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A Study of Deletion and Assimilation Processes in three Selected Yoruba Dialects

Olayinka Omolayo ATURAMU (PhD)
Department of Languages and Linguistics, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.
Phone No: +234 7030594409

Abstract
This study investigated two phonological processes: assimilation and deletion across three dialects of Yoruba, namely: Ekiti, Ondo and Yagba dialects. The dialects were selected from three major dialects groups of the language: Ekiti from Central Yoruba Group, Ondo from South East Yoruba Group and Yagba from North East Yoruba Group. The study described and compared the operations of the two phonological processes in focus in these three dialects, highlighting similarities and differences. Five language helpers were selected to supply data for each of the dialects, making a total of fifteen language helpers. The language helpers were old people between the ages of seventy (70) years and eighty (80) years. The researcher selected old people because they speak their various dialects more fluently than the younger ones. The younger ones invariably mix the regional dialects with the standard dialects and English language in their linguistic repertoire. The research work made use of Generative Theory (Generative Phonology) and Autosegmental Theory (Autosegmental Phonology). These theories account for the intuitive knowledge of a native speaker about his/her language. While Generative Phonology adequately accounts for segmental units through the postulation of rules, Autosegmental Phonology account for suprasegmental features through postulation of different tiers that are linked by Association lines. Data were presented, analyzed and accounted for at every step of the presentation. The study revealed that the two processes are operative in the three dialects; it further shows that while the dialect show similarities, they also show differences. The study confirms the claim of scholars that dialects reflect different grammatical structure of the same language.
Keywords: Phonological Processes, Dialects, Assimilation, Deletion, Yoruba language.

Introduction

This is a research work in the field of Yoruba dialectology. The research investigates and compares two phonological processes: deletion and assimilation in three Yoruba dialects namely, Èkìtì, Yàgbà and Onàdó. Dialectology is the study of variation in the grammatical structure of the dialects of a language. Every language is known to have dialects– regional dialects, socio-dialects and occupational dialects. McGregor (2009) claimed 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.

Dialects of a language are normally demarcated by geographical boundary this explains why dialectology or dialect study is not referred to as geolinguistics, (Trudgill, 1999). Crystal David (2008) Geolinguistics is a branch of linguistics which studies the geographical distribution of languages throughout the world with reference to their political, economic and culture status. The term is also used more narrowly in linguistics for an approach which combines the insights of dialect geography, urban dialectology and human geography in a sociolinguistically informed dialectology.

Dialects that are demarcated by geographical boundary are known as dialects, and the dialects in focus in this research are dialects of Yoruba. Scholars have demonstrated that dialectsinvariablyreflect variation, that is, differences in their grammatical systems. This is attested to in Oyetade (1995) when he remarks that "diversity exists in any given language at all levels - phonological, lexical and grammatical."Fromkin and Rodman (1978) also say that dialects of one language are "versions of the same basic grammar with systematic differences in grammatical structure at different levels of grammar". From the foregoing it is possible to infer that dialects of any given language would normally differ in the areas of sound system, lexicon, phonological processes

and rules, morphological processes and morphological rules and in the area of syntax.Effort to understand and account for the variation in dialects is one of the focuses of dialectology.

Scholars in the field of Yoruba studies have demonstrated that there is variation in thegrammatical structures of the Yoruba dialects. Such scholars include Adetugbo (1967), Awobuluyi (1992), Oyetade (1995), Olumuyiwa (1997), Abiodun (2000) and many more. Yoruba language has a number of dialects, that is, speech forms that are structurally different but are, however, varieties of the Yoruba language. Yoruba dialects in Nigeria (South-West of Nigeria) include the following among others):

Ào	(spoken in Onḍó State)
Àwórì	(spoken in Lagos State)
Bùnú	(spoken in Kogí)
Ẹ̀gbá	(spoken in Ògùn State)
Ẹ̀kìtì	(spoken in ÈkìtìState)
Ìbọ̀lọ́	(Spoken in Ọ̀ṣun and Kwara States)
Ìgbómìnà	(Spoken in Ọ̀ṣun and Kwara States)
Ìjèbù	(Spoken in Ogùn State)
Ijẹ̀ṣà	(Spoken in Ọ̀ṣun State)
Ìlàjẹ	(Spoken in Onḍó State)
Ìjùmú	(Spoken in Kogí State)
Ìkálẹ̀	(Spoken in Onḍó State)
Moba	(Spoken in Ekiti and Kwara State)
Ònkò	(Spoken in Ọ̀yọ́ State)
Owé	(Spoken in Kogí State)
Onḍó	(Spoken in Onḍó State)
Ọ̀họ̀rí	(Lagos & Ogun States)
Ọ́wọ̀	(Spoken in Onḍó State)
Ọ́wọ́rọ̀	(Spoken in Kogí State)
Ọ̀yọ́	(Spoken in Ọ̀yọ́ State)
Yewa	(Spoken in Ogùn State)
Yàgbà	(Spoken in Kogì State)

Yoruba language is also spoken in other nations apart from Nigeria. It is spoken as a native language or first language in Republic of Beninand in the Republic of Togo.Dialects of the language in Benin Republic, according to Abiodun (2015) and Salawu (2007), include Mọ̀fọ̀lí. Ànàgó, Àjàssẹ́ and Gbẹ́rẹ́. In Togo the dialects include Ànáàn,Ifẹ̀, and a few others, (Abiodun,Salawu & Morakinyo, 2016).

Those dialects spoken in Yoruba are group in Awobuluyi (1998)

i. North West Yoruba (NWY): Eko Awori Ibadan, Oyo Osun, Ibole, Igbomina.
ii. South East Yoruba (SEY): Ondo Owo, Ijebu, Okitipupa, Ikale Ilaje.
iii. Central Yoruba (CY) Ile – Ife, Ijesha, Moba, Akure.
iv. South West Yoruba (SWY): Sabee, Ketu, Ife (Togo).
v. North West Yoruba (NEY): Gbede, Iyagba, Oworo, Ibunu Owe Ijumu.

The volume of work available on different dialects of Yoruba demonstrates that they share similarities and also display differences. The similarities and differencesare manifested at different levels of grammar. The research work is a contribution to the existing work on phonology on Yoruba language.

The Selected Dialects of the Study

Three dialects are selected from three of the five dialect groups postulated by Yoruba language scholars. The five dialect groups are: i) Central Yoruba, ii) North-East Yoruba, iii) North-West Yoruba, iv) South-East Yoruba and v) South-West Yoruba. The three dialects selected for this research work are taken from the three groups below:

Èkìtì dialect from Central Yoruba.
Onḍó dialects from South-East Yoruba.
Ìyàgbà dialect from North-East Yoruba.

The researcher believes that choosing from different dialect groups would help in a better understanding of the variation that exists in the operation of the two processes under investigation in the different dialects. Since ample data would be provided, it would go a long way to reflect how much the phonological processes and rules contributed to the dialect groupings proposed by earlier scholars.

The question may be asked as to why the researcher chose these dialects and not others from the groups; after all there are other dialects within each of the groups. The researcher chose the dialects because each of the dialects has very large number of speakers.Èkìtì dialect for instance is spoken in the greater part of Èkìtì State. Yàgbàis also spoken widely in the Yoruba speaking area of Kogí State, while Ondo dialect is widely spoken in Ondo town within Ondo State.The researcher has easy access to these three dialects, it is possible to get speakers of each of the dialects. Finally, the dialects adequately represent the groups, and are capable of contributing significantly to scholarship in the field of Yoruba dialectology. In the sub-sections below, short brief on each of the dialects is presented.

Èkìtì Dialect

Ekiti dialect, as already pointed out, is one of the dialects in the central Yoruba dialect group.It is spoken in Èkìtì State and two Local Government Areas (LGA) of Kwara State(Òkè-Ẹ̀rọ́ LGA and Èkìtì Kwara LGA). The dialect is spoken by an estimated population of threemillion (3 million) people.

One major phonological feature that differentiates Central Yoruba dialect group from other dialect groups is the near-complete vowel harmony constraint (a situation whereby vowels are grouped into two harmonic sets with marginal overlap) in operation in the dialect group,(Adetugbo1967). Ekiti dialect, as a member of the Central Yoruba operates a nine vowel system with a robust vowel harmony system,(Bamisile 1987, Abiodun and Sanusi 1995). The dialect operates a nine vowel system, that fall into two harmonic sets.

Set I Advanced Tongue Root		Set II Retracted Tongue Root	
i	u	ị	ụ
e	o	ẹ	ọ
(a)		a	

The robust vowel harmony system is responsible for the realization, at themorphological level, two forms of the same morpheme. The third person singular subject pronoun, the negative marker and the genitival morpheme, e.g.

3rd person singular subject pronoun o/ọ

(i) **Ó** rí eo "He/She made /saw money"
Ó gbé ọmọ yṹ "He/She carried a baby along"
(ii) **Ọ́** lọ síbẹ̀ "He /She went there
Ọ́ wẹ ọmọ nì "He/She bathed that baby"

Negative marker:/kẹ̀ (Ekiti Dialect)

(i) Olú**kè** gbé ẹrù Olu did not carry the load
Adé**kè** rí eó sã Ade could not pay the money
(ii) Olú**kẹ̀** gbọ́ Olu did not hear
Adé**kẹ̀** lọ Ade did not go

Gentival Morpheme (olí/ọlị́)

(i) **olí**kòkó owner of/dealer in cocoa
olíbèbè owner of/dealer in beads
(ii) **ọlí**kẹ̀kẹ́ owner of/dealer in bicycles
ọlíbàtà owner of/dealer in shoes

Another feature of the dialects in the Central Yoruba group is the occurrence of vowel**/u/**, the high background rounded vowel in the initial position of lexical items, a feature not found in the standard dialect and majority of the regional dialects e.g.

Ekiti dialect	Yagba dialect	Yoruba Language	Gloss

Usu	Isu	iṣu	"yam"
ulé	ilé	ilé	"house"
ụkọ́	ikọ́	ikọ́	"cough"
ùdí	ìdí	ìdí	"buttocks"
ụgbá	igbá	igbá	"calabash"

Ìyàgbà Dialect

Ìyàgbà/Yàgbà dialect is one of the dialects in the NEY dialect group. Other dialects in the group are spoken in Kogi and Bùnú. The dialect (Yàgbà) is spoken in Ẹ̀gbẹ̀, Ìsánlú, Èjìbà, Mọ̀pà, Ọ̀gbè, Odò-Èrí, Òkè-Èrí, Àlù, Ìgbárùkù and a few other communities. The dialect shows lexical difference when compared with the standard dialect and other regional dialects, e.g.

Yàgbà Dialect	Yoruba Language	
apọ́	ata	"pepper"
ẹ̀pẹ̀yọ̀	ẹ̀pa	"ground nut"
ológbòda/ọ̀dọ̀dọ̀	aláǹgbá	"lizard"
olùkù	ọ̀rẹ́	"friend"
òkùlù	ìgbẹ́	"feaces"
obó	irọ́	"lies"

Yàgbà dialect does not permit vowel **/u/** in word-initial position of nouns as manifested in the Central Yoruba dialects. Oladeji (2014:14) claims thatthe dialect, unlike the standard dialect and the majority of the regional dialects permit high tone on initial vowel of a noun. He presents the following examples:

ówo	'money'
óluku	'friend
óbũrĩ	'female'

Pieces of data gathered in the course of this research do not show high tone in initial position. It must be stressed that the present researcher relied on old people who were between seventy (70) and eighty (80) years of age. They speak the Yàgbà dialect fluently, and do not code mix with English or Standard dialect of Yoruba. The present researcher would prefer to say that like all other regional dialects of Yoruba, Yàgbà dialect does not permit high tone on initial vowel of a noun.

Unlike Èkìtì dialect, Yàgbà dialect does not operate a full or near-complete vowel harmony system. The dialect operates a seven vowel system with a partial vowel harmony constraint. Only vowels **/e, o/** on the one hand, and **/ẹ ọ/** on the other are mutually exclusive as it is manifested in the standard dialect and the majority of the regional dialects.

Yàgbà dialect does not operate consonant deletion as manifested in the standard Yoruba and some other Yoruba dialects. Consider the following items,

Standard Yoruba	Ọ̀yọ́ dialect	Yàgbà dialect	Gloss
èkùọ́	èkùọ́	èkùrọ́	Palm-kernel
ẹ̀ẹ̀kẹ́	ẹ̀ẹ̀kẹ́	èrẹ̀ké	Cheeks
òótọ́	òótọ́	òtítọ́	Truth
eegũ	eegũ	egũgũ	Bone

One interesting findings in respect of the deletion of consonants and which has been mentioned in section 1.2 is contained in Oladeji (2016) to the effect that only the Yàgbà dialect of Yoruba has the longer form of the greeting verb **/kú/**. The form according to this scholar is **/kúrì/**. Consider the following:

Yàgbà Dialect	Standard Yoruba
kúràbọ̀ < kúrì # àbọ̀	kú # àbọ̀→káàbọ̀
kúràtijó < kúrì # àtijọ́	kú # àtijọ́→káàtijọ́
kúrisẹ́< kúrì # iṣẹ́	kú # iṣẹ́→kúuṣẹ́

The argument is that whereas the standard dialect permits the deletion of /r/ and subsequently **/i/** to the left of the word boundary in its historical developments, Yàgbà dialectdoes not operate **/r/-**deletion.

Ondo Dialect

Onḍó dialect belongs to the South-East Yoruba dialect group. It is spoken in Onḍó town, Ilẹ̀-Olújí, Aládèé, Ìdànrè and a few other settlements around Onḍó town. The dialect shows lexical variation with the standard dialect and other dialects of Yoruba.The items below testify to this:

Ondo Dialect	Standard dialect	
ẹdã	àáké	"axe"
taìbó	ata	"pepper"
ùpkẹ̀kũ	àdá	"matchet"
lòdòǹgbá	aláǹgbá	"lizard"
òɣíʃ́ẹ́	odò	"mortal"

Apart from this difference in lexical items, unlike Ekiti and Yagba dialects, Ondo dialect has the following sounds [k^w g^wɣ].

These sounds are represented orthographically in the items below.

. [k^w]: [èk^{w}ọ́] 'palm kernel'

[gw]: [g^{w}à] 'dig';[ẹ̀g^{w}á] 'ten';[ọ̀g^{w}á] "rib of palm front"

[ɣ]: [oɣó] " money"; [oíɣo] " head"; [àɣa] " we''

Ọghó '' money'' ọghọ̀ – broom.

Onḍó dialect does not operate a full or near-complete harmony system like the dialects in the Central Yoruba group, e. g. Ijẹ̀ṣa and Èkìtì dialects. The dialect operates a seven-vowel system**/ i u e o ẹ ọ a/** like the standard Yoruba and a host of other dialects.

Another feature of Onḍó dialect at the phonological level is the behavior of **/r/**, which appears to be lost in the dialect. The trill does not occur in any item that is beyond CV e.g **/ra/** "bought" **/ro/** "think" and **/ri/** "see"(Akintoye, 2015). Even then, the consonant may be deleted in grammatical construction as shown below.

Mo **í** iye mi Isaw my mother

Ojó**à** mátòOjo bought a car

Olu í**o** ọ̀ọ̀ nẹ̃ẹ̃ Olu is thinking about the issue

The consonant is never attested in the following item.

Standard Dialect	Ondo Dialect	Gloss
ọ̀rọ̀	ọ̀ọ̀	"word/issue"
ara	aa	"body"
àkàrà	àkàà	"bean cake"
òórọ̀	òóọ̀	"morning"
bẹ̀rẹ̀	bẹ̀ẹ̀	"start"

At the supra-segmental level, scholars claim that the widely reported syntactic raising of low tone of a monosyllabic verb when it takes a noun object is not attested in Onḍó dialect, (Awobuluyi 1992). Consider the tone of verbs in the examples below.

Ondo Dialect	Standard Yoruba	
Ọ̀gá**gbà** ẹ̀bẹ̀	Ọ̀gá**gba** ẹ̀bẹ̀.	The teacher accepted the pleas
Adé**wẹ̀** ọmọ	Adé**wẹ** ọmọ	Ade bathed the baby
Mojí**tà** ọjà	Mojí**ta** ọjà	Mojí sold (her) goods

In this section (and the sub-section) I have shown the three dialects that form the focus of this study. One important point that has been revealed is that each of the dialects demonstrates some peculiarities.While it is true that they are dialects of Yoruba, we observe that they have areas of differences. At the same time however, they show areas of similarities. The import of these shared similarities and differences is that it is quite desirable and imperative that we look at assimilation and deletion in the dialects as the preliminary research indicate interesting finding that are capable of improving knowledge in the study of grammatical variations across the dialects of Yoruba.

Literature Review

Dialect

McGregor (2009) claims that "no language with a reasonable number of speakers spread over a relatively wide territory will have a completely homogenous system." By this, the scholar means

that speakers of a given language would speak differently based on their spread within a linguistic space. Speaking differently means that speakers from different regions of the geographical space would exhibit differences in their linguistic repertoire. Such differences would reflect in their vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical structures.
Looking at the dialects of Yoruba, Èkìtì, Yàgbà, Onḋó, Ọ̀yọ́, Òǹkò, Àwórì, Ẹ̀gbá, Ìjẹ̀ṣa are distinct regional entities, yet they are not sufficiently different from each other to be regarded as separate languages.

Apart from looking at a varieties/dialects of a language based on regions, dialects may also arise based on social or/and occupational characteristic of the speakers of the language. This gives rise to social dialect or occupational dialect. The present research focuses on regional dialects rather than social or occupational dialects.

Dialectology

Dialectology is the study of linguistic differences in the dialects of a language. The field describes variations in dialects and explains the motivations behind such differences. Katalin (2008:1) while speaking on what he describes as the inevitability of the existence of linguistic variation says that "whether you like it or not, the geographical distance and physical separation of communities cause regional variation in the way speakers use their language".

Dialectology has been a very popular area of linguistic research subsumed under sociolinguistics, and referred to as geolinguistics (Trudgill, 1999 and Chamber & Trudgill, 2004). Evidence of the popularity of dialectology as a field of study is found in works such as Chambers & Trudgill, 2004) which they titled *Dialectology*, Katalin (2008) which is a whole book on English dialectology and many other such works. Awobuluyi (1992) and Olumuyiwa (1994) are examples of works on Yoruba dialectology.

Quite a number of works have been done on dialects of Yoruba. In some cases scholars have focused on one dialect while in some other cases scholars have presented a comparative analysis of two or more dialects. Works on specific dialect include Adewole (1994) on Ife dialect, Oye (2007) on Ào dialect, Ajiboye (1993) on Moba-Ekiti, Adeoye (2018) on Owo, Abiodun (2018) on Mọ̀ọ́yẹ̀ẹ̀-Igbomina and many other such works. On the other hand, comparative works on Yoruba dialects include Adetugbo (1976), Akintoye (2014); Oladeji (2015) and Abiodun & Akintoye (2016). The present work is therefore not a novel area of Yoruba linguistics as it also describes two processes in three different dialects of the Yoruba language.

Studies in Yoruba Dialectology

Studies in Yoruba dialectology have remained very robust over the years. Quite a number of scholarly works exist on the grammatical structure of the regional dialects of the language.There are works that focus on specific dialect or dialects, describing the grammatical structure of specific dialect/dialects while some are more of comparative work between dialects. This chapter will look at some of the existing works that are relevant to this study.

Over the years attention has focused mainly on the standard dialect of the language. This is so because the standard dialect serves more social functions than any of the other regional dialects. The standard dialect is used in education, it is, in fact, taught as a subject in schools up to the university level. It is widely used as language of communication in the mass media: radio, television and newspapers. It is the dialect used as lingua franca across the Yoruba nation. Notwithstanding the high profile of the standard dialect however, the regional dialects are equally widely studied with scholarly articles as could be found in learned journals. The regional dialects are studied for the purpose of documentation and also for the purpose of understanding linguistic diversity in the Yoruba language.

One very important aspect of Yoruba dialectology that scholars have focused on is the grouping or classification of the regional dialects of the language based on similarities and differences in their grammatical structures. Adetugbo (1967,1982), Fresco (1970), Akinkugbe (1976, 1978), Oyelaran (1976), Awobuluyi (1998), Adeniyi & Ojo (2003) have all proposed classification of the dialects. Adetugbo (1967, 1982) classifies the dialects into three groups, namely North-West Yoruba

(NWY), Central Yoruba (CY) and South-East (SEY). The dialects listed under each group are shown below:

i. North-West Yoruba (NWY): Ọ̀yọ́, Ìbàdàn, Ògbómọ̀ṣọ́, Ṣakí, Ìsẹ́yìn and Ẹ̀gbá.
ii. Central Yoruba (CY): Ilẹ́-Ifẹ̀, Èkìtì, Àkúrẹ́ and Ìjẹ̀ṣà.
iii. South-East Yoruba (SEY): Onàdó, Ìkálẹ̀, Ìlàjẹ, Ìjèbú and Ọ̀wọ̀.

Fresco (1970) adds a fourth group the North-East Yoruba (NEY) to the three proposed by Adetugbo (1967). In this group are Ìgbómìnà, Kakanàdà, Ìgbòlọ́ (Ìbòlọ́), Ìjùmú, Bùnú, Ọ̀wọ́rọ̀, Owé and Ẹ̀gbẹ̀ (Yàgbà). Akinkugbe (1976, 1978) and Awobuluyi (1998) independently add a new group to make five.the new group is South-West Yoruba (SWY) and listed in the group are Sábẹ̀ẹ́, Kétu, Ànàgó, Ifẹ̀ (Togo). The classification appears to continue, perhaps, based on new findings. Adeniyi & Ojo (2005) proposed seven groups that included the five already mentioned and additional two Yoruba East (YE) and South-South Yoruba. According to these two scholars, in the Yoruba East group are Ùkàrẹ́, Ọ̀bà and Ìdó-Àní. In the South-South group are Èkó, Àwórì, Yewa and Ẹ̀gbá.

The grouping of the dialects as earlier mentioned is mainly based on the similarities and differences between the dialects, particularly in the area of sound system and phonological structures. For instance, two dialects Ìjẹ̀sàand Èkìtì which belong to central Yoruba operate a nine vowel system and operate a near-complete vowel harmony system (Bamgbose, 1965 and Abiodun & Sanusi, 1999). This features set the two dialects apart from the other dialects of the language. Other dialects operate a seven vowel system and a partial vowel harmony system. This phonological difference led scholars to group Ìjèsà and Èkìtì together as the Central Yoruba dialect group, (Adetugbo, 1967 & Akinkugbe, 1967). The nine vowels in the Central Yoruba are shown below as against the seven in the other dialects of the language.

Central Yoruba		Other dialect groups	
i	u	i	u
ị	ụ		
e	o	e	o
ẹ	ọ	ẹ	ọ
	a	a	

Because the dialects operate a near-complete vowel harmony, the dialects, according to Abiodun and Sanusi (1999) show allomorphic variation in the operation of their prefixes. For instance, the gerundive marker in the two dialects are **oli/ọlị** as demonstrated in:

i. olíkòkó dealer or owner of cocoa
olírèké dealer or owner of sugar cane
ii. ọlịkẹ̀kẹ́ dealer or owner of bicycle
ọlíyọ̀ dealer or owner of salt

The third person singular pronoun also show allomorphic variation. This explain the manifestation of **o/ọ**as in,

i. ó gbe he carried it
ó ri he/she saw it
ó sù̀ he /she slept
ii. ọ́ jẹ̃ũ he/she ate
ọ́ gbọ́ he herad
ọ́ sálọ he ran away

Dialects in the other groups do not manifest the allomorphic variation described above.

One work that deserves mentioning is Awobuluyi (1992). It remains an outstanding work, a watershed in the field of Yoruba dialectology. The work does not look at phonological issues only, it discusses syntax, morphology and even semantics. Our attention will however focus on phonology only because the current research is about aspects of the phonology of selected dialects. In the work the scholar draws attention to the fact that vowel deletion in the standard Yoruba and the regional dialects in **[verb+noun]**construction is not predictable, not rule governed. The scholar however remarks that the process is rule governed in some dialects of the language. He puts it thus,

> In contemporary Standard Yoruba, as is well known this phonological operates in a very unpredictable manner. What is true

> of Standard Yoruba in this respect is also true for so many other regional dialects that there is the natural tendency for researchers to assume that the phenomenon behaves erratically in all the dialects of the language. In fact however, this is not the case. In at least the Ìlàjẹ and Ìtsẹ̀kírì dialects, vowel elision behaves for the most part in a fully predictable manner, with the first of two juxtaposed vowels almost being deleted in the two dialects.

The scholar also reveals that looking at **/l – n/** alternation intra-dialectically, the segments behave differently across dialects. While the segments behave like allophones of the same phoneme in the standard dialect and other regional dialects like Ọyọ́, Ìbàdàn, Ìbọ̀lọ́, Èkìtì, Ìjẹ̀sà and many others, it behaves more like distinct consonants in Ẹ̀gbá, Ikale and Onḍó dialects (Oyelaran 1976, Pulleyblank 1987).

The issue of coalescence is also visited in the work under review (i.e. Awobuluyi1992). The scholar had earlier claim that coalescence is a phonological process in the Yoruba language (Awobuluyi 1983). He relies on evidence from the standard dialect. In a reaction to the work, Bamgbose (1986) argues that the examples in the said research should be accounted for through the process of deletion rather than coalescence. The scholar gives numerous examples from Èkìtì dialect to buttress his position. His major submission is that the examples in question show evidence of close interaction between the dialects of Yoruba as elements from one dialect can be encountered in other dialects.

While Awobuluyi's (1992) represents inter-dialectical study in the area of Yoruba dialectology, many other works have also compared dialects at the level of phonology. Oladeji (2014) compares the aspects of the phonology of Owé, Yàgbà and Ìjùmú, three dialectsfrom the North-East Yoruba group. One very important point that relates to the present research is the issue of assimilation in these dialects. Oladeji (2014) argues that vowel assimilation that is common in the standard dialect and many regional dialects are no found in this dialects (Owé, Yàgbà, Ìjùmú Bùnú). He gives the following examples,

Standard Yoruba

ilé # iṣẹ́	→	iléẹṣẹ́	"office""
asọ # ẹbi	→	aseẹ̀bí	""family uniform"
ọjọ́ # ogbó	→	ọjóogbó	"old age"
àga # ọba	→	àgọọba	"king's chair"

North-East Dialects

ilé # iṣẹ́	→	ilé iṣẹ́ / *iléẹṣẹ́
asọ # ẹbi	→	asọ ẹbí / *aseẹ̀bí
ijọ́ # ogbó	→	ijọ́ ogbo / *ijóogbó
àga # ọba	→	àga ọba / *àgọọba

The illustration above shows that variation exists in Yoruba dialects as many examples in this work have shown.

Whereas there are various works that reflect comparative study of Yoruba dialects, there are a number of research works that study specific dialects without engaging in comparative analysis. Bamisile (1986) studies the phonology of Moba dialect, Ajiboye (1993) studies the dialect of Mọ̀bà. It should be mentioned that Mọ̀bà is a variety of Èkìtì dialect, notwithstanding however, a study of the works show variation in the dialects. Èkìtì dialect is one of the dialects in focus in this work, and it is observed that while Bamisilẹ (1986) and Ajiboye (1993) identify assimilation and deletion as phonological processes in Èkìtì dialect, the two scholars fail to identify all the grammatical structures where the processes occur. The two scholars fail to mention assimilation between the question word /ṣé/ and nouns that follow as in:

ṣé # ọmọ (nì gbọ́)	→	sọ́ọmọ (ni gbọ́)	"did that child hear"
ṣé # eó (nì tó)	→	séeó (nì tó)	"is that money enough"
ṅjẹ́ # ọmọ ni sùn	→	ṅjọ́ọmọ (nì sùn)	"did that child sleep"

The scholars also fail to mention assimilation between the marker of subordinate clause **/kí/** and the noun/pronoun that follows as in:

kí # olú (báa wí) → kóolú (báa wí) 'if Olú fails to say/talk'
kí # adé(báa sùn) → káadé(báa sùn) 'if Adé fails to sleep'

With regard to deletion in the dialect, the two scholars fail to offer explanation as to what determines deletion, particularly in a monosyllabic verb + noun construction. The two scholars identify deletion in this construction but no effort is made to postulate motivation for the deletion.

Another issue that has been mentioned in relation to Èkìtì dialect is that of nasality. Bamisile (1996) observes the occurrence of nasal vowels in the initial position of lexical items contrary to what obtains in the standard dialect and some other regional dialects of Yoruba. He, however, fails to explain he motivation for the occurrence. Abiodun (1999) offers an explanation to the effect that the occurrence in initial position is as a result of nasalization through assimilation of the nasal feature. This work will investigate further whether such nasalization occurs in the other dialects in focus.

Onˋdó dialect is another dialect that is in focus in this research work. Much has been done on the grammar of this dialect also, the attention in this research would however be limited to works in the area of phonology only. Ayanlọla (1989) presents a comparative phonology of Onˋdó and Standard Yoruba. The scholar noted the following segments that are not found in standard Yoruba and a number of dialects of the language. The segments are /k^w. g^w, ɣ/ which are attested in:

/ọg^{w}ata/'fifty /àk^{w}ọ̀/ 'fadama' /fẹ́ɣã̀/ 'like'
/g^{w}ọ̀/ 'dig' /ẹ̀k^{w}ọ́/ 'palm kernel /ɣõ̀/ 'weave'

Another interesting thing about the sound inventory in Onˋdó dialect is that the trill /r/ only occurs in initial postion. It does not occur between vowels. Akanji (2002) agrees with Ayanlọla (1989) that /g^w. k^w, ɣ/ occur in Onˋdó and that /r is restricted to initial position. It should be remarked that these segments are not attested in Èkìtì dialect, however, /ɣ/ occurs in Yàgbà in items that include:

àɣõ̀ 'they'
àɣa 'we'
ɣá 'come'
oɣó 'money'

Unlike Èkìtì dialect, Onˋdó dialect does not operate a full vowel harmony system. The dialect operates a seven vowel system like the Yàgbà dialect, which also does not operate a full vowel harmony system.

A very interesting aspect of Onˋdó dialect is the behavior of **/l-n/**, which are said to be allophones of the same phoneme, (Owolabi 1989 and Bamgbose 1990). Whereas **/n/** occurs before nasal vowels, /l/ occurs before oral vowels. Awubuluyi (1983) demonstrates that /n/ invariably changes to /l/ when it occurs before an oral vowel in genitive construction, /ní/ verb plus noun, focus marker **/ni/** plus noun and several other environments, e.g.

oní + owó → olówó 'wealthy person/owner of money'
oní + aṣɔ → aláṣɔ 'dealer in/owner of cloth'
ní + ɔmɔ → lɔmɔ 'have/has children'
ní + ewè → léwé 'have/has leaves'
ni + Olu → lolú is Olu (in focus construction)
ni + Ɛran → lƐran is the animal (in focus construction)

While it is true that **/n/→/l/** in the Standard Yoruba, Yàgbà, and Èkìtì dialects, such change is not recorded in the Onˋdó dialect. Akinsipẹ (2006) contains the following examples,

ní eɣó → néɣó 'have/has money'
níɔma → nɔma 'have/has children'
ní ewé → néwé 'have/has leaves'
ní Ɛã → nƐã 'have/has meat'

What obtains in the Onˋdó dialect in respect of **/n – l/** alternation is true of Ìlàjẹ and Ìkálẹ̀ and Ẹ̀gbá dialects of the language, (Oduroye 1986, Shada 1988 and Awobuluyi (1992). All the scholars that have worked on Onˋdó dialect report that both assimilation and deletion are operative as phonological processes in the dialect. Interestingly, attention on the constructions that permit the processes is focused on those constructions where they are manifested in the standard dialect. As would be shown be shown in this study there are constructions where contrary to what is found in the standard dialect, the processes fail to occur. For instance, vowel assimilation does not occur across

segment in genitive construction as it is found in the standard dialect, Èkìtì dialect and Yàgbà dialect. The examples below gathered in the course of this research work testify to this.

oni eɣó	→	onéɣó	'owner of money'
oni asɔ	→	onásɔ	'owner of/dealer in clothes'
oni ɔma	→	onɔma	'owner of children'
oni ewé	→	onéwé	'owner or dealer in leaves'

Ìyàgbà (Yàgbà) has been widely studied, Olaosebikan (2002) studies aspects of the phonology of the dialect of Ẹ̀gbẹ̀, one of the major towns that speak Yàgbà dialect. Yusuff (2006) studies aspects of the phonology of the Ìyàgbà variety of the dialect spoken in Mọ̀pà community, Olatunde (2007) also studies aspects of the phonology and morphology of Ìyàgbà. His work does not focus on any particular community. Two works that are of interest to this study are Mepayeda (2006) and Oladeji (2014, 2017). All the works cited, Olaosebikan (2002), Yussuff (2014), Olatunde (2007), Mepayeda (2006) and Oladeji (2014, 2017) agree that both deletion and assimilation occur in Yàgbà dialect, the scholars are however not unanimous on the structures that permit the processes. Olaosebikan (2002), Yusuff (2006) and Olatunde (2007) claim that assimilation occurs between a noun + noun structure as in:

ɔmɔ + Ɛrã	→	ɔmƐƐrã	kid, idiot
ewó + ƐgbƐ	→	ewƐgbƐ	money contributed by an asssociation
asɔ + olú	→	asoolú	Olu's cloth
ewé + ɔgƐdƐ	→	ewɔɔgƐdƐ	banana leaf

Mepayeda (2006) and Oladeji (2014) in separate work claim that assimilation does not occur in a noun + noun construction. The present researcher took time to investigate very carefully and found that assimilation in noun + noun construction does not occur in the speech of my informants who are presently above seventy years of age, and who have lived in their various communities all their lives. The researcher collected data from this category of informants in Ẹ̀gbẹ̀, Ògbè, Mọ́pà, Èjìbà and Pọ́nyàn and found that the informant failed to produce grammatical forms that demonstrate assimilation. The researcher presented the same pieces of data to youths who are between thirty five and forty years of age, they all produced forms that demonstrated assimilation as shown in the examples above.

In a similar vein, Yusuff (2014) and Olatunde (2007) claim the consonant deletion occurs in the examples below.

egũgũ	→	eegũ	'bone
òtítọ́	→	òótọ́	'truth'
erúrú	→	eérú	'ashes'
esĩsĩ	→	eesĩ	'housefly'
èdúdú	→	èédú	'chacoal'

My informants who are about seventy years and above did not delete consonants. However the youths deleted the consonants.

The point to note from the foregoing is that there is a variety in the speech of the old and the young. The Yàgbà dialect is already going through a phonological change that is conditioned by exposure to the standard Yoruba. The old people interviewed claimed they have never traveled outside Yàgbà land and do not speak the standard dialect, as such their speech form has not been influenced bythe standard dialect. The youth are University graduates who have live for some years outside Yàgbà land. Apart from the fact that they speak the standard dialect of Yoruba very fluently, they also speak English language.

Oladeji (2017) makes a similar observation in respect of the greeting verb that has two forms in Yàgbà/**kú/** and **/kúrì/**. The scholar remarks thus,

> We found that our language informants who are between seventy and eighty years of age use **/kúrì/** consistently…. The younger generation between the age of twenty and sixty, who have lived outside Yàgbà land use **kúrì** when greeting old people but use **/kú/** when relating with their contemporaries.

In the present research, attention would focus on the speech of the old people because their speech forms represent the oldest form of Yàgbà dialect, which this study will focus on.

Deletion and Assimilation Processes

These two phonological processes have been widely reported in languages of the world. Phonological processes are different modifications or changes that segments undergo when morphemes or words are joined together to form meaningful utterances (Schane, 1973; Sommerstein, 1977 and Katamba, 1996). Abiodun (2007) remarks that:

> As words and morphemes are combined, sounds are influenced by their environments thereby undergoing some adjustments. A sound may change to resemble another sound, it may be lost, or some segments introduced into the combination. These changes are technically referred to as phonological processes.

Agboyinu (2018) describes of phonological processes,

> …subconscious modification of sounds in order to achieve euphony in speech, to facilitate articulatory ergonomics, to synchronize articulatory gestures, and to mediate violation of articulatory mechanism and phonotactic constraint in connected speech

The two processes, assimilation and deletion are described below.

Assimilation

Assimilation is a process that results when one of two contiguous segments copies features of the other segment. Maimkjer (2010) describes the process as a "transformation of a speech segment into another, owing to the influence of a neighbouring segment." O' Grady and Archibald, 2000) also define the process as one that "results from the influence of one segment on another…(it) results into a sound becoming more like another nearby sound in terms of one or more phonetic characteristics." Crystal (2008) corroborates this when he says that "assimilation occurs when there is influence of one distinct sound upon the articulation of another so that the sounds look alike or identical."

In the literature, assimilation is classified into partial and full (Schane, 1973; Katamba, 1986 and O'Grady & Archibald, 2004). Describing full assimilation, Abiodun (2007) says that "in a full assimilation, a segment take the entire features of a segment before or after it to become identical." He gives the following examples from the Yoruba language:

ɔdʊ̌ + ɔdʊ́ → ɔdɔɔdʊ̌́ "yearly"
ogʊ̌ + ogʊ̌ → ogoogʊ̌́ "in twenties"

In the examples, the vowels before the boundary take all the feature of the vowels after the boundary, thereby becoming identical. The scholar also described partial assimilation as cases where a segment takes on some of the features of a segment before or after it. According to the scholar, the segments do not become identical; rather, they have more features than they had before the assimilation process occurred. Homorganic assimilation provides a good example of partial assimilation. In the Yoruba language for instance, the progressive marker represented by the archiphoneme **/Ṇ/**invariably takes on the place of articulation of a consonant after it e.g.

Ṇ́ + bọ̀ → ḿbọ̀ "coming"
Ṇ́ + kpè→ ḿpkè "calling"
Ṇ́ + dè → ńdè "tying"
Ṇ́ + tà → ńtà "selling"
Ṇ́ + kọ → ŋ́kọ "writing"
Ṇ́ + gʊ̌ → ŋgʊ̌́ "ponding"

Note that the nasal archiphoneme does not become identical with the consonant after it in each of the examples, rather it assimilates the place of articulation of the consonants. Other areas where partial assimilation is found are in palatalization, labialization and nasalization.

Scholars also identified different types of assimilation based on proximity of segments, and also based on the direction of assimilation. Skandera & Burleigh (2005) claimed that assimilation may be categorized as either contiguous assimilation or distant assimilation when we consider proximity.

The scholar reported that contiguous assimilation occurs when the segments involved in the process occur side by side without any segment between them. For instance the examples above reflect contiguous assimilation. On the other hand, distant assimilation occurs when there is a segments in-between the two segments involved in assimilation. An example of distant assimilation is found in genitive construction in Yoruba where the **/o/**in the initial position of a genitive marker assimilates the initial vowel of a noun to which it is attached. The examples below confirm this.

oní + asọ → alásọ "owner/ dealer in clothes"
oní + ewé → eléwé "owner or dealer in leaves"

Note that the /o/ that begins the prefix assimilates the features of the initial vowel of the nouns despite the intervening sonorant.

With regard to direction of assimilation, it could be to the right or to the left (Richard & Schmidt, 2002 and Roach, 2009). Assimilation is to the right when a segment influences the segment that follows it. This form of assimilation is also referred to in the literature as progressive or preservative assimilation. In the example **/ilé iṣẹ́/**which is normally produced **/iléeṣé/**, **/e/** influences the **/i/** that occurs after it. This represents progressive/preservative or rightward assimilation. Leftward assimilation on the other hand refers to cases where a segments influences the segment that precedes it. It is also referred to as regressive or anticipatory assimilation. The examples shown above **/ɔdṹ + ɔdú → ɔdɔɔdṹ/ "yearly",** represent aninstances of leftward or anticipatory assimilation.

Deletion Process

Deletion, which is the second phonological process in focus in this work, is defined in O'Grady and Archibald (2000) as "a process that removes a segment from certain phonetic contexts." The scholars go further to say that, "deletion occurs in everyday rapid speech in many languages." In the literature, scholars have presented evidence that both consonants and vowels are capable of being deleted in human language. It is equally possible to delete suprasegmental features (Schane, 1973; Sommerstein, 1977 and Katamba, 1999).

Consonant deletion occurs across the languages of the world. Roach (2009) for instance reports that consonant deletion occurs in the English language particularly when there occurs consonant clusters resulting from word combination in rapid speech. Temple (2003) consists the examples below,

kɛpt # mɪ → kɛpmɪ "kept me" (t → Φ)
əʊld # kɑpɪt → əʊlkɑpɪt "old carpet" (d→ Φ)

Consonant deletion is also reported in Yoruba language. Yusuff (2005) contains the following examples,

dúró → dúó "wait/stand" (r → Φ)
dára → dáa "good" (r → Φ)
báyìí → báìí "like this" (y → Φ)

Apart from consonant deletion, vowel deletion is reported is also reported across languages. Jones (2006) claims that unstressed vowel is often deleted when it occurs immediately before or after a stressed syllable in a polysyllabic word, also weak vowels are deleted when they occur before syllabic consonants. The examples below demonstrate vowel deletion.

vɪktərɪ → vɪktrɪ "victory" (ə → Φ)
pəli:z → pli:z "police" (ə → Φ)

Vowel deletion is very robust in the Yoruba language (Owolabi 1989, Bamgbose 1999). One of two contiguous vowels is normally deleted across word boundary in rapid speech in the language e.g.

ra # ẹrã → rẹrã "buy meat" (a → Φ)
gbé # owó → gbówó "carry/steal money" (e → Φ)

On the deletion of suprasegmental features, it is common for tone to delete when a vowel is lost in a grammatical construction. The example below demonstrate tone deletion,

jẹ # èso → jèso/ "eat fruit"

It is observed that the high tone before the word boundary is deleted in the first example and the low tone before the boundary is also deleted in the second example.At times, the vowels and tone are deleted. At times, the tone is deleted without deleting the vowel.

Deletion and Assimilation in Yoruba

The two processes described above are very robust in the standard Yoruba language, and scholars have described the various grammatical constructions where they operate in the standard dialect. Talking of assimilation for instance, Yoruba linguistics such as Oyelaran (1972), Owolabi (1989), Bamgbose (1999), Yusuff (2005) and many others demonstrate the operation of assimilation in the following grammatical constructions.

i. **noun + noun structure**

ọmọ̃ # ẽrã	→	ọmẽ̃ẽrã kids	
asọ # ẹbí	→	aṣẹẹbí	group wear

ii. reduplication

ọsẹ́ # ọsẹ́	→	ọsọ̀ọsẹ́	
ọdǔ # ọdǔ	→	ọdọ̀ọdǔ	

iii. question word and pronoun

ṣé o wá	→	ṣó o wá 'did you (sg) come?'	
ṣe ẹ gbọ́	→	ṣẹ ẹ gbọ́	'did you (pl) hear?'

iv. greeting verb /kú/ and noun

kú# abọ̀→	káábọ̀	'welcome'	
kú # iṣẹ́	→	kúuṣẹ́	'well done'

v. subject pronoun and negative marker /ò/

a ò ri	→	a à ri	'we did not see him/her/it'
ẹ ò gbọ́	→	ẹ ẹ̀ gbọ́	'you (2nd pl) did not hear'

Assimilation is reported in all the dialects of Yoruba (Olumuyiwa 1994). However, the mode of the operation differs across dialects. Some structures that permit the process in some dialects do not permit it in some other dialects. For instance assimilation of subject pronoun and negative marker is not manifested in Yàgbà and Èkìtì dialects.

Like the assimilation process, scholars have demonstrated the manifestation of deletion process in the standard dialect and the dialects of Yoruba language, (Owolabi 1985. Bamgbose, 1999; Yusuff 2005 and Olumuyiwa, 1988).

We present below some of the environments where the process is realized.

i. noun # noun structure

ẹ̀bá # odò	→	ẹ̀bádò	'river bed'
ẹrã # oko	→	ẹrãko	'animal'
aya # ọba	→	ayaba	'queen'

ii. verb # noun

ra # ewé	→	rewé	'buy leaves'
ta # ọjà→	tajà	'sell goods'	

iii. preposition # nouns

sí# oko	→	sóko	'to the farm'
sí # àjò	→	sájò	'on a journey'
fún # Olú	→	f'Ólú	'for Olu'

iv. question word and noun/pronoun

sé Olú wá	→	s'Ólú wá	'did Olu come'
sé ó lọ	→	só wá	'did he go
ǹjẹ́ Adé lọ	→	nj'Adé lọ	'did Ade go'

In the present study, the researcher would discuss this two processes in the dialects under study and highlight areas of differences in the operation of the processes in the dialects.

Deletion and Assimilation in the Selected Dialects

Deletion in the Dialects

In Section above, deletion was defined as "a process that removes a segment from certain phonetic contexts" (O'Grady & Archibald, 2000). Such segment that is removed when the process occurs may be a vowel, consonant or a suprasegmental feature.

As already mentioned above, deletion is a robust process in the Yoruba language. Many scholars such as Bamgbose (1965. 1989), Oyelaran (1972), Owolabi (1989), Yusuff (2005) and many other scholars have presented data showing the different structures that permit the process in the standard Yoruba of the language. Such grammatical structures are presented below with examples:

i. **noun # noun structure**
   ẹrã # oko → ẹrãko 'animal' (o → Φ)
   ìyá # ilé → ìyálé 'eledest wife' (i → Φ)

ii. **verb # noun structure**
   so # èso → sèso 'bear fruit' (o → Φ)
   já # ewé → jáwé 'pluck leave' (e → Φ)

iii. **preposition # noun**
   sí # oko → sóko 'to the farm' (i → Φ)
   fṹ # ọmọ̃ → fómọ̃ 'give the child' (ũ → Φ)

iv. **question word # noun/pronoun**
   ṣé # omĩ (wa) → ṣómĩ (wa) 'Is there water' (e → Φ)
   ǹjẹ́ # Olú (sũ) → ǹj'Ólù sṹ 'Did Olu sleep' (ẹ → Φ)

Apart from the vowel deletion illustrated above, consonants are equally deleted in some contexts. For example consonants are deleted in words presented below:

dúró → dúó 'stand/wait' (r → Φ)
kúrò → kúò 'step aside' (r → Φ)
òtítọ́ → òótọ́ 'truth' (t → Φ)
èfĩ́fĩ́ → èéfĩ 'smoke' (f → Φ)

As far as the deletion of suprasegmental features is concerned, scholars mentioned earlier above have all reported that the deletion of tone and nasality in Yoruba is consequent upon the deletion of a vowel. Since vowels bear tone and nasality, these features are in most cases affected when a vowel is deleted, e.g.

i. so # èso → sèso 'bear fruit'
ii. kó # ẹ̀pà → kẹ́pà 'gather groundnut'

In the examples in above, the vowel of the verb in (i) bears a mid-tone, but the mid-tone is lost due to the deletion of the vowel of the verb. In the same vein, the vowel of the verb in (ii) is deleted but its high-tone realigns with the initial vowel of the noun, thereby causing the low-tone of the initial vowel of the noun to delete.

Research Method

This was a survey research that examines and describes the operation of two phonological processes, namely deletion and assimilation.The research relies mainly on interview using questionnaire prepared by the researcher. The questionnaire consists of one thousand lexical items and grammatical constructions that reveal possible environments that may trigger assimilation or deletion. For each of the dialects under study, speakers of the dialect form the population for the research. However the researcher selected five native speakers as language informants on each dialect.

The researcher travelled to different communities where these dialects are spoken. However the researcher selected speakers of Èkìtì dialect from Adó-Èkìtì, speakers of Onḍó dialect from Onḍó town and speakers of Yàgbà from Ìsánlú. The informants selected were all in the age range of seventy to eighty (70-80 years of age), and have lived in their communities all their lives. The age range is very important because speakers in this age range speak the dialect fluently. The researcher found that speakers whose age is lower and who have travelled out of the research area speak their dialects with a mixture of standard Yoruba and English. The responses of the informants were recorded on tape. This gave the researcher the opportunity of listening to the responses as many times as was necessary, it made it possible to validate the responses from other speakers who did not belong to the group of primary informants.

Data Presentation: Consonant Deletion

Consonant deletion is not robust in the three dialects under study. It was reported that **r-deletion** is very robust in the standard Yoruba.A similar observation was made in the Oyo and Ibadan dialect. Apart from **r-deletion**, scholars claim that consonants apart from **/r/** are often deleted in some structures. The examples below confirm the claims of consonant deletion in the standard Yoruba.

	A		B		
a.	orúkọ	→	oókọ	'name'	
	ẹ̀rẹ̀kẹ́	→	ẹ̀ẹ̀kẹ́	'cheek'	
	erùpẹ̀	→	eèpẹ́	'sand'	
	òrùka	→	òòka	'ring'	
	òrùjọ́	→	òòjọ́	'day'	
b.àkàrà	→	àkàà		'bean cake'	
	èkùrọ́	→	èkùọ́	'palm kernel'	
	àdúrà	→	àdúà	'prayer'	
	àbúrò	→	àbúò	'younger sibling'	
	àkùrọ̀	→	àkùọ̀	'fadama'	
c.	báyìí	→	báìí	'like this'	
	Láyíwọlá	→	Láíwọlá	'a name'	
d.	òtítọ́	→	òótọ́	'truth'	t
	egũgũ	→	eegũ	'bone'	g
	erírú	→	eèrù	'ashes'	r
	esĩsĩ	→	eesĩ	'housefly'	s
	èdídú	→	èédú	'charcoal'	d
	àrìrò	→	ààrò	'cooking tripod'	r

The pieces of data in above provide evidence of consonant deletion in standard Yoruba. The forms in A represent the underlying form, while those in B represent the surface forms which show that a consonant is deleted. The research shows that the consonant deletion captured in (a-c) is not attested in Ado Èkìtì and Yàgbà dialects because the forms in A are realized as the surface forms with no evidence of deletion. The Ondo dialect however shows forms that do not have the **/r/**, which apparently suggest **r-deletion**. The forms below are attested in Onḍó dialect.

a.	oúkọ	'name'	
	ẹ̀ẹ̀kẹ́	'cheek'	
	euku	'dust'	
	eùpẹ̀	'sand'	
b.	ìkàrà	ìkàà	'bean cake'
	èkùró	èkùọ́	'palm kernel'
	àdúrà	àdúà	'prayer'
	káre	káe	'praise word'
	àburò	àbúò	'younger sibling'

The data in above shows that /r/ is lost in the items above going by the underlying forms in (A) above. This appears, however, not to be the case because the forms from which the items in would have been derived do not occur at te diachronic level in the Onḍó dialect. Knowing fully well that it is not possible to derive something from nothing it is not possible to derive the items in from an underlying form that do not exist in the dialect. The apparent explanation is found in the historical development of the Onḍó dialect, whereby **r-deletion** occurred as a diachronic process. Being a diachronic process, it has stopped operating long time ago and the forms in above are already well integrated in the lexicon of the dialect (Adetugbo, 1967). Thus, this explains why those lexical items that serve as input to **r-deletion** in the standard Yoruba and its dialects as pointed out earlierare not found in the Onḍó dialect.

The general claim that can be made in respect of consonant deletion in the dialects examined in this work is that deletion process does not occur in the dialects. Whereas the process is attested in the standard Yoruba and some of its dialects such as Ìbàdàn, Ọ̀yọ́ and Ìbọ̀lọ́, it is not attested in Èkìtì, Onḍó and Yàgbà.

Conclusion

Considering the process of deletion, it is found in the study that all the dialects operate the process. One important observation is that consonant deletion which operates in the standard Yoruba and some of the dialects of Yoruba is not operative in the dialects studied in this research. For instance /r/ deletion is common in the standard Yoruba as already reported earlier. Similarly, consonant deletion in some words such as **/òtítọ́ →[òótọ́] '**truth'; **/erírú/ →[eérú]** 'ashes' is not operative in the dialects. However, it was reported that /r/-deletion operated as a diachronic rule in Onḍó dialect. Its operation was so robust that only very few words serve as relics of the manifestation of the sound in the older form of the dialect. The following words attest to the diachronic application of the /r/-deletion in the older form of the dialect:

oúkọ	'name '	ìkàà	'bean cake'
ẹ̀ẹ̀kẹ́	'cheek'	èkùọ́	'palm kernel'
euku	'dust'	àdúà	'prayer'

While consonant deletion appears non-operative in the dialects, vowel deletion is a common feature in the three dialects. For instance the process operates in preposition + noun construction, it operates between grammatical word **/kí/** and pronouns/nouns, and between question words and pronouns/nouns. The process also occurs in verb+noun construction. Vowel deletion occurs in all the grammatical structures mentioned above in the standard Yoruba and its dialects of the language. The point to note here is that even where the dialects studied in this research do not belong to the same dialect group, they still show a lot of similarities. Not only that, they share similarities with the standard Yoruba and some other dialects. The reason for the similarities is traceable to the fact that these dialects and the standard Yoruba are sisters of the same language, the year of separation between them is not long enough to obliterate the close affinity and similarities. Furthermore, they are still spoken within a politically and socially knitted geographical area, which allows for constant relationship and interaction between the speakers, thereby preserving the similarities between the dialects.

With regards to assimilation, the research shows that the process occurs widely in the dialects. For instance, the dialects does not operate assimilation between noun+noun as found in the standard dialect and some regional dialects, in the same vein, the dialects does not operate assimilation in some words following deletion as earlier reported for standard dialect as found in;

òtítọ́ → òítọ́ → òótọ́ 'truth'
erírú → erírú → eérú 'ashes'

However, apart from sharing similarities in not displaying assimilation in the structures mentioned, they also share similarities in operating the process in similar structures. For instance, all the dialects operate assimilation in reduplicated items as in **/ọdṍ+ọdṍ/→ [ọdọọdṍ]** 'yearly'; **/ẹ̀jọ+ẹ̀jọ/** → [**ẹ̀jẹ̀ẹ̀jọ**] 'the whole eight'. Two dialects are similar in operating assimilation in greeting forms, the dialects are Ado Èkìtì and Onḍó, e.g. **/kú alẹ́/ →[káalẹ́**] 'good evening'; **/kú ilé/ →[kúulé**] 'greeting from someone who just came back to the house'. Two other dialects: Ado Èkìtì and Yàgbà demonstrate distant assimilation in the derivation of genitive nouns, e.g. **/onḭ́+ ẹja**/→ [**ẹléja**] 'owner of/ dealer in fish', **/onḭ́+epo**/ → [**elépo**] 'owner of /dealer in oil'. Looking further at the data, assimilation occurs between pronouns and thefuture marker/a/ across the dialects, e.g. **/wọ̀ a yṹ**/ → [**wà a yú**] 'you will go'; **/wọ̀ a gbé e**/ → [**wà a gbé e**] 'you will carry it'. Another structure where assimilation occurs is between question words and pronouns mainly in Èkìtì and Yàgbà. Consider these examples:

ibi sí ọ̀ yṹ → ibi sọ́ ọ̀ yṹ 'where did you go to?'
kí ọ̀ rà líbẹ̀ → kọ́ ọ̀ rà líbẹ̀ 'what did you buy there?'
wọ̀ à yṹ → wa à yṹ 'did you go?
Ìsí ò bá líbẹ̀ → ìsó ò bá líbẹ̀ 'who did you meet there?'

Apart from similarities at the segmental level, the study shows that there are similarities at the suprasegmental level also. For instance, as already demonstrated in the body of the thesis, there is total assimilation of tone across the dialects in the derivation of the reduplicated items, e.g. **/ọdṹ+ọdṹ/** → [ọdọọdú] 'yearly', **/osù osù/** → [**osoosù**] 'monthly'. From the examples, it is glaring that the high tone that occurs on the final vowel of **/ọdṹ//** before the morpheme boundary is assimilated by the mid-tone that occurs after the morpheme boundary.

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