

CONSONANT AND VOWEL ELISION IN OGBAIIU DIALECT OF IGBO

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Abstract

The object of this paper is to explore and explain the phonological process of Elision in Ogbahu dialect of the Igbo language of Nigeria, West Africa. This process involves the elision/deletion/dropping of segments and tones, but the focus of the present paper is on consonant and vowel elision. Vowel elision in Ogbahu entails tonal elision. In other words, when a vowel is lost, its tone goes with it. Hence vowel elision and tonal elision are interwoven in this dialect. Furthermore, in Ogbahu, both consonant and vowel elision occur at morpheme boundary or within a word. However, in Standard Igbo, vowel elision occurs only across word boundary, though consonant elision occurs at similar phonetic environments as in Ogbahu.

Introduction

The present paper intends to explore and describe consonant and vowel elision in Ogbahu dialect of Igbo. Are they phonetically conditioned?

1. Vowel Elision

(a) During the juxtaposition of the vowels V_1 and V_2 in the noun-noun associative constructions, the V] could be deleted as exemplified below:

(1)	N_1	+	N_2	→	
	/osè/		/ɔd̩ i/		[o!sɔd̩ i] ‘kolanut pepper’
	V_1		V_2		
	‘pepper’		‘kolanut’		
	/àda/	+	/ezè/	→	[à!deze] ‘king’s daughter’
	V_1		V_2		
	‘daughter’		‘king’		

It could be postulated that, in the above example, the two juxtaposed vowels first go through an intermediate assimilation process, later the two vowels contract, since either the assimilated or the contracted form can be used in this dialect. Thus we have:

(3)	/osè/	+	/ɔd̩ i/	→	[o!sɔd̩ i]	→	[o!sɔd̩ i]
	V_1		V_2				
	‘pepper’		‘kolanut’				‘kolanut pepper’
	/àda/	+	/ezè/	→	[à!deze]	→	[à!deze]
	V_1		V_2				
	‘daughter’		‘king’				‘king’s daughter’

We also observe that, in the noun-noun genitival relationship, when V_1 and V_2 are identical, one is automatically dropped. Examples:

(5)	N_1	+	N_2	→		
	/isi/		/i!g̩ u/		[isi! g̩ u] ‘head of louse’	
	V_1		V_2			
	‘head’		‘louse’			
	(6)	/òdò/	+	/ògò/	→	[òdògò] ‘umbrella of in law’
	V_1		V_2			
	‘umbrella’		‘in-law’			

(b) The process of vowel elision is also found in numeral constructions. When a numeral is derived

from two primary ones (which we may call the first and second numerals, N₁ and N₂ respectively), usually with the conjunction /na/, this conjunction loses its vowel and the AW is attached straight to the second numeral (N₂). For instance, the numeral 'eleven' is derived from a (construction) a combination of 'ten' as N₁ and 'one' as N₂. Inbetween N₁ and N₂ we have the conjunction /na/ where vowel /-a/ is lost in the combination. N₁ is usually higher than N₂.

(7)	/ili/	N ₁	+	/nà/	+	/òfu/	N ₂	→	[ilinofu] 'eleven'
	'ten'			'and'		'one'			
(8)	/ohu/		+	/nà/	+	/ise/		→	[ohunise] 'twenty-five'
	'twenty'			'and'		'five'			

(c) Vowel elision is also observed in the derivation of some compound nouns. When a noun is derived from a preposition and an underlying noun, the vowel of the preposition before the boundary is elided and the noun is attached straight to the preposition without its last vowel. Examples:

(9)	/ime/	+	/ɲnò/	→	[imɲnò] 'indoors'
	'inside'		'house'		
(10)	/enu/	+	/ɲnò/	→	[enɲnò] 'housetop'
	'top'		'house'		

(d) The last type of vowel elision recorded is the elision of the final vowel of the noun /agulu/ 'hunger/thirst/appetite' when it precedes nouns.

(11)	/agù!ɥ/	+	/n nɪ/	→	[agɥn !nɪ] 'appetite for food'
	'appetite'		'food'		
(12)	/agù!ɥ/	+	/m `ma a/	→	[agɥm !ma a] 'thirst for wine' 'thirst'
	'wine'				

2. Consonant Elision

Four types of consonant elision have been observed in this dialect.

(a) In one case, the first consonant of nouns with a V₁ C, V₂ C₂ V₃ where d and C₂ are the same is elided. In other words, V₁C\ V₂C₂V₃ is realized as V₁ V₂C₂V₃ where C] and C₂ are the same. Examples:

b.	/ɥt j!t a/	→	[ɥ!t a] 'cockroach'
c.	/asɥsɥ/	→	[asɥsɥ] 'speech/language'
d.	/èfifè/	→	[èifjè] 'afternoon'

(13) a. /osisi/ → [oisi] 'tree'

(b) In another case the final consonant in a noun with V, d V₂C₂ V₃ is elided so that,
Examples: V₁C, V₂C₂V₃ → V]C, V₂V,

Examples:

(14)	/`agbògò/	→	[`agbògò]	
(15)	/`àbàda/	→	[`àbàda]	agbgp] 'young unmarried girl' 'type of textile material'

(c) The third consonant elision observed in the dialect is the elision of the palatal approximant /j/ in a sequence /jV/. The /j/ of the second and third person singular pronoun is elided in a noun-possessive pronoun construction.

(16)	a.	/j/	'your (singular)'
	b.	/ja/	'his/her'
Examples:			
(17)	/isi/	+	/ji/ → [isili] 'your head'
	'head'		'your'
(18)	/isi/	+	/ja/ → [isi!a] 'her head'
	'head'		'his/her'

(d) The final consonant elision recorded is the elision of the voiced bilabial plosive /b/. There are two types of environments where /b/ elision occurs. The first type is where progressive vowel assimilation operates only after the consonant /b/ of the verb root /-by/ has been elided. Consider the following examples: (19)

Underlying form	Consonant Elision	Progressive Vowel Assimilation	Gloss
A. /o bu/	o u	o o	'it is'
B. /o bu/	o u	o o	'is it?'
C. /o buho/	o uho	ooho	'it is not'
D. /a i abuhø/	a i auhø	a i aahø	'we are not'
E. /unü abuhø/	unü auhø	unü aahø	'you are not'
F. / wa abuhø/	wa auhø	wa aahø	'they are not'
G. /isi abuhø/	isi auhø	isi aahø	'head is not'
H. /Ada abuhø/	Ada auhø	Ada aahø	'Ada is not'

in A-H above, /by/ becomes o or a, depending on which vowel precedes it.

- is a factative construction
- is an interrogative of the factative
- is a negative construction with the negative suffix -ho 'not'

In A, B, C, where the subject is o, this vowel is the assimilating or conditioning vowel. D, E, F are 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons plural pronouns; G, H are nouns - all are subjects of the negative construction with the negative suffix -ho 'not'.

In D - H, where the verb root has the prefix a-, it is this prefix that brings about the progressive assimilation. Thus, /abuhø/ becomes /aahp/ 'is not', /b/ is also elided when it occurs between two vowel /e/. Here it first undergoes weakening into a voiced labiodental approximant [] before being eventually dropped completely, as in:

- (20) /ebe/ -^ [e e] -^ [ee] 'where/place'
- (21) /ebe a/ -^ [e e a]-> [ee a] 'this place'

Conclusion

It has been established in the foregoing discussion that both consonant and vowel elision occur in Ogbahu. Each process is triggered off by specific environment/condition under which they must apply. It is only when they occur in such phonetic environments that they are elided, that is, elision takes place.

Notes

- V₁ - final vowel before the boundary
V₂ - initial vowel after the boundary
- N₁ - first noun in the construction
N₂ - second noun in the construction

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