



Research Paper

Phonological Interference between Ebira and Hausa Languages

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ABSTRACT

This research work attempted to investigate the phonological interference of Ebira (as first language) with Hausa (as second language). The study was psycholinguistic one with reference to phonology. Ebira native speakers who are domicile in Kogi State, Nigeria and speak Hausa as second language constituted the target population. Sample of the study were drawn from the population using the stratified sampling technique. Some of the specific objectives of the study among others were to find out: (i) The sounds that are perceived when an Ebira native speaker pronounces some Hausa lexical items. (ii) Phonological processes that apply when an Ebira speaker attempts to pronounce some Hausa lexical items outside his (Ebira) phonological territory. (iii) Consonant and vowel influence of the Ebira language in Hausa. The study is qualitative one and employed a case study approach. Some of the major findings emerged from the study are: (a) There is a significance phonological interference of the Ebira language in Hausa. (b) As a result of the phonological interference, some phonological processes were noticed, such as elision, substitution, monophthongization. In addition, syllabification process of some Hausa lexical items is applied to conform with the Ebira language open syllable structure. (c) The phonological processes above, as noticed, triggered yet again some other phonological processes such as deglottalization, apocope, vowel lengthening, vowel raising, epenthesis etc. In conclusion, phonological interference of one language with another was established through scientific investigation.

KEY WORDS: Phonological, Interference, Hausa, Ebira, Languages.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The field of second language acquisition research investigates how people attain proficiency in language other than their mother tongue. In deal acquisition situations, very few adults seem to reach native-like proficiency in using a second language. There are individuals who can achieve great expertise in writing, but not in speaking. This means or might suggest that some features (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) of a second language are easier to acquire than others (e.g. phonology).

Guirora (2013) argues that the hardest part of learning a new language is pronunciation, which can result in a foreign accent. According to him, some believe accents are caused by transfer between the sounds of the first and second languages. For example, there are three possibilities:

- (1) One or more phonemes of the second language are not found in the learner's native language at all. For instance, Korean does not have any phoneme corresponding to the English phonemes [f] or [v], so they would be completely new to the Korean learner of English.
- (2) The first language has one of the two contrasting phonemes. For example, Japanese has a /p/ sound, as in English pay, but has no /f/ sound, as in English fade.
- (3) The second language phonemes exist in the native language, but as allophones of the same phoneme. For example, in Japanese /l/ and /r/ are allophones, so Japanese learners of English need to learn to distinguish these sounds.

Therefore, this proposal is a psycholinguistic study that draws heavily from phonology. The Ebira speakers become the subject matter in the study as speaker of Hausa second language (L₂). The study focuses on how the Ebira native speakers pronounce some Hausa words. The study aimed at examining the phonological interference (recognizable traits at the phonological domain) of the Ebira that are witnessed in the process of speaking the Hausa language as their second language.

Justifiably, the practical importance of this research includes an understanding of how Hausa L₂ is learned, which may be lead to more effective teaching practices. In a broader context, knowledge of second

language learning may help educational policy makers to set more realistic goals for programmes for both second language course and learning of the Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) by minority language children and adults. To corroborate this point, the national language policy places considerable emphasis on the human resource components in our educational institutions, because they produce for both domestic and international market. It is for the same reason that more efforts were made by Nigeria government over the years to expand access to second language learning in tertiary institutions in various parts of the country for sustainable development and national cohesion.

This research is very conversant with the fact that issues in second language learning can be approached from different perspectives such as syntactic, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic etc. The interest of this research focuses on psycholinguistics. Syal and Jindal (2013) argue that since language is a mental phenomenon, mental processes are articulated in language behaviour. Psycholinguistics studies these mental processes of thought, and concept formation and their articulation in language, which reveal a great deal about the structure of both human psychology and of language. Psycholinguistics is concerned with the learning of language at various stages; early acquisition of first language by children and learning of a second language.

In conclusion, this study focuses on the interference within the phonological domain of the Ebira native speakers, speaking Hausa as L₂.

Statement of the Problem

There are some recognizable traits at the phonological domain usually witnessed when an Ebira native speaker pronounces Hausa lexical items. These phonological traits constitute an error-like problem, as opposed to the ideal situation on how the lexical items are pronounced. This study aimed to identify, analyze and explain these problems from linguistic point of view.

Objectives of the Study

The reason behind the study is to present some certain effects in terms of phonological influence of first language (Ebira as L₁) over a second language (Hausa as L₂). Specifically the researcher will try to study:

1. The sets of phonemes that are present in Ebira and Hausa phonological systems.
2. The sounds that are perceived when an Ebira native speaker pronounces some Hausa lexical items.
3. Consonantal and vowel influence of the Ebira language in Hausa.
4. The phonological processes that apply when an Ebira speaker attempts to pronounce some Hausa lexical items outside his (Ebira) phonological territory.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Ebiras

“Ebira” as a name, is used by not less than nine different but historically related groups of people. These are the EbiraOpanda, EbiraJukun, EbiraAgatu, Ebira Toto, EbiraAbaji, Ebira Koto, EbiraMozum, EbiraEtuno and Ebira Tao. Historically, attempt to trace the actual origin of the Ebira people, has not been easy. However, what is certain among the scholars is that the various ethnic groups that constitute the six linguistic groups of the Ebira people, are said to have migrated at different times before the First World War (1914-1918) to the present settlement, which are prospectively located in Adamawa, Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Kwara, Kogi and Edo States. Records have it that the early history of the Ebiras dated back to the sixteenth Century (Circa 1500) when the defunct Kwararafa kingdom was a flourishing empire that engage in fierce wars of ethnic conquest with the UsmanDanfodio fame and the war moguls of the El Kanemi kingdom of Borno empire. These three prolonged wars later proved to be decisive in shaping the present identities and destinies of the minority pagan tribes that constitute the then Jukun, Idoma, Tiv, Angas, Ebira, Igalla that made up the Kwararafa kingdom (salami 2011).

Going by the classification of African languages by Greenberg, Ebira belongs to the Kwa sub-group of the Niger-Congo family of languages. Ebira, like other languages in the same group, is a tone language. It is a tone language because tone plays a very significant role in the usage and meaning of words (Salami 2011). By ethnologue classification, Ebiralanguage belongs to Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Nupoid, Ebira-Gade. The written form of the Ebira language would largely be incomprehensible if tone marks are not indicated. This is because words spelt exactly the same way as the same segmental sounds (phonemes) may have totally different meanings due to their different levels of tones in actual speech. Due to proximity to, as well as social and economic interaction with the Yoruba, the Ebira have been greatly influenced by the Yoruba culture. A lot of Yoruba words have infiltrated the Ebira language. The Ebira language is also suffering from over-dose of loan words from Arabic, English and Hausa languages.

The Ebira Vowel Sounds

The Ebira language has two (2) set of vowels. These are dotted vowel sound and undotted vowel sounds.

The dotted vowel sounds are the ones that have dots (subscripts) added to them. These dots are part of the spelling of the words that are used. If the dots are not added, these change the meaning of the words. The vowels in this group are i, e, o, u. The undotted vowel sounds, on the other hand, are those without dots (subscripts). The vowels in this group are i, e, o, u, a. Therefore, based on the standard Ebira orthography, there are nine (9) vowel sounds, as follows i, i̇, e, ė, o, ȯ, u, u̇ and a.

Features of the Ebira vowel sounds

Vowel sounds in Ebira are characterized by distinguishing between long and short vowel, vowel harmony and vowel elision (Salami 2011):

i. **Vowel Harmony**:- As a rule, vowels from the two groups i.e. dotted and undotted vowels do not occur in one word. Vowels in a word are either dotted or undotted invariably. This is called vowel harmony. The only exceptions to this rule are compound words, as in Ohinoyi (ohi/inoyi), onyeche (onyi/eche).

ii. **Long Vowels**:- In the spoken language, two or three vowels may co-occur at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of an utterance. In these circumstances, they are regarded as long vowels and distinguish meanings. For example:

ahẹ (song), aahẹ (play)

ẹhi (sweat), ẹẹhi (five)

ohu (market), oohu (twenty)

Vowel Elision:- All words in Ebira, whether they belong to the nominal or verbal class, end in a vowel. Again, words that belong to the nominal class (nouns, pronouns, adjectives etc) always begin with a vowel. When two vowels come together in a sentence (one vowel ending a word and another vowel beginning the next word), one of the vowels may be slipped out in actual speech. This is called elision. The two words are pronounced together as if it is one word (compound word) despite the fact that they are two distinct words in written form.

.The Ebira Consonant Sounds

According to Salami (2011), consonants in the Ebira language occur at the beginning or middle of a word only. As an open syllable language, all words end in a vowel, and never in a consonant. Also, all words belonging to the nominal class (e.g. nouns, pronouns, adjectives etc) always begin with a vowel while words in the verbal class (verbs, adverbs, idiophones, etc) begin only with a constant. Salami (2011) further argues that there are 19 single consonants and 12 double consonants in the Ebira language totalling 31, as follows

Single consonants

b, ch, d, g, h, j, k, m, n, ng, ny, p, r, s, t, v, w, y, z

Single consonants

gw, hy, kw, nyngw, sw, tw, vw, zw, mw

On the other hand, Momo (2008) identifies 28 Ebira consonant sounds: b, ch, di, g, gw, h, hw, hy, j, k, kw, m, mw, n, ng, ngw, ny, p, r, s, sw, t, tw, v, vw, w, z, zw.

The Ebira Syllable Structure

Syllable can be defined as a way in which words are divided into minimal units (consonant and vowel). According to Salami (2011), the Ebira language is entirely an open syllable language. This means that the Language has no closed syllable as obtains in Hausa and other languages. He also maintains that the Ebira words are segmentable into monosyllabic, disyllabic, trisyllabic and so on.

The Hausa

Hausa is the name of language, people or tribe and it is a fact that many of the tribal groups who speak Hausa as their only language today are described as Hausa, and have little or nothing in common in respect of their ethnological origin (Haruna 2008). Hausa, name of African people who are racially diverse but culturally fairly homogenous people based primarily in Sahelian and Sudanian areas of Northern Nigeria and Southeastern Niger, with significant number also living in parts of Cameroon, Cotedivoire, Chad, Togo, Ghana and Sudan. Predominantly, Hausa-speaking communities are scattered throughout West Africa, and on the traditional Hajj route north and east traversing the Sahara Desert, with an especially large population around and in the town of Agadez. Other Hausa have also moved to large coastal cities and Cotonou as well as to parts of North Africa such as Libya over the course of the last 500 years (Wikipedia 2014).

III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This segment describes the design of the study with particular reference to the population, the sample and sampling strategy, the methods of collecting the data as well as the method of analyzing the data.

Research Design

A research design is the arrangement of condition for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims at combining research purpose with economy in procedure. A research design is a plan to attack: What approach to problem should be taken? What methods will be used? What strategies will be most effective? This study will adopt the qualitative research approach with ethnography research characteristics. Qualitative research is the type of research aimed at gathering information for an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour. It investigates: Why something happened; what happened; how it happened; and where it happened. The qualitative approach is sometimes referred to as interpretative, the naturalistic, the constructivist or the post-positivist approach.

Population of the Study

The population of this study will comprises all Ebira native speakers that speak the Hausa language as their second language. The target populations are presence in all Ebira nations across the North central (middle belt) and some parts of the south-west/south-south Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling will be considered. Stratified random sampling is a population sample that requires the population to be divided into smaller 'strata'. Random samples can be taken from each stratum or group (Noun 2004). The target population of this study will be divided into four or five different social groups.

Data Collection Method

A formal data collection process is necessary as it ensures that data gathered are both defined as accurate and the subsequent decisions based on arguments embodied in finding are valid. The process provides both a baseline from which to measure and, in certain cases, a target on what to improve. For the data collection method, two main techniques will be used, these are (a) **Test of orals** (b) **Speech recording**.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision-making. This research is qualitative and not quantitative (which deals with discrete data). Thus, statistical analysis may not be required. However, the data will be analyzed using content analysis and latent level analysis. It will begin with the description of what the data contain. At this level, the researcher will not infer from the data. The latent level will infer meaning from the data. The researcher will continue the analysis with coding and classifying the information contained in the test of orals and speech recording on various sub-headings.

IV. RESULT FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study attempted to examine the phonological interference and influence of the Ebira language (as L_1) on the Hausa language (as L_2). The study intended to find out the factors responsible for the interference and influence thereby giving the explanation from linguistic point of reasoning. The data are presented on various sub-headings. In addition, a long vowel in the examples is marked by adding a colon in front of a vowel, e.g. a: Low and falling tones are marked with a grave accent ` and circumflex ^ respectively, while a high tone is left unmarked.

Elision

Yule (2007) describes elision as omission of a sound segment which would be present in the deliberate pronunciation of a word in isolation. The word elision is frequently used in linguistic description of living languages, and deletion is often used in historical linguistics for a historical sound change. Hausa lexical items pronounced by Ebira native speakers undergo these phonological processes of elision due to first language influence (the Ebira language). However, this study looked at the vowel and consonant elision that occurs when an Ebira native speaker attempts to say some Hausa lexical items.

4.1.1 Vowel Elision

Vowel elision is very common in the Ebira language. The Ebira native speaker extends this while speaking the Hausa language. This is shown in the following examples:

Table 1 Elision of /a/ vowel

| Hausa | Ebira | Gloss |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Yâuruwa: akè: yî: | Yo: ruwa:kè: yî: | Today it is raining |
| Sàkwàra: àkwàida:dí: | Sàkwàla:kwe: dà:dí: | Pounded yam is delicious |
| Ku:ka: akè: | Ku:ka:kè: | Its crying |

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jiyà an yi test fa: | Jiya:yi test fa: | A test was held yesterday |
| àku:yà: à cikinruwa | àku:yàciki: ruwa | A goat in the water |

Table 1 above shows the elision of vowel /a/ sound in a circumstance where /a/ is ending a word and another /a/ sound beginning another word. One of the /a/ sounds is elided in actual pronunciation as spoken by Ebira.

Table 2 Elision of /i/ vowel

| Hausa | Ebira | Gloss |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Là:mí: i:hù take: | Lámí:hù: take: | Lami is shouting |
| Káinjinyanà: gida: | Kái:ji: yana: gida: | The engine is at home |
| Tùma:tíri: iri: – iri: | Tùma:tiri:riri: | Varieties of tomatoes |
| Ki:fi: iyò: yakè: | Ki:fi:yò: yakè: | The fish is swimming |
| Sa:niidò: na: ci:wò: yakè: | Sa:nidò:naci:wò: yakè: | Sani, my eye pains me |

Table 2 above indicates the elision of /i/ sound in the examples. Shows that the /i/ sound elision occurs in Hausa as spoken by Ebira.

Table 3 Elision of /u/ vowel

| Hausa | Ebira | Gloss |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Kàbi:rù, uwa:nitanàkirà: | Kabi:rùwa:nitanà: kirà: | Kabiru, Uwani is calling |
| I:hù: uwargida:na: kèyi: | I:hùwargida:na: kèyi: | My wife is shouting |
| She:hù, ùngowannànka:yân | She:hù:gowa:nà: ka:yà: | Shehu, collect this luggage |
| Sahu: ùmarùya bi | Sahù:marùya bi | Umaru was in sallah row |

In table 3 above, the /u/ sound elision occurs in a situation that warrants /u/ sound ending a word and another beginning a word in a sentence, as shown in the examples.

Table 4 Elision of /o/ vowel

| Hausa | Ebira | Gloss |
|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Omeizaya: sa:to: o:mò: | Omeizaya: sa:to:mò: | Omeiza stole omo |
| Ma:làmya: zo o:fi:shi: | Ma:là: yazo:fishi: | Malam has come to office |
| Ya:rò, ò:ga: nà: zuwà: | Ya:rò:ga: na: zuwà: | Boy, the boss is coming |

The missing of /o:/ sound as shown in table 4 above indicates elision of /o:/ sound when Hausa is spoken by Ebira.

Table 5 Elision of mixed vowel

| Hausa | Ebira | Gloss |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ma:làmya: zo a kârshenlaccà: | Ma:là: ya: zakârshenlaccà: | Malam came late for the lecture |
| Lyndà ta: tàfi a mo:tà: | Lyndà ta: tafa: mo:tà: | Lynda has gone by road |
| Bellòina: zâ: ka? | Belòina: zâ: ka ? | Bello where are you going? |
| Ya:rò: mè: idòdàci:wò: | Ya:rò: mè:dò: da ci:wò: | A boy with eye infection |

Table 5 above shows the elision involving vowels of different quality. The vowels involved are not similar. The examples show non similar vowels coming together, one ending a word and another beginning another word, yet elision occurs. This is an extension of what happens in Ebira, for example, vearias(a)(written), vearisa(spoken). The /a/ is elided.

Vowel elision in Ebira generally occurs only in connected speech, that is, either in compound word, phrase or sentence. The reason is that, the Ebira language strictly operates open syllable structure. As such, vowel elision does not occur in single words. Therefore, vowel elision in Hausa as spoken by Ebira as shown in tables 1-5 above occur only in connected speech but not in single word.

It is worthy to note that, there is no word that begins with a vowel in Hausa. This is in line with the Hausa phonological system. All Hausa words begin with a consonant. The words that are written with a vowel at the beginning have a glottal stop onset as a consonant (Sani 2002). Meanwhile, the Ebira language has a lot of words that begin with a vowel. Secondly, the Ebira language does not have a consonant ? glottal sound (Alhamza in Hausa). Therefore, when an Ebira native speaker says such words that begin with a consonantal glottal stop, the consonant in question is automatically elided. Words like *akwai*, *ihu*, *iyò*, *iri*, *uwargida*, *ungo*, for instance, are all said without the initial glottal stop. Therefore, in any circumstance that warrants a sequence of two independent words coming together in a sentence or phrase in Hausa, with one vowel ending a preceding word and the other beginning the following word, one of the vowels may be missed out in actual speech by Ebira native speaker. This development is as a result of a similar situation (vowel elision) that occurs in the Ebira language. Hence, a first language (Ebira language) interferes with second language (Hausa language) here.

4.1.2 Consonant Elision

The deletion of a consonant in a word may occur word initially or medially. Hausa has a glottal stop consonant as an independent phoneme as we highlighted before. The Ebira language on the other hand lacks this glottal consonant (?). Therefore, Ebira native speaker deletes the glottal stop outright in the course of speaking Hausa. Take these examples:

Table 6 Elision of Consonant

| Hausa | Ebira | Gloss |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Sàna:’à | Sàna: | Occupation |
| Mà’ána: | Mà:na: | Meaning |
| Sa:’à | Sâ: | Luck |
| Masana:’anta: | Masana:ta | Industry |
| Ra’ayo:yi: | Ra:yo:yi: | Opinions |

One can clearly notice the elision of consonantal glottal stop in word medial position.

4.1.3 Phonological Implication of Elision

Elision, whether vowel or consonantal, occurs virtually in every natural language, Ebira and Hausa languages inclusive, though type or circumstances may differ. Vowel or consonant elision that occurs in Hausa as spoken by the Ebira native speaker is found to be triggered by some other phonological processes. These processes include deglottalization, merger, and vowel lengthening.

4.1.3.1 Deglottalization

Deglottalization is a phonological process that occurs when a glottal stop phoneme is removed from a word or sentence in the course of speech. There are various situations that warrant deglottalization in Hausa both within segmental and prosodic aspect (Haruna 2008). This study however, focuses only on segmental domain.

Consonant elision in some Hausa lexical items in relation to the Ebira language interference, as discussed earlier, deglottalization results as in the following example, again:

Hausa (+glottal)

Sàna:’à
Mà’ána:
Sa:’à
Masana:’anta:
Ra:’ayo:yi:

Ebira (-glottal)

Sânâ:
Mà:na:
Sâ:
Masana:nta:
Ra:yo:yi:

4.1.3.2 Merger

Literally merger is the act or an instance of joining two things together. In linguistics, however, merger may be seen as coming together of two or more independent phonemes, syllables, words in a special circumstance for certain purposes. Merger is found in phonology, morphology and syntax. Chomsky (2001) distinguishes between external and internal merge. According to him, if A and B are separate objects, then we deal with external merge, if either of them is part of the other, it is internal merge.

Going by our discussion on vowel and consonant elision in the Hausa language due to Ebira language interference, merger also occurs, as in these examples, once again:

Hausa (-Merger)

Yáuruwa: akè:yi:
Sàkwàra: àkwàida:di:
Là:mí:, i:hù take:
Sa:ni, idò:na: ci:wò: yakè:
Sàhu: ùmarùya bi
Kàbi:rù, Uwa:nitanà: kirà:
Omeizaya: sa:tò: omò:

Ebira (+Merger)

Yo: ruwa:kèyi:
Sàkòla:kojda:di:
Là:mí:hùtake:
Sa:nidò:na:ci:wò: yakè:
Sàhu:marùya bi
Kàbi:rùwa:nitanà: kirà:
Omeizaya: sa:tò:mò:

In all these examples, external merge is reflected. For, two independent vowels from two neighboring words are found to merge in the pronunciation of Ebira native speaker of Hausa.

For consonant elision, on the other hand, merger also takes place. Still consider these examples:

Hausa (- Merger)

Sana:’à:
Mà’ána:
Sa:’à:
Masana:’anta:
Ra’ayo:yi:

Ebira (+ Merger)

Sanâ:
Mà:na:
Sâ:
Masana:ta:
Ra:yo:yi:

Ba'à:

Bâ:

In the above examples, the vowel following the glottal consonant is merged with the vowel immediately preceding it. Hence, it is an internal merger in this respect.

4.1.3.3 Vowel Lengthening

Vowel lengthening is a situation where a short vowel turns long under particular circumstances. With regard to elision that occurs in the Hausa language due to Ebira language interference resulting into some other phonological processes, vowel lengthening is also observed, as yet in the following examples:

Hausa (- Long)

Ebira (+ Long)

Sana:’à

Sanâ:

Mà’ana:

Ma:na:

Sa:’à

Sâ:

Masana:’anta:

Masana:ta:

Ra’ayo:yi:

Ra:yo:yi:

Ba’a:

Bâ:

Due to the removal of the said consonant (glottal sound) in the above examples, two sounds (the one that comes before glottal sound and the one that comes after the glottal sound) near each other by sharing same boundary, hence are pronounced in lengthened form.

4.2. SYLLABIFICATION

Syllabification is the division of a word into syllables, whether spoken or written. A syllable is a unit of organization for a sequence of speech sounds. Syllables are often considered as the phonological “building blocks” of words. They can influence the rhythm of a language, its prosody, its poetic meter and its stress pattern (Wikipedia 2016). Sani (2005) maintained that syllable is of two structural types. These are open and closed syllables. An open syllable is composed of a consonant followed by a vowel and is represented as CV/CVV. A closed syllable is made up of a consonant followed by a short vowel and another consonant respectively and represented as CVC. Sani (2005) further believed that, in both types of syllables, the first consonant is technically known as the onset, the following vowel as the nucleus and the final consonant, in case of a closed syllable, as the coda.

The Ebira language is an open syllabled language. This means all words in the language end in a vowel and never a consonant. Unlike the Ebira language, Hausa has both open and closed syllables. In view of this syllable structural difference between Ebira and Hausa languages, the Ebira language influences and interferes with the syllable structure of the Hausa language. In effect, whenever an Ebira native speaker attempts to pronounce certain Hausa lexical items, the Ebira open syllable structure is always maintained even if the attempted lexical items are of closed syllable structure. Hence, the Ebira native speaker syllabifies the Hausa language to conform to the Ebira language syllable structure. This is a manifestation of first language interference with second language (Ebira in Hausa), as reflected in the following examples:

Table 4.2.1

| Hausa (+ closed syllable) | Ebira (-closed syllable) | Gloss |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Ma:làm | Ma:la: | Teacher |
| Bàshîr | Bâshi:ru | A proper name |
| îre-îren | îre-re: | Different types of |
| Wannàn | Wa:nà | This one |
| Yaddà | Ya:dà | How... |

These examples clearly reflect how Ebira native speaker syllabifies the Hausa lexical items to conform to the Ebira language open syllabled structure. All the lexical items listed above involve a closed syllable, but, when pronounced by Ebira native speaker they transformed into open syllable structure.

4.2.1 Phonological Implication of Syllabification

Now, this development, on the other hand, is found to trigger some phonological processes, such as apocope, vowel lengthening, degemination and epenthesis, as we are going to see below:

4.2.1.1 Apocope

Apocope originated from Greek word apokope which literally means ‘cutting off’. Therefore, apocope is the loss of one or more sounds at the end of a word (encyclopaedia Encarta).

Apocope, as a phonological process is clearly observed whenever an Ebira native speaker attempts to pronounce some Hausa lexical items, reflecting the Ebira language open syllable structure. Consider the following examples:

Table 4.2.2

| Hausa (- apocope) | Ebira (+ apocope) | Gloss |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Ma:lām | Ma:lā: | A teacher |
| Nairā: biyaḡ | Ne:rā: biya: | Five naira |
| ire-iren | Īre: | The types of |
| Karīn māgana: | Karī: māganā: | Proverb |
| Rùbù: tunzùbe: | Rùbù: tu: zùbe: | Written prose |

In these examples, the under listed Hausa sounds (consonants) are lost when Ebira native speaker pronounces m, n, r, n, n, and n. This is apocope, which occurs as a result of Ebira open syllable structure. Hence, the interference of first language in second language (Ebira on Hausa).

4.2.1.2 Vowel Lengthening

In addition, it is equally observed that vowel lengthening occurs simultaneously. The vowel that comes before the affected sound (phoneme) is lengthened. This vowel lengthening is aimed at bridging the gap of the lost sound (phoneme) in the affected word, as portrayed thus:

Ma:lām → Ma:lā: → Gidān → Gīdā: Biyar → Bīya: → ire-iren → Īre: → →
 Karīn → Kārī: → Rùbù: tun → Rūbū: tu: → →

4.2.1.3 Degemination

Degemination is a phonological process which reduces two identical neighbouring consonants to one single consonant. For example,

Baccibaci, rassa → rasa, himma → hima. →

In the effort of Ebira native speaker to maintain his language open syllable structure, he degeminates, as in the following examples:

Table 4.2.3

| Hausa (+ germination) | Ebira (- germination) | Gloss |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Kunnuwà: | Ku: nuwa: | Ears |
| Hammà: | Hamà: | Yawn |
| Râssa: | Râsa: | Branches |
| Dàddawa: | Dàdawa: | A Hausa local seasoning |
| Gagga:wa: | Gaga:wa: | Hurry |
| Tattàrà | Tatàrà | Collect |
| Zannuwà: | Za: nuwà: | Wrappers |

The above examples show the interference of first language (Ebira) with second language (Hausa) where geminate consonants are degeminated in Hausa lexical items:

4.2.1.4 Epenthesis (Anaptyxis)

According to Crystal (1980), epenthesis is a term used in phonetics and phonology to refer to a type of INTRUSION, where an extra sound has been inserted medially in a word. Epenthesis is of two types: excrescence for the addition of a consonant and, anaptyxis for the addition of a vowel. For the purpose of this work, anaptyxis is considered.

Anaptyxis is observed in the pronunciation of some Hausa lexical items by Ebira native speaker in line with the Ebira language open syllable structure. Consider the following examples:

Table 4.2.4

| Hausa (- Epenthesis) | Ebira (+ epenthesis) | Gloss |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Garbà | Gar <u>u</u> bà | A proper name |
| Kwaḡwalwa: | Kwak <u>u</u> wal <u>u</u> wa | Brain |
| Garga:jiya: | Gar <u>i</u> ga:ji:ya | Traditional |
| Girki: | Gir <u>i</u> k <u>i</u> : | Cooking |
| Ālbasa: | Āl <u>u</u> basa | Onion |

Anaptyxis or vowel insertion employed by Ebira native speaker of Hausa is clearly evident in these examples. By and large, Ebira native speakers syllabify some Hausa lexical items in order to rhyme with the Ebira language open syllable structure. In effect, the Ebira language as first language interferes with Hausa as second language.

V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The central focal point of this study was to investigate the phonological interference of the Ebira language in the course of pronouncing certain Hausa lexical items by the Ebira native speaker. The following is the summary made by the researcher with respect to the research findings:

1. There is a significance phonological interference of the Ebira language with Hausa when Ebira native speaker attempts to pronounce some Hausa lexical items.
2. As a result of the Ebira phonological interference with Hausa, vowel and consonant elisions were noticed. The elision leads to other phonological processes, such as deglottalization, merger and vowel lengthening.
3. As a result of the Ebira phonological interference with Hausa, syllabification process of some Hausa lexical items is made to conform with the Ebira language open syllable structure. This syllabification, again, leads to some other phonological processes, such as apocope, degemination and epenthesis.

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