Aspects of Yoruba Phonology in the Speech of Igede-Yoruba Bilingual Migrants in Osun State, Nigeria

Kolawole Adeniyi
Department of Linguistics & African Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

Abstract
This paper describes the phonological features that distinguish Igede-Yoruba, the variety of Yoruba spoken by Igede residents in Osun State, Nigeria. The findings reveal variations in the numbers of vowels, consonants and tones, as well as morpheme structure conditions on segments and tones as key markers of the phonology of Yoruba in the speech of Igede migrants in Osun State. The paper concludes that these variations arise as a result of the observed differences in the sound systems of Igede and Standard Yoruba. These variations are shown not to interfere with the ability of the Igede-Yoruba speakers to communicate with their host communities; rather they are shown to be markers of Igede-Yoruba. The paper recommends that attention should be focused on the identified variations for the Igede-Yoruba speakers to improve their performance of Standard Yoruba.
Keywords: morpheme structure conditions, tone, vowels, vowel harmony, Yoruba

Introduction

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), "a migrant is any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence". By this definition, the community of Igede natives in Osun State of Nigeria are classified as migrants. This is more so because they no longer enjoy the privileges that they had in their own state, and their native language has lost its place at the core of their economic survival; they are now required to learn another language, which is the language of their host community as part of integration into the community. Along with the Tiv and some other tribes from around Central Nigeria, the Igede people constitute notable migration communities across southwest Nigeria.

With farming as their primary occupation, it is characteristic of them to live together in linguistic enclaves, farm settlements or villages close to their farms. The Igede migrants in southwestern Nigeria generally, and in Osun State in particular, are categorized as internal migrants, since they are Nigerians who have moved away from their states in search of economic opportunities. It is estimated that as of 2010, about 23 percent of Nigerians were internal migrants for the fact that they live outside their states of birth (Nigerian Population Commission, 2010; Akinyemi 2020: 185).

Igede is an Idomoid language spoken predominantly in Oju, Otukpo, and Okpokwu Local Government Areas of Benue State (Lewis 2009). Being predominantly farmers who need to sell their farm produces without delay, the migrant Igede speakers have the need to speak the language of their host communities to facilitate commerce and accommodation among others. As a result, Igede speakers in southwestern Nigeria learn Yoruba. However, their Yoruba is laced with a heavy accent emblematic of Igede which is their first language (L1). It is therefore the aim of this paper to present a plain description of the Yoruba as spoken by

Igede-Yoruba bilinguals, in the conception of Akinlabi and Liberman (2000) and Hyman (2003).

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows; in the next section, the sound systems of both Igede and Yoruba are summarised. This is followed by the methodology and results sections, in that order. The final section presents the discussion of the findings.

Igede and Yoruba Sound Systems

The Igede sound system contains 36 consonants and nine vowels (Bergman, 1971; Abiodun, 1989). Examples (1a – d) present both the IPA transcriptions and orthographic symbols of the sounds side-by-side. Of the 36 consonants, 20 are classified as neutral (1a), while 16 have the secondary articulation features of either labialisation or palatalization (1b) (Bergman, 1971). It is noteworthy that Igede has Advanced Tongue Root- based vowel harmony ((ATR harmony) whereby the vowels are divided into two sets that do not mix within disyllabic words. Example (1c) contains the group of vowels with the [+ATR] value, while (1d) contains those with the [-ATR] value. For all the sounds, the orthographical symbols are sourced from Hartell (1993).

(1a) Neutral consonants of Igede

/p/ <p>	/b/ <b>	/t/ <t>	/d/ <d>	/c/ <ch>	/ɟ/ <j>	/k/ <k>	/g/ <g>	/k͡p/ <kp>	/g͡b/ <gb>
/m/ <m>	/n/ <n>	/ɲ/ <ny>	/ŋ/ <ng>	/ŋ͡m/ <nm>	/h/ <h>	/r/ <r>	/j/ <y>	/w/ <w>	/l/ <l>

(1b) Labialized and palatalized consonants of Igede

Labialized	/pʷ/ <pʷ>	/bʷ/ <bʷ>	/cʷ/ <cʷ>	/ɟʷ/ <jʷ>	/kʷ/ <kʷ>	/gʷ <gʷ>	/mʷ/ <mʷ>	/ŋʷ/ <ngʷ>	/rʷ/ <rʷ>	/hʷ/ <hʷ>	
Palatalized	/pʲ/ <pʲ>	/bʲ/ <bʲ>	/gʲ/ <gʲ>	/mʲ/ <mʲ>	/rʲ/ <rʲ>	/hʲ/ <hʲ>					

(1c) Igede vowels Set 1 ([+ATR])

/i/ <i>	/e/ <e>	/o/ <o>	/u/ <u>

(1d) Igede vowels Set 2 ([-ATR])

/ɪ/ <ị>	/ɛ/ <ẹ>	/a/ <a>	/ɔ/ <ọ>	/ʊ/ <ụ>

The underlying syllable structures of Igede are the CV, V, and Ṇ (Bergman, 1971). In line with this structure, nouns usually have the V.CV disyllabic structure (2a). It is also noteworthy that Igede allows what may appear as vowel hiatus where the clustering vowels are syllabified into different syllables (2d). Also, while the syllabic nasals of Igede can occur within a word (2c), they can also occur finally (2d).

(2) a. ẹ́.rù “farm”
b. ọ̀.tú.kà “big”
c. ò.jé.ń.wé “new”
d. ọ.tá.à.kō.m̄ “cassava”

Igede has a discrete level tone system with four contrastive tones, namely High <v́>, high-mid <v̄>, low-mid <v̈> (usually left unmarked) , and low <v̀> (Bergman, 1971; Hartell,

1993: 230). The contrast between these four tone levels is exemplified in examples (3a-d), taken from Bergman (1971:16).

(3) a. ɔ̄- hó lɛ̀ “he has washed”
b. ɔ̄- hō lɛ̀ “he has stayed”
c. ɔ̄- hʊ lɛ̀ “he has scattered”
d. ɔ̄- hó lɛ̀ “it has flown”

Yoruba, on the other hand, is a West Benue-Congo language spoken in south-western Nigeria. Although with many dialects, Yoruba has a standard form known as Standard Yoruba (SY). SY has 18 consonant, seven oral vowel and five underlyingly nasal vowel phonemes (Owolabi, 2011).

(4) Yoruba sounds and their corresponding orthographical symbols (Adeniyi, 2018).

Consonants								
/b/ <b>	/t/ <t>	/d/ <d>	/k/ <k>	/g/ <g>	/k͡p/ <p>	/g͡b/ <gb>	/dʒ/ <j>	/m/ <m>
/n/ <n>	/f/ <f>	/s/ <s>	/ʃ/ <ṣ>	/l/ <l>	/ɹ/ <r>	/j/ <y>	/w/ <w>	/h/ <h>
Oral vowels								
/i/ <i>	/e/ <e>	/ɛ/ <ẹ>	/a/ <a>	/ɔ/ <ọ>	/o/ <o>	/u/ <u>		
Nasal vowels								
/ĩ/ <in>	/ɛ̃/ <ẹn>	/ã/ <an>	/ɔ̃/ <ọn>	/ũ/ <un>				

Yoruba has a terraced-level tone system with three tones and the downstep feature (5a-c). In addition, the syllable structure of Yoruba are CV, V, and Ṇ, where sequences of vowels are syllabified into different syllables and consonant clusters are not allowed. Codas are also prohibited in the Yoruba syllable structure.

(5) a. high tone /v́/ “acute accent on the vowel” <v́>
b. mid tone /v̄/ “a macron on the vowel” <v> (usually left unmarked)
c. low tone /v̀/ “a grave accent on the vowel” <v̀>

Differences between Yoruba and Igede

There are notable differences between Yoruba and Igede sound systems. These include the fact that Igede has 36 consonant phonemes, while Yoruba has 18; Igede has nine oral vowels, while Yoruba has seven oral and five nasal vowels; Igede operates a four-tone system, while Yoruba has three tones. Also, whereas the Igede tone system has been described as discrete-level, that of Yoruba is terraced-level. A further difference between the sound systems of the two languages is that while Yoruba operates partial vowel harmony, Igede has full harmony, which marks a significant distinction in the morpheme structure conditions of the two languages.

Further on morpheme structure conditions, Igede does not have the positional restriction whereby the high tone does not occur in word-initial position in disyllabic nouns in Yoruba.

While syllabic nasals occur either medially or separately (as a morpheme) in Yoruba, Igede allows nasal consonants in word-final position.

Some of the differences between Igede and Yoruba inform the patterns characteristic of the Yoruba spoken by Igede second language users. The consonant, vowel, and tone-level components of these differences are summarised in (6a-c) below.

(6) a. Consonant differences between Yoruba and Igede

Igede	/p/ <p>	/c/ <ch>	/ɟ/ <j>	/ɲ/ <ny>	/ŋ/ <ng>	/n͡m/ <nm>	/r/ <r>	–	–	–	–	–
Yoruba	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	/f/ <f>	/s/ <s>	/ʃ/ <ṣ>	/ʤ/ <j>	/ɹ/ <r>

Igede	/pʷ/ <pʷ>	/bʷ/ <bʷ>	/cʷ/ <cʷ>	/ɟʷ/ <jʷ>	/kʷ/ <kʷ>	/gʷ <gʷ>	/mʷ/ <mʷ>	/ŋʷ/ <ngʷ>	/rʷ/ <rʷ>	/hʷ/ <hʷ>
Yoruba	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Igede	/pʲ/ <pʲ>	/bʲ/ <bʲ>	/gʲ/ <gʲ>	/mʲ/ <mʲ>	/rʲ/ <rʲ>	/hʲ/ <hʲ>
Yoruba	–	–	–	–	–	–

(6) b. Vowel differences between Yoruba and Igede

Igede	/ɪ/ <ị>	/ʊ/ <ụ>	–	–	–	–	–
Yoruba	–	–	/ĩ/ <in>	/ɛ̃/ <ẹn>	/ã/ <an>	/ɔ̃/ <ọn>	/ũ/ <un>

(6) c. Tonal differences between Yoruba and Igede

Igede	High (H) <v́>	High-Mid (M) <v̄>	–	Low-Mid (′M) <v̈>/<v>	Low (L) <v̀>
Yoruba	High (H) <v́>	–	Mid (M) <v̄>/<v>	–	Low (L) <v̀>

Methodology

Data for this study were collected from Igede settlements in Alawo, owode-Ede, Abere-Osogbo and Awo communities in Osun state during a series of field trips between 2017 and 2023. At least 10 participants were involved in each speech community and data collection were done using the focus group method. All the speakers were adults who speak Igede as first language and acquired Yoruba informally within the Yoruba speech community. On the average, they had lived in Osun state for more than 20 years.

Data were recorded in quiet environments using Zoom H1N and Zoom H4N digital audio recorders. The Ibadan wordlist of 400 basic items was used to collect data in all the speech communities. This was complemented with phrases purposively designed to investigate specific phonological phenomena other than the sound system.

The focus of the analysis is on the sound system of Yoruba as attested in the Yoruba spoken by the Igede bilinguals. This was done by comparing Igede-Yoruba with Standard Yoruba forms in order to identify its distinguishing features.

Results

The results show variations in the number of sounds, morpheme structure conditions, number of tones, and tonal co-occurrences between Igede-Yoruba and SY. The most pronounced variations relate to morpheme structure conditions which apply even when there are no segmental differences between Igede and Yoruba. These are discussed one after the other in this section.

De-nasalization

The participants in the study tended to denasalize the nasalized vowels of Yoruba. As shown in examples (7a-f), when there are more than one nasal vowel in a word, the nasality tends to be preserved only in the final position while others are denasalized. This is not a generalized pattern; (7g) shows an instance of the final two vowels retaining their nasality, while (7h-j) show denasalization spanning entire words.

(7)

S/N	Igede-Yoruba	Native-Yoruba	Gloss
a	ɔ̃mɔ̃kùrĩ̀	ɔmɔkṵ̀rĩ	"male child"
b	ɔ̃mɔ̃bìrĩ̀	ɔmɔbḭ̀rĩ	"female child"
c	esisĩ	ɛʃĩʃĩ	"housefly"
d	òkùkṵ̀	òkṵ̀kṵ̀	"darkness"
e	àgùtɔ̀̃	àgṵ̀tã̀	"sheep"
f	sōkṍ	sũkṹ	"weep"
g	ɛ̀gbɔ́kṵ̀rĩ̀	ɛ̀gbɔ́́kṵ̀rĩ	"elder brother"
h	tōtō/ tȭtȭ	tũtũ	"new"
i	īrógbì	irúgbḭ̀	"seed"
j	rétí/rɛ́tí	rã́tí	"remember"

Vowel lowering

The high vowels /i/ and /u/ tend to be lowered to their lowered -ATR counterparts [ɪ] and [ʊ] respectively. This is most often attested when the vowels are nasalized; in such instances, the vowels get lowered. [ʊ], the lowered /u/ then triggers right to left vowel harmony (8c-e, h, j).

(8)

S/N	Igede-Yoruba	Native-Yoruba	Gloss
a	īrʊ̃	īrũ̄	"hair"
b	ɪmṍ	īmṹ	"nose"
c	īkʊ̃̄	īkṵ̀	"belly (external)"
d	īnʊ̃̄	īnṹ	"stomach"
e	ìtɔ̀	ìtɔ̀	"urine"

f	īlá	īlá	“okra”
g	īrógbì	īrúgbì̂	“seed”
h	īrāwɔ̀	ìràwɔ̀	“star”
i	ɔ́ kɔ̃́	Ó kṹ	“it is full”
j	īnɔ́	īnā́	“fire”
k	tɔ̃́tɔ̃́	tṹtṹ	“new”
l	mɔ̃́	mṹ	“drink”
m	ɛ̄nō	ɛ̃nṹ	“mouth”
n	ɔ̄rɔ̃̀	ɔ̄rṹ	“neck”
o	sɔ̄nɔ̃̀	sɔ̄nṹ	“lose”
p	kpōkpā	kpūkpā	“red”
q	ɔ̄dɔ́	ɔ̄dṹ	“year”

Vowel Harmony

The full-scale vowel harmony of Igede reflects in the Yoruba of Igede-Yoruba bilinguals. Full-scale in this case implies that beyond just the mid vowels as in Yoruba, the high vowels and low vowel /a/ also participate in the vowel harmony in the Yoruba spoken by Igede speakers of Yoruba. The high vowels /i/ and /u/ get lowered to [ɪ] and [ʊ] respectively in order to facilitate harmony in words containing -ATR vowels /ɛ/ and /ɔ/. In example (8h), above, the word-initial /i/ becomes [ɪ] in harmony with the -ATR /ɔ/ that occurs word-finally. The converse is attested in (9b), where the vowel /ɛ/ becomes [e] in order to ensure +ATR harmony in the entire word. Although this has many exemptions, which show that the speakers were aware of the conflict and were addressing it, it is a widespread phenomenon in the data.

(9)

S/N	Igede-Yoruba	Native-Yoruba	Gloss
a	īrɔ́	īrɔ́	“lie”
b	ìbèrù	ìbɛ̀rù	“fear”

Vowel sequences

The consonant deletion of Yoruba is a well-documented phenomenon (Bamgbose, 1990). When this happens, it creates a vowel sequence situation. This triggers a further process of assimilation whereby the vowels in sequence become alike in a bid to achieve ease of articulation. The output of the assimilation is then a sequence akin to long vowels; but with each of the vowels in sequence often bearing different tones (see column for “SY” in 10a-e), it is straightforward to eliminate the long vowel possibility. In instances of such derived vowel sequences, Igede speakers of Yoruba consistently elide one of the vowels. The column for “underlying form (SY)”in examples (10a-f) contains the inputs with the deleted consonants written in boldface; it will be seen that the Igede speakers consistently realise the words with single vowels.

(10)

S/N	Igede-Yoruba	Underlying form (SY)	SY	Gloss
a	ēgū̃	e**g**ū̃gū̃	ēégū̃	“bone”
b	èdú	È**d**údú	èédú	“charcoal”
c	èfī́	È**f**ífī́	èéfī́	“smoke”
d	érú	ē**r**úrú	ēérú	“ashes”
e	àké	à**k**éké	àáké	“axe”
f	èn̰ò	È**n**ĩj̃ã̀	èèj̃ã̀	“person, human”

Segment substitution

Igede speakers of Yoruba consistently substitute the consonant /ʃ/ with [s] (11). This is traceable to the consonant inventory of Igede which lacks the /ʃ/. In examples (11a-f), Igede-Yoruba consistently has [s] in place of /ʃ/. This is also seen in (7c) where the two instances of /ʃ/ are realised as [s] in the word *ē̃ʃ̃ī̃ʃ̃ī̃* “housefly”.

(11)

S/N	Igede-Yoruba	Native-Yoruba	Gloss
a	ī**s**ɛ́	īʃɛ́	“work”
b	ē**s**ī̃	ēʃ̃ī̃	“horse”
c	àsá	à̰ʃá	“kite”
d	sūbú	ʃ̰ūbú	“fall”
e	īsū	īʃū	“yam”
f	āsɔ̃	ā̰ʃɔ̃	“cloth”

Also, Igede speakers of Yoruba consistently substitute the /w/ phoneme with glottal fricative [h]. This is in spite of the fact that Igede has the /w/ phoneme. The most probable cause of this is morpheme structure condition; it is indicative of possible differences in the distribution of the /w/ phoneme in both languages. In (12a-e), the substitution occurs before the high back vowels /u/ and /ʊ/. It is only in (12g) where it occurs in another position, but the vowel /ɔ/ after which it occurs is still a back vowel.

(12)

S/N	Igede-Yoruba	Native-Yoruba	Gloss
a	òhú	Òwú	“cotton”
b	èhù	èwù	“robe”
c	ēhúrɛ́	ēwúrɛ́	“goat”
d	fɔ̃hɔ́ kɔ̃̀	fɔ̃wɔ́ kɔ̃̀	“touch”
e	báñ sãhó	bá mī sã̄wó	“pay for me”
f	wɛ̀hɔ̀	wɛ̀wù	“put on cloth”

There is an alternation between /ã/ and /ɔ̃/ in SY and Igede-Yoruba (13a-l). Igede-Yoruba consistently has /ɔ̃/ in environments where SY has /ã/ (7e; 8j; 13a – l; 15g). in examples (13a-g), it is an underlying nasal /ã/ that alternates with /ɔ̃/, while the [ã] in alternation in

examples (13h-k) is itself phonetically realised in the environment in SY. This shows that the attested alternation is not only about the phonetic realisation of the sounds. This alternation is perceptually made evident by the acute lip-rounding feature of the /ɔ/ in this position.

(13)

S/N	Igede-Yoruba	Native-Yoruba	Gloss
a	ītɔ̄	ītā̄	"thigh"
b	ɔ̄kɔ̀	ɔ̄kā̄	"heart"
c	ɛ̄rɔ̄	ɛ̄rā̄	"meat"
d	ìtɔ̀	ìtà	"story"
e	kɔ̄kɔ̀lá	kɔ̄kà̀lá	"eleventh"
f	ɔ̄gbɔ̀	ɔ̄gbà̀	"30"
g	tɔ́	tá	"finish/exhaust"
h	īgī ìdánɔ́	īgī ìdánā́	"firewood"
I	īnɔ́	īná	"louse"
j	ànɔ̄	ànā̄	"in-law"
k	gbónɔ̄	gbónā́	"hot"
l	ɲɔ̄ ɔ́	ɲā̄ á	"roast it"

Tone

The bulk of the phonological features that distinguish Igede-Yoruba are tonal. Igede-Yoruba has four distinctive tones, which varies significantly from the three-tone system of SY. For ease of reference, these four tones are listed again in (14).

(14) a. High
b. High-Mid
c. Low-Mid
d. Low

Example (14b-c) show that the mid tone of SY corresponds to two different tones in Igede-Yoruba, namely High-Mid, and Low Mid. The realisations of these two types of Mid tone vary. First; as seen in examples (15a-l) the participants in this study frequently realised LL sequences as ˊML where the ˊM is on a level between the L and M of SY. One key proof that the ˊM realised in this manner is higher than L is that the L on the following tone-bearing unit then falls from the level of the ˊM.

(15)

S/N	Igede-Yoruba *(ˊMF)*	Native-Yoruba *(LL)*	Gloss
a	agbɔ̂	àgbà̀	"jaw"
b	ɔkɔ̂	ɔ̀kɔ̀	"spear/arrow"
c	ɔbɛ̂	ɔ̀bɛ̄	"knife"
d	ɛɲî	ɛ̀jì	"back"
e	ɛwâ	ɛ̀wà	"beans"

f	akpô	àkpò	“bag”
g	ɔnɔ̂	ɔ̀nà	“road”
h	ɔgɛdɛ̂	ɔ̀gɛ̀dɛ̀	“plantain”
i	odʒô	òdʒò	“rain”
j	ɪrawɔ̂	ìràwɔ̀	“star”
k	ɔrɔ̂	ɔ̀rɔ̀	“word”
l	ìkokô	ìkòkò	“water pot”

The low-mid ´M level of Igede-Yoruba also corresponds to Yoruba L in an LM sequence, where LM is realised as Lowered ´MM. in examples (16a-c), the mid tone on the initial tone-bearing units is different from the one on the second tone-bearing units, both being realised on different levels in each of the words. For all the words, the tone on the initial tone-bearing units is consistently lower than the following one.

(16)

S/N	**Igede-Yoruba** *(MM)*	**Native-Yoruba** *(LM)*	**Gloss**
a	orū	òrū	“night”
b	ɛrī̄	èrī̄	“four”
c	okū̄	òkū̄	“sea”

A third method of realising the low-mid ´M is by lowering the M of SY to that level just below it and above the L (17a-b). At this level, the tone is perceived as clearly lower than the regular Yoruba M and higher than the regular L, with the added ability to trigger falling of a following L.

(17)

S/N	**Igede-Yoruba** *(‘MH)*	**Native-Yoruba** *(MH)*	**Gloss**
a	odʒú	ōdʒú	“eye”
b	etí	ētí	“ear”

As seen in (15 – 17), ‘M of Igede-Yoruba triggers the realisation of following Low tone as a falling tone. The M of Igede-Yoruba also triggers this falling contour (18). This is another variation between Igede-Yoruba and SY. This is because the L is not realised as a falling tone after M in SY.

(18)

S/N	**Igede-Yoruba** *(MF)*	**Native-Yoruba** *(ML)*	**Gloss**
a	ēsɛ̂	ēsɛ̀	“leg”
b	ɔ̄bɛ̂	ɔ̄bɛ̀	“soup”
c	ābâ	ābà	“village”
d	ōdô	ōdò	“river”

LH rising tone

In SY, the H is realised as a LH rising tone after L (Connel and Ladd, 1990). But this rising tone is absent in the Yoruba of Igede-Yoruba bilinguals where the H is realised entirely within the perceptual range of H (7g; 11c; 12a; 13h; 19a-c).

(19) a. ìsáńá́ "matches"
b. àdá "cutlass"
c. ìlú "town"

L-Raising in Verbs

In citation form, the L on low-toned verbs is realised as a ˊMF falling tone from low-mid to L (20a-e), but they optionally become normal L when situated within phrases (21a-b). It can be seen that in (20e), *gbī̀* "plant" has a ˊMF falling tone, but this falling tone becomes level L when it is followed by another segment in the phrase in (21a). This is also true of *mɔ̀* "know" which has a ˊMF falling tone in (20c), but which is realised as a level L when flanked by other items in a longer utterance. These relevant portions are within boxes in (21a-b).

(20)

S/N	**Igede-Yoruba** *(F)*	**Native-Yoruba** *(L)*	**Gloss**
a	sʊ̃̀	sʊ̃̀	"sleep"
b	rī̀	rī̀	"walk"
c	mɔ̀	mɔ̀	"know"
d	kpè	kpè	"call"
e	gbī̀	gbī̀	"plant"

(21)

S/N	**Igede-Yoruba** *(F)*	**Native-Yoruba** *(L)*	**Gloss**
a	gbī̀ ḭ́	gbī̀ ḭ́	"plant it"
b	ō mɔ̀ kpé ìgbe tá tī wà ñbī bá↓yí	ō mɔ̃̀ kpé ìgbà tá tī wà ñbí bá↓yí	"since we have been here"

Downstepped High Tone

Downstepped High in Igede-Yoruba is devoid of the Assimilated Low Tone nature outlined in Bamgbose (1967) and is rather realised as a classical type of downstep similar to what is usual to two-tone systems such as Efik and Igbo. By this, the sharp fall on the pre-downstep H in SY is not realised while the perceptual rise on the H that is downstepped is also not realised in Igede-Yoruba. The implication of this is that downstepped H is lowered all the way to the level of the Low tone in Igede-Yoruba, a case of total downstep. This is a significant perceptual marker of Igede-Yoruba. It is so acute that examples (22a-c) are perceived more as *jókò*, *lálà*, and *rérì* respectively having HL tonal sequence.

(22) a. jó↓kó "sit down"
b. lá↓lá "dream"

c. rɛ́ ˛rí “laugh”

Discussion and Conclusion

A noticeable feature of Igede-Yoruba is its four-tone system. Igede-Yoruba has a terraced-level four tone system with classical downstep (23). The nature of the downstep of Igede-Yoruba is a significant departure from SY. Also, an important result of the presence of four tone levels is a widespread alternation among the L and M of Yoruba as against the L, ´M and M of Igede. These alternations may appear not to be systematic at first, but the speakers were consistent in their realisations.

One possible explanation is that this is perception induced such that there are interceptions between tone ranges of SY L and M and Igede L ´M, and M. It should be noted that the tones involved all belong to the natural class of non-high tones. This may be magnified by the relative nature of tone coupled with speaker variation. The clear result is widespread consistent alternations among non-high tones.

(23) Tone levels of Igede-Yoruba

High (H) <v́>	High-Mid (M) <v̄>	Low-Mid (′M) <v̈>/<v>	Low (L) <v̀>

Another tonal marker of Igede-Yoruba is the realisation of the falling tone. The L is realised as a falling tone from all the three levels (‘M, M, H) higher than it, which makes the falling tone more widely realised in Igede-Yoruba than in SY. The LH rising tone is absent in Igede-Yoruba, a situation that makes contour tones unidirectional, but with additional marked number of contours within that direction, since there are now three types of falling contour as against only one in SY. The occurrence of H in word-initial position of disyllable nouns in Igede-Yoruba is also a significant departure from the sacrosanct distributional restriction against the occurrence of H in that position in SY (10d).

Regarding the oral vowels, Igede-Yoruba operates a nine-vowel system with the vowels /i/, /ɪ/, /e/, /ɛ/, /a/, /o/, /ɔ/, /u/ and /ʊ/. These nine vowels are split in two along ATR line to implement the full-vowel harmony system similar to that of Igede (24, 25). One significant corollary of the full vowel harmony is increased alternation with the vowels of SY. This is illustrated in examples (7i-j,8b, 9b, 13f, 13j), etc.

(24) [+ATR] vowels of Igede-Yoruba

/i/ <i>	/e/ <e>	/o/ <o>	/u/ <u>

(25) [-ATR] vowels of Igede-Yoruba

/ɪ/ <ị>	/ɛ/ <ẹ>	/a/ <a>	/ɔ/ <ọ>	/ʊ/ <ụ>

Derived vowel sequences that result from consonant deletion in SY are absent in Igede-Yoruba. What examples (10a-f) suggest is that the Igede speakers of Yoruba as a second language learn the language without the etymologies of the vowel sequences of SY, and proceed to delete one of such contiguous vowels in a simplification process.

The consonants of Igede-Yoruba are similar to those of SY, except for the absence of the voiceless postalveolar central fricative /ʃ/ (26). There are however distributional variations between Igede-Yoruba and SY. For instance, the voiceless glottal central fricative /h/ is more active in Igede-Yoruba than in SY; it also alternates with the voiced labial-velar central approximant /w/ in many words (12a-f).

(26) Consonants of Igede-Yoruba

Consonants								
/b/ <b>	/t/ <t>	/d/ <d>	/k/ <k>	/g/ <g>	/k͡p/ <p>	/g͡b/ <gb>	/dʒ/ <j>	/m/ <m>
/n/ <n>	/f/ <f>	/s/ <s>		/l/ <l>	/ɹ/ <r>	/j/ <y>	/w/ <w>	/h/ <h>

The conclusion that can be drawn from these distinguishing features of Igede-Yoruba is that although it is mutually intelligible with Yoruba, it has apparent features imported from Igede, the speakers' first language, which can be viewed in the same light with what is called accent in many varieties of Englishes spoken around the world. This is not a case of error; it is a marker of Yoruba as a second language by Igede L1 speakers. This study may be considered a preliminary one such that further aspects of Yoruba as a second language by Igede speakers can be explored. It also points in the direction of studying African languages as spoken by migrants as second languages as a viable area of study.

References

Abiodun, M. A. (1989). The Class System of Igede Nouns. *Journal of West African Languages* 14(2). 51–56.

Adekanmi, A. S. (2018). Phonological Interference in the Yoruba of Igede-Yoruba Bilinguals. B. A. Project, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Adeniyi, K. and Adeniyi, T. (2017). Consonant Sequence Reduction in Child Phonology. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics* 6 (1): 22-48.

Adeniyi, K. (2018). Òun, ohun, ohùn: An Experimental Study of /h/ in Yoruba. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 27 (4): 1-17.

Adeniyi, K. (2020). Lexicalization of Tonal Downstep in Yoruba. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics/ Revue Canadienne de Linguistique* 65 (4) 353-555.

Akinlabi, A., & Liberman, M. (2000). The tonal phonology of Yoruba clitics. In B. Gerlach, & J. Grijzenhout (Eds.), *Clitics in phonology, morphology and syntax* (pp. 31-62). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Akinyemi, A. I. (2020). Contemporary issues in Migration and Development in Nigeria. In Daramola, O. M. A., K. Adeniyi, E. T. Babalola, and M. Ademilokun (Eds), *Migration: Identity Construction and Reconstruction.* Ile-Ife: Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, 184 – 196.

Badewo, G. (2017). Mother Tongue Interference in the Yoruba of Tiv Speakers in Ajigbala Village, Osun State, Nigeria. B. A. Project, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Bamgbose, A. (1967). *A short Yoruba grammar*. Ibadan: Heinemann.

Bamgbose, A. (1990). *Fonọ́lọ́jì àti Gírámà Yorùbá* [Phonology and Grammar of Yoruba]. Ibadan: University Press.

Bergman, R. (1971). Vowel Sandhi and Word Division in Igede. *Journal of West African Languages* 8(1). 13–25.

Connell, B., and Ladd, D. R. (1990). Aspects of pitch realization in Yoruba. *Phonology*, 7 (1) 1 – 29.

Eihebhoria, B. (2017). Assimilatory and Syllable Structure Processes in Igede. B.A Project, Department of Linguistics and African Languages, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Ellis, R. (1998). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 51, p. 140.

Eugène, J. (1966). An Investigation of Phonological Interference. *Linguistic Society of America*, *42*(4), 768–796. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/411832

Hartell, R. L. (ed.) (1993). *Alphabets of African.* Dakar: UNESCO and SIL.

Hyman, L. M. (2003). Why describe African Languages? *Proceedings of World Congress of African linguistics 4/Annual conferences on African linguistics* 34, Rutgers, USA, June 18.

Lewis, M. P. (ed.). (2009). Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Sixteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=nigeria, accessed August 15, 2011.

Sinha, A., Banerjee, N., Sinha, A., & Shastri, R. K. (2009). Interference of First Language in the Acquisition of Second Language. *Journal of Psychology and Counselling*, *1*(7), 117–122. Retrieved from http://www.academicjournals.org/JPC.

United Nations (2025). https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/migrants#:~:text=The%20UN%20Migration%20Agency%2C%20International,movement%20is%20voluntary%20or%20involuntary, accessed March 3rd, 2025.

Yuniar, R. S. (2013). Korean Phonological Interference in Indonesian Language as Second Language. Strata-1 Degree Thesis, Diponegoro University, Semarang.