

Consonant Insertion in Iyinno: A Critique

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Abstract

Unlike vowel insertion (epenthesis), consonant insertion is a rare occurrence in languages. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the occurrence of consonant insertion in Iyinnó as claimed by Ibikunle (2008:122). He (Ibikunle 2008:122) claimed that, there is an insertion of voiced bilabial nasal [m] between two nouns while combining them to form new words. This paper shows that, the voiced bilabial nasal [m] found between two nouns in the lect is not the case of consonant insertion but rather, an associative morpheme (a genitive marker) [mè] which has lost its vocalic anchor as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundary. Also, our study reveals that, after [mè] has lost its vocalic anchor, the nasal feature of [m] got transferred to the (oral) V1 of the second noun across morpheme boundary.

Keywords: Epenthesis; Associative Morpheme; Vocalic Anchor; Hiatus, Possession.

1. Introduction

Iyinnó also known as Ijínó, is a lect of ÁIKA¹ spoken in Ayánrán, a linguistic community in Ondo State, Nigeria. By the West, Ayánrán is bounded by Ìsè and Ìsùà to the South, both located in Akoko South-East Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. To the North, we have Ìkiràn-Òkè and Ìkirà-Ile. By the East, we have Ìbílò and Ìkákumò- Oláyéle

According to Oyebade (2004:73), consonant insertion is not common in languages. Also, researches show that any language that seems to have such, need to be carefully examined by looking at the occurrence of the consonant in question, that the consonant must have lost its vocalic anchor, which might be as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundary and at the same time, has a grammatical or lexical function(s) it performs in the construction.

However, Ibikunle (2008:112) argues that whenever two (2) nouns are combined to create possessions in Iyinnó, there will be voiced bilabial nasal [m] insertion. This paper sees this as a rare occurrence and hereby challenges it by exploring the situation with a different view.

2. The Claim

According to Ibikunle (2008:112),

There is insertion of voiced bilabial nasal [m] in Iyinnó whenever two (2) nouns are combined to create possessive constructions.

¹ Although Arohunmolase et al (2006a), Salfnner (2009) and a host of others use Ukann/Ikaan instead of ÁIKA in their research. But recently, ÁIKA has been used by other scholars. It is an acronym made up of the initials of the villages where the lect is spoken i.e. Ayánrán-Ìsè-Kákumò-Àúga (Abiodun 1999, Elugbe 2001).

The data he used to buttress his points are presented thus:

1. (a) [ènó] [àháí] → [ènómâháí] “Animal”
 Meat farm

(b) [aʃó] [itítí] → [aʃómítítí] “Titi’s feaces”
 Feaces Titi

(c) [aʃó] [ehú] → [aʃómehú] “Rice”
 Feaces rat

(d) [iʃó] [ikéhíidé] → [iʃómíkhíidé] “Kéhinde’s head”
 Head Kéhinde

(e) [àháí] [ɔlá] → [àháímɔ́lá] “Farm”
 Farm Olá

(f) [òrù] [ufúdžídží] → [òrùmūfúdžídží] “Snake’s tail”
 Tail snake

(g) [èfigé] [ejú] → [èfigéméjú] “Friend’s house”
 House friend

(h) [èdédé] [umó] → [èdédémumó] “Water pot”
 Pot water

(i) [èrùrù] [èmá] → [èrùrùmèmá] “Tortoise’s heart”
 Heart Tortoise

3. Interrogating the Claim

The assumption that a voiced bilabial nasal [m] is inserted between two (2) nouns while combining them to form possessions in ɿyínnó by Ibikunle (2008:11) is phonologically unacceptable. Our study shows that the voiced bilabial nasal [m] found at the right side of the arrow is not the case of consonant insertion but rather, an associative morpheme (a genitive marker) [mè] which has lost its vocalic anchor as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundaries. This is shown in (2) below:

2. (a) ènó mè àháí → [ènómâháí] “Animal”
 Meat gen. farm

(b) àʃó mè itítí → [àʃómítítí] “Titis feaces”
 Feaces gen. Títí

(c) àʃó mè ehú → [àʃómehú] “Rice”
 Feaces gen. rat

(d) iʃó mè ikéhíidé → [iʃómíkhíidé] “Kéhinde’s head”

Head	gen.	Kehinde		
(e) àháí	mè	olá	→ [àháím̩lá]	“Ola’s farm”
Farm	gen.	Olá		
(f) òrù	mè	ufudʒidʒi	→ [òrùm̩fudʒidʒi]	“Snake’s tail”
Tail	gen.	snake		
(g) èfigè	mè	ejú	→ [èfigèm̩ejú]	“Friend’s house”
House	gen.	friend		
(h) èdédé	mè	umó	→ [èdédém̩umó]	“Water pot”
Pot	gen.	water		
(j) èrùrù	mè	èmà	→ [èrùrùm̩èmà]	“Tortoise’s heart”
Heart	gen.	Tortoise		

From the data above, we could see that the voice bilabial nasal [m] found in between the two (2) nouns in each data is not the case of consonant insertion but rather, it is a morpheme (genitive) on its own, which is affixed to indicate possession in the lect. Furthermore, it can be deduced that the genitive marker [mè] lost its vocalic anchor as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundaries, and then the nasal feature of the consonant got transferred to the (oral) V1 of the second noun across morphemes.

This paper will be an incomplete and controversial one without indicating how we derived the original vowel ([è]) of the voiced bilabial nasal. This is explained with the aid of the data below:

3. (a) [ènó] “meat” [umó] “water”

It was observed that, when the speakers want to show that the “meat comes from the water not from the bush” they will add the morpheme [mè] (in form of emphasis) to show that the meat is from the water. This is shown below;

(b) / ènó mè umó / → [ènóm̩umó] “Fish”
 Meat ‘that comes from’ water

Also, the example in (4) buttresses the point above;

4. /mè / àfèi/ → [m̩àfèi] “that of egg”
 of egg
 /mè / ejú/ → [m̩ejú] “that of house”
 of house

It was from these instances we derived the vowel [è] for the voiced bilabial nasal [m] for the lect.

Most importantly, whenever a consonant initial noun is emphasized like what is obtained in 4 above, the morpheme {mè} shows up while its vowel invariably survive as shown below:

5. /mè / mísù/ → [m̩émísù] “that of cat”
 of cat
 /mè / kpékpéje/ → [m̩kpékpéje] “that of duck”
 of duck

4. Conclusion

This Paper Has Shown That it is not valid to argue that there is consonant insertion in Ȳyínnó as claimed by Ibikunle (2008:112). There are two major arguments proposed to debunk this claim: First, the proposed consonant that is inserted between the nouns is not a consonant but a morpheme which indicates possession and lost its vocalic anchor as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundaries. Second, literature has it that consonant insertion is not common in languages like vowel insertion.

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