Consonant Insertion in Iyinno: A Critique

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Abstract  
Unlike vowel insertion (epenthesis), consonant insertion is a rare occurrence in languages. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the occurrence of consonant insertion in Iyinno as claimed by Ibikunle (2008:122). He (Ibikunle 2008:122) claimed that, there is an insertion of voiced bilabial nasal [m] between two nouns while combining them to form new words. This paper shows that, the voiced bilabial nasal [m] found between two nouns in the lect is not the case of consonant insertion but rather, an associative morpheme (a genitive marker) [mὲ] which has lost its vocalic anchor as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundary. Also, our study reveals that, after [mὲ] has lost its vocalic anchor, the nasal feature of [m] got transferred to the (oral) V1 of the second noun across morpheme boundary.

Keywords: Epenthesis; Associative Morpheme; Vocalic Anchor; Hiatus, Possession.

1. Introduction  
Iyinno also known as Ilo, is a lect of AİKA1 spoken in Ayánrán, a linguistic community in Ondo State, Nigeria. By the West, Ayánrán is bounded by Isé and Isú to the South, both located in Akoko South-East Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. To the North, we have Ikiràn-Okè and Ikirà-Ile. By the East, we have Ìbílò and Ìkákumò-Ọláyèłe.  

According to Oyebade (2004:73), consonant insertion is not common in languages. Also, researches show that any language that seems to have such, need to be carefully examined by looking at the occurrence of the consonant in question, that the consonant must have lost its vocalic anchor, which might be as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundary and at the same time, has a grammatical or lexical function(s) it performs in the construction.

However, Ibikunle (2008:112) argues that whenever two (2) nouns are combined to create possessions in Iyinno, there will be voiced bilabial nasal [m] insertion. This paper sees this as a rare occurrence and hereby challenges it by exploring the situation with a different view.

2. The Claim  
According to Ibikunle (2008:112), there is insertion of voiced bilabial nasal [m] in Iyinno whenever two (2) nouns are combined to create possessive constructions.

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1 Although Arohumolase et al (2006a), Salfriner (2009) and a host of others use Ukann/Ikaan instead of AİKA in their research. But recently, AİKA has been used by other scholars. It is an acronym made up of the initials of the villages where the lect is spoken i.e. Ayánrán-Isé-Kákumò-Aüga (Abiodun 1999, Elugbe 2001).
The data he used to buttress his points are presented thus:

1. (a) [ἐν] [ἀγά] ——> [ἐν ἀμάρι] “Animal”
   Meat farm
(b) [ἀφό] [ἰτιτί] ——> [ἀφόμιτιτί] “Titi’s feaces”
   Feaces Titi
(c) [ἀφό] [ἐχύ] ——> [ἀφόμεχύ] “Rice”
   Feaces rat
(d) [ἰφό] [ἰκῆ́] ——> [ἰκῆ́] “Kè̩hinde’s head”
   Head Kè̩hinde
(e) [ἀφό] [ἐλά] ——> [ἀφόμελά] “Farm”
   Farm Ṓ̩ lá
(f) [ορū] [ουφύδζι] ——> [ουρύμουφύδζι] “Snake’s tail”
   Tail snake
(g) [ἐφλγέ] [ἐμ] ——> [ἐφλγεμέ] “Friend’s house”
   House friend
(h) [ἐδέ] [ουμό] ——> [ἐδέδεμο] “Water pot”
   Pot water
(i) [ἐρῦρυ] [ἐμά] ——> [ἐρῦρυμέ] “Tortoise’s heart”
   Heart Tortoise

3. Interrogating the Claim
The assumption that a voiced bilabial nasal [m] is inserted between two (2) nouns while combining them to form possessions in Ḣỳ箸 by Ḧbikunle (2008:11) is phonologically unacceptable. Our study shows that the voiced bilabial nasal [m] found at the right side of the arrow is not the case of consonant insertion but rather, an associative morpheme (a genitive marker) [m] which has lost its vocalic anchor as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundaries. This is shown in (2) below:

2. (a) [ἐν] [μέ] [ἀγά] ——> [ἐν ἀμάρ] “Animal”
   Meat gen. farm
(b) [ἀφό] [μέ] [ἰτιτί] ——> [ἀφόμιτιτί] “Titis feaces”
   Feaces gen. Titi
(c) [ἀφό] [μέ] [ἐχύ] ——> [ἀφόμεχύ] “Rice”
   Feaces gen. rat
(d) [ἰφό] [μέ] [ἰκῆ́] ——> [ἰφόμικῆ́] “Kè̩hinde’s head”
Head
Kehinde

(e) ̀aháì mè ọlá  [̀aháìmọ̀lá] “Ola’s farm”

Farm
Olà

(f) òrù mè ufu dʒìṣì  [òrùmọ̀fu dʒìṣì] “Snake’s tail”

Tail
snake

(g) ẹ̀fìgè mè ejù  [ẹ̀fìgemẹ̀jù] “Friend’s house”

House
gene

(h) èdédè mè umó  [èdédemùmò] “Water pot”

Pot
gene

(j) èrùrù mè èmà  [èrùrùmèmà] “Tortoise’s heart”

Heart
gene

From the data above, we could see that the voice bilabial nasal [m] found in between the two (2) nouns in each data is not the case of consonant insertion but rather, it is a morpheme (genitive) on its own, which is affixed to indicate possession in the lect. Furthermore, it can be deduced that the genitive marker [mɛ̀] lost its vocalic anchor as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundaries, and then the nasal feature of the consonant got transferred to the (oral) V1 of the second noun across morphemes.

This paper will be an incomplete and controversial one without indicating how we derived the original vowel ([ẹ̀]) of the voiced bilabial nasal. This is explained with the aid of the data below:

3. (a) [ènɔ] “meat” [omù] “water”

It was observed that, when the speakers want to show that the “meat comes from the water not from the bush” they will add the morpheme [mɛ̀] (in form of emphasis) to show that the meat is from the water. This is shown below;

(b) /ènɔ mè omù / [ènùmùmù] “Fish”

Meat ‘that comes from’ water

Also, the example in (4) buttresses the point above;

4. /mè ̀aʃèì/ [màʃèì] “that of egg”

of egg

/mè ejù/ [mèjù] “that of house”

of house

It was from these instances we derived the vowel [è] for the voiced bilabial nasal [m] for the lect.

Most importantly, whenever a consonant initial noun is emphasized like what is obtained in 4 above, the morpheme {mɛ̀} shows up while its vowel invariably survive as shown below:

5. /mè múṣù/ [mèmùṣù] “that of cat”

of cat

/mè kpèkpejè/ [mèkpèkpejè] “that of duck”

of duck
4. Conclusion
This Paper Has Shown That it is not valid to argue that there is consonant insertion in Ìyínnó as claimed by Ibikunle (2008:112). There are two major arguments proposed to debunk this claim: First, the proposed consonant that is inserted between the nouns is not a consonant but a morpheme which indicates possession and lost its vocalic anchor as a result of hiatus resolution across morpheme boundaries. Second, literature has it that consonant insertion is not common in languages like vowel insertion.

References

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