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TONE OPERATION IN *SÁBẸ̀Ẹ́* AND *ÒǸKÒ* DIALECTS OF YORÙBÁ

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Abstract

Dialects of Yoruba are found within and outside Nigeria. These dialects exhibit varying degrees of intelligibility with the Standard variety. This study examined Sábẹ̀ẹ́, a dialect of Yoruba spoken in Benin Republic and Òǹkò, its closest counterpart in Nigeria. The most conspicuous variation was observed at the level of tone which is the nexus of this study. Autosegmental theory was adopted for the analysis of tonal phenomenon in the two dialects and similarities and differences were clearly identified. Data were gathered from the adult native speakers which were transcribed for analysis. The study discovered that Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò exhibit contour tone (falling) which realization is at variance in the two dialects. Contextual grammatical use of tone was also observed. The study concluded that though Sábẹ̀ẹ́ is spoken outside Nigeria, it shares a lot of affinities with its counterparts in Nigeria, namely Òǹkò.

Keywords: comparative, tone, Òǹkò, Sábẹ̀ẹ́, Yoruba

OPERACIÓ TONAL EN EL SÁBẸ̀Ẹ́ I L'ÒǸKÒ, DIALECTES DEL IORUBA

Resum

Els dialectes del Yoruba es troben dins i fora de Nigèria. Aquests dialectes exhibeixen diversos graus d'intel·ligibilitat respecte a la varietat estàndard. Aquest estudi examina el sábẹ̀ẹ́, un dialecte de Yoruba que es parla a la República de Benín, i l'Òǹkò, la seva contrapartida més propera a Nigèria. La variació més conspícua s'ha observat en el nivell del to, que és el nexe d'aquest estudi. S'ha adoptat la teoria autosegmental per a l'anàlisi del fenomen tonal en els dos dialectes i s'han identificat clarament les similituds i les diferències. S'han recopilat dades de parlants nadius adults que s'han transcrit per ser analitzades. L'estudi ha descobert que el Sábẹ̀ẹ́ i l'Òǹkò mostren un to de contorn (descendent) la realització del qual difereix en els dos dialectes. També s'ha observat l'ús gramatical contextual del to.

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L'estudi conclou que, encara que el sábẹ̀ẹ́ es parla fora de Nigèria, comparteix moltes afinitats amb els seus homòlegs de Nigèria, és a dir, l'Òǹkò.

Paraules clau: comparatiu, to, Òǹkò, Sábẹ̀ẹ́, Ioruba

OPERACIÓN TONAL EN LOS DIALECTOS DEL YORÙBÁ: SÁBẸ̀Ẹ́ Y ÒǸKÒ

Resumen

Los dialectos del Yoruba se encuentran dentro y fuera de Nigeria. Estos dialectos exhiben diversos grados de inteligibilidad respecto a la variedad estándar. Este estudio examina el Sábẹ̀ẹ́, un dialecto de Yoruba hablado en la República de Benín, y el Òǹkò, su contrapartida más cercana en Nigeria. La variación más conspicua se ha observado en el nivel de tono, que es el nexo de este estudio. Se ha adoptado la teoría autosegmental para el análisis del fenómeno tonal en los dos dialectos y se han identificado claramente las similitudes y las diferencias. Se han recopilado datos de hablantes nativos adultos que se han transcrito para su análisis. El estudio ha descubierto que el Sábẹ̀ẹ́ y el Òǹkò exhiben un tono de contorno (descendente) cuya realización difiere en los dos dialectos. También se ha observado el uso gramatical contextual del tono. El estudio concluye que, aunque el sábẹ̀ẹ́ se habla fuera de Nigeria, comparte muchas afinidades con sus homólogos de Nigeria, a saber, el Òǹkò.

Palabras clave: comparativo, tono, Òǹkò, Sábẹ̀ẹ́, Yoruba

1. Introduction

No two languages have the same sound inventory. However, there are similarities between related languages especially those belonging to the same family. By finding out the evident similarities and differences between or among languages or dialects, we are doing the comparative aspects of linguistic study. Comparative study has received a lot of interests in linguistics, e.g., Omoniyi (2012), Adetunji & Raji (2010), Fabunmi (2013). However, little attention has been paid to investigating dialects of Yoruba at comparative level, particularly those spoken in the diaspora, e.g., Idaatsa, Ife, Manigri, Itsa, Ajase among others.

Majority of the Yoruba populace are found in southwestern Nigeria. As a result of this and several other reasons, researchers have laid more emphasis on the study of the dialects of Yoruba found in Nigeria only. Only a few have made attempts at studying the dialects of the language found in the Diaspora (Adediran 1994, Fabunmi 2013). However, impressive number of Yoruba speakers are found in the neighboring Republics of Benin, Togo, Cameroun, etc., thus, the need to make more productive effort at the study of these dialects. This will afford the researchers, learners as well as

the speakers the opportunity to know the degree of intelligibility with the forms spoken in Nigeria.

Therefore, this paper is a case study of the comparative phonological analysis of two dialects of Yoruba namely, Òǹkò and Sábẹ̀ẹ́; the former spoken in Nigeria while the latter in the Republics of Benin and Togo. Specifically, the study examines tone in the two dialects. Areas covered are: tone pattern, function, stability and tone deletion. Apart from a few segmental differences, variations in the operation of tones in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò exhibit a huge linguistic resources for divergence, hence this investigation.

This study examines and analyzes how tones operate in two contiguously spoken dialects of Yoruba, which are Òǹkò and Sábẹ̀ẹ́. The objective is to compare the pattern and distribution of tone in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò dialects. Also, effort is made to find out the similarities and point of departure in their tonal operation. In addition, the study shall identify the functions tone performs in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò.

For the purpose of this presentation, the study has been divided into five sections: section one presents the focus of the study as well as information on the dialects and their speakers. The objectives of the work are also contained in this part. Section two is the methodology used for data gathering. In section three, a brief review of relevant literature is presented, which dovetailed into the theoretical tool used. Data for the study are presented and analyzed in section four. Discussion of the major findings concludes the study.

2. Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò dialects and their Speakers

The Yoruba are one of the ethnic groups of West Africa affected by the demarcation of territories by European powers at the close of the 19th century (Adediran 2012). Yoruba is regarded as one of the major languages of Nigeria. Majority of the speakers of the language reside in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. Although the bulk of the Yoruba people are now found in southwestern Nigeria, impressive

indigenous Yoruba communities are in the neighboring Republics of Benin and Togo among many other countries of the world.

There are numerous dialects of Yoruba all over West Africa. In Nigeria alone, the language is spoken in different areas of Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Kwara, Lagos, Ekiti, Edo and some areas in the western part of Kogi State. Outside Nigeria, the language is spoken in different dialects. For example, in the Republic of Benin, there are dialects such as Ajase, Nago, Idaisa, Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Ketu. Ana and Itsa are the two dialects found in the Republic of Togo.

The western Yoruba sub-group under which Sábẹ̀ẹ́ is classified belongs to the mainstream of Yoruba history through dynastic links with Ile-Ife. It was discovered that the three major kingdoms in the region (Ketu, Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Idaatsa) were secondary states having their immediate origins in the troubles that gripped the region in the 16th century when Oyo-Ile was evacuated and the sixth Aláàfin had to live in exile (Adediran 2012). The area that can be referred to as Sábẹ̀ẹ́ land extends from the Òyán River westwards to the Oueme. The region covers the administrative districts of Sábẹ̀ẹ́, Wese, Kilibo and Tchaourou in the Republic of Benin and extends to the present-day Oyo North and Egbado-Ketu region in modern Nigeria.

Previous research on Sábẹ̀ẹ́ documented the dialect name using different spellings viz; Tsabe, Sabe, Cabe, etc. Although this work adopted the spelling found in Oyelaran's (1978) classification, i.e., Sábẹ̀ẹ́, it is important to note that the exact pronunciation heard from the native speakers of the dialect is *Châbé referred to as *Èdè Cabe* (i.e., Sabee Language) on the linguistic map. Sábẹ̀ẹ́ has a language status in Benin Republic. It is spoken in prominent towns such as Tchaourou, Savé, Kilibo, Wese and Papane. Other villages where speakers of Sábẹ̀ẹ́ dialect reside are Kassouala, Malete, Kake, Toui, Kadjola, and Ekpa. Sábẹ̀ẹ́ is used to refer to both the people and the dialect.

The Òǹkò, otherwise known as Oke-Ogun people are a Yoruba group inhabiting the areas drained by the Upper Ogun River in Northwestern Oyo State in Nigeria. They were historically a part of the once expansive Oyo Empire. The area is home to the Old Oyo National Park, one of the Nigeria's largest conserved areas. It is located on the northern axis of Oyo State. The total population of the area according to the 2011

census is 1,616, 980. Regions with significant populations include Irepo, Olorunsogo, Orelope, Saki-east, Saki-west, Atisbo, Itesiwaju, Iwajowa, Kajola and Iseyin. These areas constitute the ten (10) Local Government Areas that constitute Oke-Ogun. All *Òǹkòs* without exception claim direct descent from Oduduwa the mythical progenitor of the Yoruba race. Figure 1 shows the geographical areas where Òǹkò dialect is spoken while Figure 2 is the linguistic map of Benin Republic.

Figure 1. A map showing the ten (10) Local Government Areas that make up Oke-Ogun axis, Oyo State, Nigeria (see *Ethnologue*)

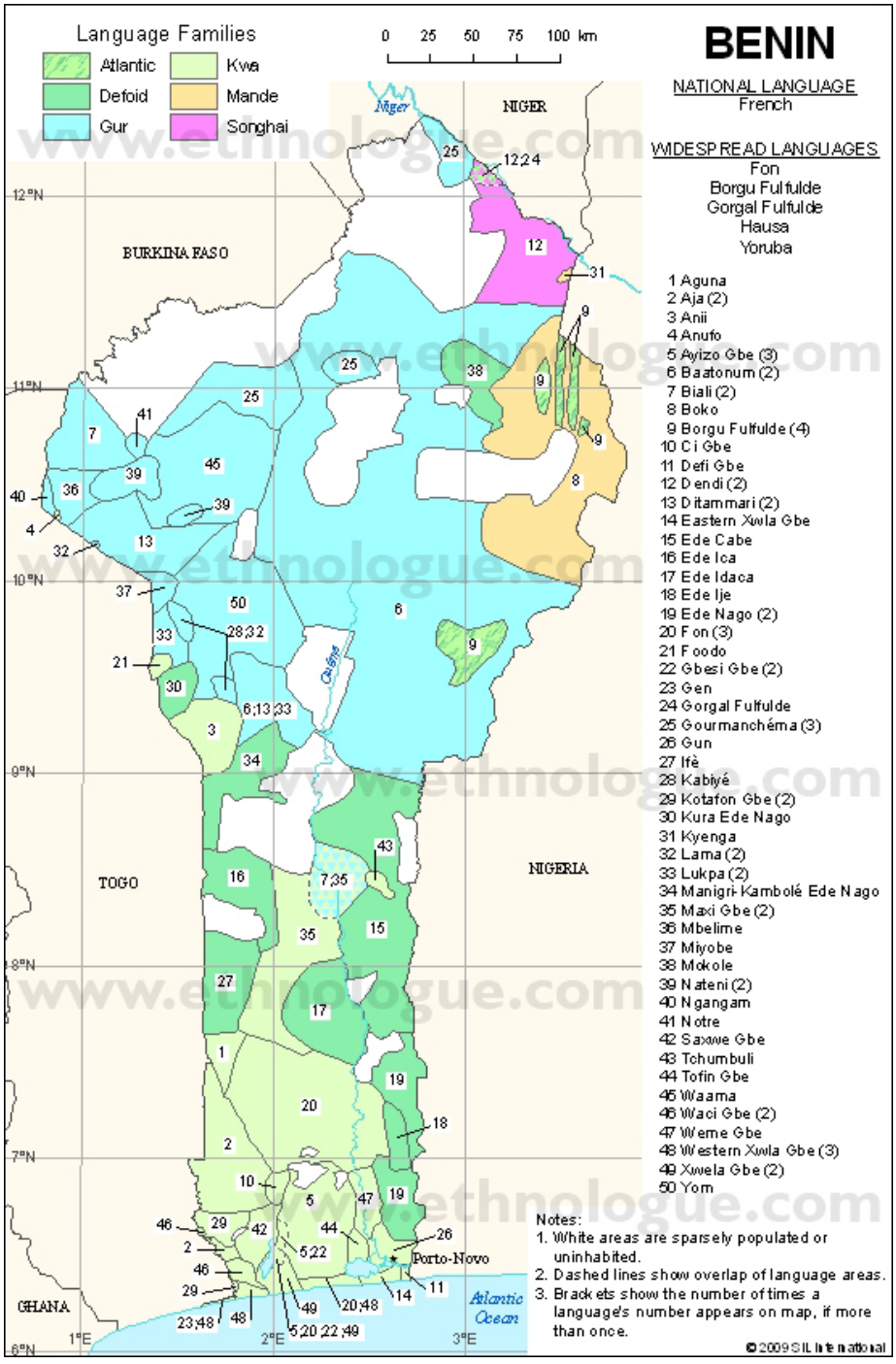

Figure 2. Linguistic map of Benin-Republic

3. Theoretical framework

The use of pitch to distinguish or inflect words in languages is called tone. Languages that use tone to distinguish lexical or grammatical meaning are called tone

languages. Pike (1947: 3) describes a tone language as "a language having significant and contrastive but related pitch on each syllable". Most languages of the Niger-Congo family consisting mostly of languages of Sub-Saharan Africa are predominantly tonal. Both dialects under study are tonal-they are dialects of Yoruba which is a tone language.

This study is a case of two dialects of the Yoruba language namely, Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò. The study of dialects of language(s) whose speakers can normally understand one another is known as dialectology. According to Fabunmi (2013), dialectologists working on the Yoruba language have identified about thirty-two dialectal varieties of the language.

A lot of efforts have been made towards the classification of these dialects (Adetugbo 1967, Akinkugbe 1976, Oyelaran 1978, Awobuluyi 1998). Phonological, lexical and grammatical variations are the hallmarks of these classifications. There are varying degrees of mutual intelligibility among the geographical dialects found in each group. For instance, Oyelaran (1978) notices the dialectal variations existing among Yoruba speakers and divides the Yoruba speaking areas into four:

i. North West Yoruba (NWY): Oyo, Ibadan, Egba, Ohori-Ifohin; Upper Ogun (Oke-Ogun) including Saki, Ijio, Ketu, Sábẹ̀ẹ́ (Benin and Togo), Ife (Togo), Idatsa, Manigri.
ii. Southeast Yoruba (SEY): Ondo, Owo, Ijebu, Ikale and Ilaje.
iii. Central Yoruba (CY): Ile-Ife, Ijesa and Ekiti.
iv. Northeastern Yoruba (NEY): Igbomina, Ibolo, Ijumu, Bunu, Oworo, Owe and Egbe.

Although there are other classifications of recent, this study favors Oyelaran's Classification because his classification includes the north-western Yoruba which comprises Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò. Several researchers have applied the autosegmental theory in analyzing the phonological features of languages. The choice of the theory is made by researchers due to its problem-solving effectiveness (Rafiu 2008). Issues that were found difficult using the linear approach was designed to cater for in the non-linear autosegmental approach. Mostly, the framework has employed the theory to the analysis of supra-segmental features such as tone, nasality, etc., among others. For instance, Rafiu (2008) describes segmental processes in Eket language using the

autosegmental theory. He extends the frontier of the application of the theory to segmental processes in the language such as spirantization, deletion and assimilation.

The phonological features of Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò dialects will be surveyed and viewed from the perspective of Autosegmental Phonology as developed by Goldsmith in 1976. This theory was preferred because of its efficient method of solving problems that occur in the relationship between segmental and supra-segmental features.

3.1 *Autosegmental theory*

This theory came into limelight through the study of tone languages particularly, Igbo. In this framework, tone is considered to be on a separate tier from the segmental and prosodic materials like the musical melody. The independence of the tier is critical. Though this theory is different from the standard theory, it is not meant to be an alternative to it rather it is complementary. Autosegmental derives from the notion of autonomous segment referring to the relative independence of at least some features. Any such independent feature linked to a timing slot is said to occupy its own autosegmental tier. Autosegmental representations state precisely which features (segmental or prosodic) can occupy an independent tier, such possibilities are unavailable in linear phonology.

In the autosegmental framework, data are analysed as sequences on tiers; one tier represents the features of the segment while the other tier represents the supra-segmental features such as tone, nasality, etc. By means of association lines, these tiers are linked through a process called mapping. For instance, the mapping of tone is done in a one-to-one fashion, i.e., each tone is mapped to each vowel from left to right until we run out of tones or vowels. Features on one tier may be transferred to another through phonological processes such as assimilation. Autosegmental captures such transfer of features through a process called spreading. In the mapping of tones to vowels, if some vowels are still free after mapping, the rule of spreading requires that the vowel be linked to the last tone on the right. Although scholars proposed that the direction of autosegmental linking is left to right, recent findings show that languages select their direction of linking. In addition to these, there are other

conventions such as dumping, delinking, etc. All of these are guided by a universal convention called the Well-Formedness Condition (WFC). The WFC ensures the appropriate operation of the conventions mentioned earlier. The WFCs were stated as:

i. All autosegment bearing units are associated with at least one autosegment.
ii. All autosegments are associated with at least one autosegment bearing unit.
iii. Association lines do not cross.

Oyebade (2008) states that tone stability discussed in Goldsmith's work is one of the reasons for a non-linear approach. The ideology in Autosegmental phonology posits each tier as having its independent status. Segments and supra-segments are placed on separate tiers such that when one tier is affected by a phonological rule such as deletion, the other tier may not be affected. In other words, the loss or deletion of an element of one tier does not necessarily imply the loss of its counterpart. This situation is what Goldsmith refers to as stability.

4. Research methodology

The data used for analysis in this study were drawn from Standard Yoruba, Òǹkò dialect spoken in the Oke-Ogun area of Oyo State; particularly the variants found in Saki-west and Iwajowa Local Government Areas and Sábẹ̀ẹ́ dialect spoken in Tchaouroú and Savé in the Republic of Benin. These selected study areas were found appropriate as a result of their geographical proximity. Selection of respondents was done carefully in both areas based on age range. Informants were picked randomly among adults within the ages of 40-65. The native speakers have spent nothing less than 30 years in their native towns. The Ibadan 400 wordlist of basic words was used to elicit data from the native speakers of Òǹkò and Sábẹ̀ẹ́. A tape recorder was used to complement the data collection process. Words collected were transcribed and verified for clarity. The frame technique was also used. This was done by forming some collocations so as to realize further the behavioral pattern of tones in the dialects under study.

5. Data presentation and analysis

Here, data collected during research were presented. Using our theoretical model, the data were analyzed in line with the provisions of autosegmental theory as contained in the tonal system of Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò dialects.

5.1 *Tone in Òǹkò*

Just like Standard Yoruba, Òǹkò attests three level tones namely high (H), low (L) and mid (M). The H tone is marked with an acute accent [´]; the L tone with a grave accent [`] and the M tone with a macron [-]. The mid tone is left unmarked in normal orthography. Below are some examples showing tonal occurrences in Òǹkò dialect:

(1)

H	[mɔ́]	'clean'
M	[mɔ̄]	'drink'
L	[mɔ̀]	'know'

In multisyllabic words, a single tone may be carried by the entire word, two different tones may follow each other and all three level tones may occur within a word. In other words, all three level tones can occur independently or simultaneously in any environment: be it initial, medial or at the final position of a word (Omolewu 2014). For example, the high tone is presented below as it occurs independently:

(2) [kpákó] 'log of wood'
[ʧánɛ̃] 'strike fire'
[bínɔ́] 'get angry'

The low tone:

[ààtɛ̃] 'refuse dump'

[ɔ̀bɔ̀̃] ‘dirty person’

[ìgɛ̃̀] ‘bundle (of cloth)’

The mid tone:

[ɛmɔ̃] ‘palm wine’

[ɛrɛ̃] ‘meat’

[ataare] ‘alligator pepper’

Below are examples where all tones co-occur at different structural positions:

(3) [ìʧánɛ̃̀] ‘matches’

[irɔ̃gbɔ̀̃] ‘beard’

[àrɪ́fɪ́] ‘contempt’

[kʊ̋lɛ̀] ‘kneel down’

Autosegmental phonology posits tone and other prosodic features as belonging to a separate tier. Therefore, tonal tier is independent and not a part of the feature bundle of the segment. We shall give the analysis of our data presented above. Each tone is mapped to each segment through association lines as seen in the Òǹkò example earlier given in (1):

Tonal Tier H

Segmental Tier mɔ̃ [mɔ̋] ‘clean’

Several tones in a sequence of a single word as seen in example (3):

Tonal Tier M M L

Segmental Tier i r ɔ̃ gb ɔ̃ [irɔ̃gbɔ̀̃] ‘beard’

As mentioned above, pitch variation is used in tone languages to distinguish between identical words and also to inflect words. The former refers to the lexical function of tone while the latter is its grammatical function. Tone performs both lexical and grammatical function in Òǹkò. We give examples of words where tones perform lexical function in (4):

(4) [ɔkɔ́] 'hoe'
[ɔkɔ̀] 'car'
[ɔkɔ] 'husband'
[ɔ̀kɔ̀] 'spear'

[adʒɔ̀] 'sieve'
[àdʒɔ] 'contribution'
[ijɛ̃] 'pounded yam'
[ijɛ̃] 'famine'

[àájɛ̃] 'odour'
[aájɛ̃] 'effort'
[áájɛ̃] 'cockrach'

Tone also performs grammatical role in sentences. Examples are as shown in (5):

	Òǹkò	*Gloss*
(5)	/ǹ ń lɔ/	'I am going' (continuous sentence)
	/n ń lɔ/	'I will go' (declarative sentence)
	/n ǹ lɔ/	'I am not going' (negative sentence)

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5.2 *Tone in Sábẹ̀ẹ́*

The tone system in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ dialect is almost similar to that of Òǹkò although some differences exist. Just like Òǹkò, Sábẹ̀ẹ́ attests the three level tones mentioned earlier: High, Mid and Low. It is observed in the dialect that in addition to the three level tones found in Òǹkò, there is an occurrence of a tone having a falling pitch. This occurrence of gliding tone is a similitude of what is found in Cantonese which operates this tone typology. Sábẹ̀ẹ́ tone type and patterns are given in 6-15. The high (H) tone as it occurs independently:

(6) [ʧí] ‘open’
[tó] ‘taste’
[éwó] ‘head’
[láálɛ́] ‘night’

Mid (M) tone:

(7) [ge] ‘climb’
[egi] ‘tree’
[aʧī] ‘horse’
[nɤɔ̃] ‘hair’

Low tone:

(8) [bù] ‘dash’
[òsì̗] ‘left side’
[àʧà] ‘tradition’
[ìdòdò] ‘bedroom’

The falling tone does not occur independently in the dialect, i.e. it occurs only in the environment of the register tones. Thus, mono-syllabic words do not carry a falling tone, only multi-syllabic words do. For example,

(9) [bɛ̂sí] ‘how’
[eîʧi] ‘variety’
[châbɛ] ‘Sábẹ̀ẹ́ dialect and people’
[àgbâgbà] ‘plantain’

Also, the falling tone is found in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ numeral system:

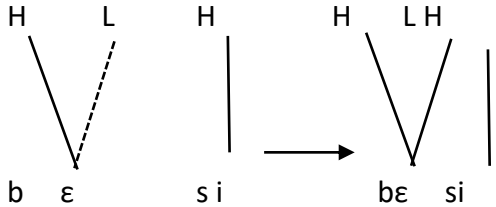
(10) [mêʤì] ‘two’
[mêta] ‘three’
[mɛ̂ɤ̂ĩ] ‘four’
[mɛ̂ɤ́ṹ] ‘five’
[èkêʤì] ‘second’

In words where two root morphemes are joined by affixes, technically referred to as interfixes, the falling tone appears at the surface level. For example,

(11)	/ɔ̀ɤɔ̀/ +kí+/ɔ̀ɤɔ̀/	[ɔ̀ɤɔ̀kɔ̂ɤɔ̀]	‘gibberish talk’
	/ìsɔ/+kí+/ìsɔ/	[ìsɔkîsɔ]	‘vulgar’
	/ìjà/+kí+/ìjà/	[ìjàkîjà]	‘wayward’
	/àʧà/+kí+/àʧà/	[àʧàkâʧà]	‘mischief’

The occurrence of a falling tone was observed in the Sábẹ̀ẹ́ dialect where a single syllable is produced during the period of two distinct tones. The many-to-one mapping rule posited in the autosegmental model is used to capture this. An autosegmental analysis of many-to-one mapping is presented in (12) as follows:

[bɛ̂sí] ‘how’



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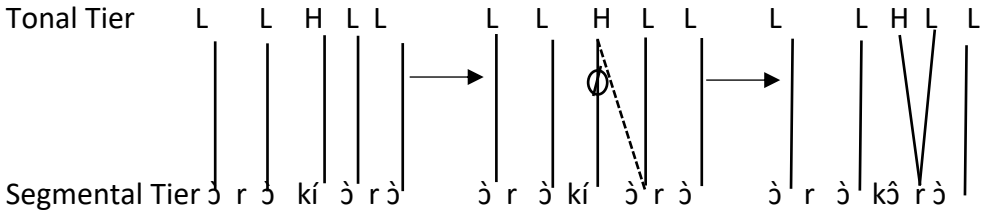
(12)

[ɔ̀rɔ̀kɔ̂rɔ̀] ‘gibberish talk’



Tone performs lexical function in Sábɛ̀ɛ́, i.e., words that are strings of the same segments are distinguished by the use of different tones as shown below:

(13) [udʒà] ‘fat’
[ùdʒà] ‘fight’
[ijḯ] ‘teeth’
[ijĩ] ‘egg’
[bù] ‘to dash’
[bú] ‘to insult’
[bi] ‘to like’
[bí] ‘to birth’

5.3 *Differences observed in tone operation in Sábɛ̀ɛ́ and Òǹkò*

There are cases where different tones are used to express the same idea in sentences. For example, in Òǹkò, a mid-tone is employed when pronouns serve as subject in a sentence, in the same position; the low tone is used in Sábɛ̀ɛ́ For instance,

(14)	*Òǹkò*	*Sábɛ̀ɛ́*	*Gloss*
	/mɔlɔ/	/mɔ̀ lɔ/	‘I go’
	/mɔ̃ mɔ̃̀/	/mɔ̃̀ mɔ̃̀/	‘I know’

/ɔ ʤɛ/	/ɔ̀ ʤɛ/	'you eat'
/ɛ lɔ/	/ɛ̀ lɔ/	'you (plural) go'

In Òǹkò, tone performs grammatical function. It is used to differentiate between declarative, negative and continuous sentences. On the contrary, tone does not perform such grammatical function in Sábẹ̀ẹ́. For example,

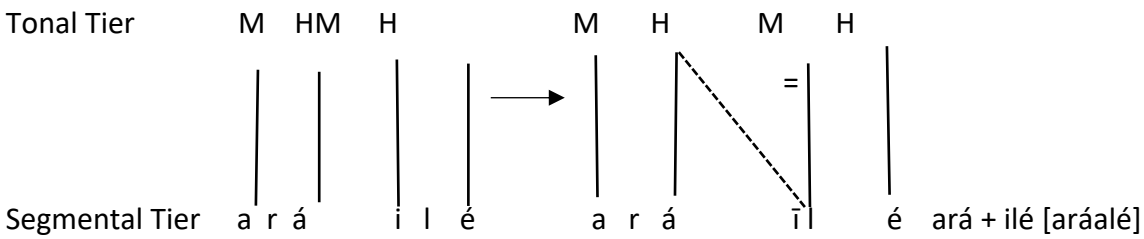
(15)

Òǹkò	*Gloss*
/ǹ ń jɛun/	'I am eating' (continuous sentence)
/n ń jɛun/	'I will eat' (declarative sentence)
/n ǹ jɛun/	'I am not eating' (negative sentence)

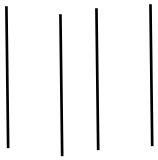
Sábẹ̀ẹ́	*Gloss*
/mò mí jɛun/	'I am eating' (continuous sentence)
/mà jɛun/	'I will eat' (declarative sentence)
/n kɔ̀ jɛun/	'I am not eating' (negative sentence)

5.4 *Tone stability in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹko dialects*

The loss or deletion of an element of one tier does not necessarily imply the loss of its counterpart. In tone languages, a vowel may be de-syllabified or get deleted by some phonological rule, meanwhile, the tone it is bearing does not disappear; rather, it shifts its location and shows up on some other vowel. This situation is what Goldsmith refers to as Stability. The stability of tone is observed in both Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò dialects, although tone stability is more observed in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ dialect than in Òǹkò. Examples will be given from both dialects to buttress our point. We will also compare some occurrences as found in both dialects.



Tonal Tier M H M H



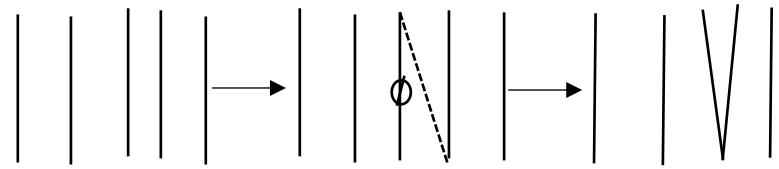
Segmental Tier a r á a l é [aráalé] ‘home dweller’

The example above from Òǹkò shows the independence of each tier. The change of the first vowel of the following morpheme i.e. [i] due to assimilation did not lead to the disappearance of the tone it bears. The mid tone later surfaced after the process on the assimilating vowel [a].

The Sábẹ̀ẹ́ examples in (11) show tone stability and its realization in the dialect. In words where two root morphemes are joined by an interfix, the tone on the vowel of the interfix merges with the low tone on the second morpheme which result is a falling tone. The derivational process is as given in the analysis hereunder:

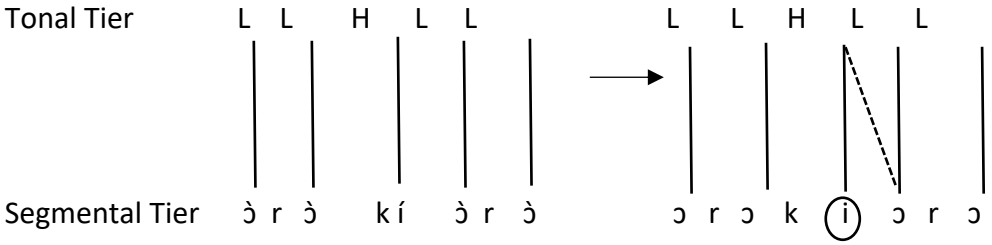
[ɔ̀rɔ̀kɔ̂rɔ̀] ‘gibberish talk’

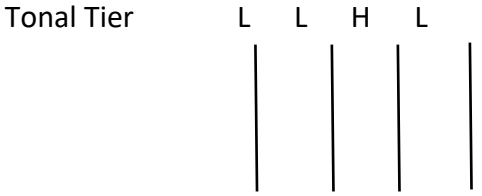
Tonal Tier L L H L L L L H L L L H L L



Segmental Tier ɔ̀ r ɔ̀ kí ɔ̀ r ɔ̀ ɔ̀ r ɔ̀ kí ɔ̀ r ɔ̀ ɔ̀ r ɔ̀ kɔ̂ r ɔ̀

The processes of tone relinking and stability do not occur in standard Yorubá and Òǹkò as it does in Sábẹ̀ẹ́.In Òǹkò, the high tone on the interfix [kí] will be relinked to the first vowel of the second morpheme [ɔ]. However, unlike what happens in Sábẹ̀ẹ́, the initial low tone on the second morpheme will not be maintained, rather it will be delinked. This is illustrated below.





[ɔrɔkɔ́rɔ] 'gibberish talk'

6 Findings

The study made the following findings after the analysis:

i. Tone performs both lexical and grammatical function in Òǹkò dialect while in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ dialect, tone performs only lexical function.

ii. Both Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò attest to tone stability, however, sonority hierarchy plays a vital role as stability does not operate the same way.

iii. Tone stability is pervasive in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ than Òǹkò.

iv. The tonal operations in Sábẹ̀ẹ́ and Òǹkò conform to the universal ideology of tone in autosegmental phonology.

7. Conclusion

As stated from the beginning, the main aim of this study is to compare the operation of tone in Òǹkò and Sábẹ̀ẹ́ dialects of Yoruba. So far, this study has examined the aspects of tone pattern, function, similarities and differences observed in Òǹkò and Sábẹ̀ẹ́ dialects of Yoruba. It was discovered that both dialects share a lot of similarities and just a few differences were observed. On this note, it is believed that

this work can serve as reference point for further research. In order to ascertain the degree of variations within and across dialects, there is need for future researchers to work more on the dialects of Yoruba especially those spoken in the diaspora. Other prosodic features such as nasality, vowel harmony, etc., and segmental features such as deletion, spirantization can be analyzed using the theory adopted in this work i.e., autosegmental phonology. Also, other phonological theories such as the optimality theory which is constraints based may be employed to discover the hidden constraints in the two dialects.

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