will be a variant of back close oral sound /v/.

### Conclusion

This paper examined the phonological modification process like elision, assimilation and vowel harmony on elision, it is observed that there is no landmark difference in vowel elision in standard Yoruba and Ijesa dialect but the elision of labio-velar approximant sound /w/ is much in Ijesa dialect than other consonant sounds. On assimilation, it is discovered that in some words must go through assimilation process after the occurrence of elision in standard Yoruba. But in Ijesa dialect, it is only elision that will result from such a process. Also, in vowel harmony, partial vowel harmony occurs in standard Yoruba while there is full vowel harmony in Ijesa dialect.

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