

A Contrastive Study on French and Urhobo Phonological Systems—A Case Study of Articles and Demonstrative Structures

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It is a general knowledge that French as a language is widely spoken internationally whereas Urhobo is mainly spoken in the geographical location where it belongs. It is also spoken, and this, sparingly so, by Urhobo persons in the Diaspora. Presently, Urhobo has become a language of study at the Delta State University, Abraka. It has also been included in the educational curriculum for study at the lower cadre of secondary school education in the Delta State. This situation has triggered the author's interest in doing a contrastive phonological study. The significance of this study is that it will highlight the salient differences in some of the grammatical aspects in the languages under consideration and also identify the difficulties that learners experience as a result of these difficulties. The author will also, as much as it is possible, proffer solutions to these learning difficulties.

Keywords: contrastive, study, French, Urhobo, phonology, articles

Introduction

There may have been contrastive studies done on the phonological systems of French and other Nigerian languages or dialects before now but that of French and Urhobo phonology is comparatively new. Akpofure (2015) provides us with a thesis titled *Une étude comparée des systèmes phonologiques du français et de l'urhobo*. This book, which may not be the first to study this aspect of French and Urhobo phonology, although to the best of our knowledge, seems to be the only available work on the French/Urhobo theme just now treats the subject on hand. It will largely serve as our reference as this work progresses.

The Urhobo language is spoken in the Delta State of Nigeria as well as in the Diaspora. Odiemo (2014, p. 1) puts the number of Urhobo language speakers at about one million according to the 2006 census, a number which could possibly be contested due to possible lapses in the census exercise.

Objective

This study is aimed at exposing language students to the differences and similarities which exist in the phonological systems of French and Urhobo languages. It is expected that an understanding of these differences will facilitate learning either of the French or Urhobo language as the case may be. (Let it be noted in passing that Urhobo, like lots of African languages, is fast becoming a second or even third language to the owners.)

Theoretical Framework

We will base this study on the Optimality Theory. Zuraw (2014, p. 3) cites Prince and Smolensky (1993, p. 1) as saying that this theory "...was developed as a response to a conceptual crisis at the center of phonological thought". He also goes on to say that "in a 1970 Linguistic Inquiry article, Charles Kissoberth identified a 'conspiracy' in Yawelmani: rules of vowel insertion and deletion conspire to place every consonant adjacent to a vowel".

Methodology

To fully treat this subject, the eclectic approach will be adopted since it is required that various technics be used to gather data for it. For example, there will be recordings that would help to determine the different sounds in both languages under consideration, verbal interviews, etc. This study will begin with the discussion of definite and indefinite articles. This will be followed by demonstrative structures. Under the demonstrative structures, we will treat adjectives and pronouns. Pluralization will invariably be treated in connection with all the areas under consideration since it is interwoven with articles, demonstrative adjectives, as well as demonstrative pronouns. The structure of this work is therefore as follows:

- (1) The Article;
- (2) The Demonstrative Adjectives (Determiners);
- (3) The Demonstrative Pronouns;
- (4) Phonological Processes;
- (5) Conclusion.

As it is, the French aspect will be discussed in this work, not because we do not know what the elements to be treated in French are, but because it is what we know of these reference points in French that will enable us to highlight the differences between its phonological system and that of the Urhobo language.

The Article

For Trueman (2015, p. 1), "An article (...) is a word (or prefix or suffix) that is used with a noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun. Articles specify grammatical definiteness of the noun, in some languages extending to volume or numerical scope". Ade Ojo (2002) agrees with this definition when he states that:

Articles are the words used for presenting or identifying (the gender and number of) nouns, all the possessive pronouns and a few indefinite pronouns (like même, autre). Each noun is preceded immediately by the article, except when there is an intervening adjective before the noun. In which case the article is placed before such an adjective. (p. 58)

Mazet (2015, p. 1) affirms that "...French has definite articles, indefinite articles and partitive articles. The French definite article is the equivalent of the English *the*. But French has four forms of article défini...". Mazet goes on to name them as /le/, /la/, /l'/, and /les/. By this it is clearly affirmed that the French article has three different parts, i.e., the definite, the indefinite, and the partitive articles. This is different from the Urhobo situation where the article "na" has no parts other than one. Clearly the Urhobo article "na" is used to represent both the definite and the indefinite articles. As for the partitive article, this is not yet clearly represented in Urhobo phonology, although it will be more fully examined later on in this work.

The Definite Article

Ade Ojo (2002, p. 58) and Alden (1965, p. 197) also affirm that in French the definite article comprises of

/le/, /la/, /l'/, and /les/. /Le/ indicates the masculine noun as in (1) le père; (2) le gillet; and (3) le bidon. /La/ indicates feminine nouns as in: (1) la mère; (2) la famille; and (3) la maison. The /l'/ is used when the noun in question begins with a vowel and it does not distinguish between the masculine and the feminine. The elision of the vowel brings about a contraction. This contraction makes room for a free flow of the sequence between article and noun, creating in the process, a more fluid and pleasant form of articulation. For example, instead of (1) /Le enfant/ [ləãfã], one says [lãfã]; instead of (2) /la église/ [laegliz], one says /l'église/ [legliz].

The rule of vowel elision clearly applies here. Quite different from the case of the French article, this rule does not apply as touching the Urhobo article /na/. The Urhobo article “na” is the direct equivalent of the French definite articles /le/, /la/, and /l'/. Another difference between the French and the Urhobo article is that the Urhobo article ‘na’ does not come before the noun; it comes after it, as in:

Example: /Ómó nà/ l'enfant. Ex : (Ómó/enfant, nà/l')

/Ómóshárè nà – Le garçon

/Ómótè nà/ - la fille

/Óshárè nà/ - l'homme

/Aye nà/ - la femme.

(The examples above as well as some others that will follow are extracted from Akpofure (2015, p. 200), not for want of other examples to give, but to clearly indicate how the Urhobo article /nà/ is appropriately used for the masculine as well as the feminine gender. The reason is that apart from persons most of the other nouns are without gender distinction.) The examples noted above also show that whereas in the French language, the article comes before the noun (or before the adjective, as the case may be), clearly indicating the gender of the noun in question; the Urhobo article does not precede the noun, or the adjective (as the case may be) neither does it distinguish between masculine and feminine nouns. In most cases, it also comes after the adjective. The French “l” has no equivalent in Urhobo. The article /nà/ describes the masculine as well as feminine noun:

Example: /Ómóshárè nà = le garçon

/Ómótè nà = la fille.

/Óbé nà = le livre

/isíkúrù nà = l'école etc.

When the sentence features an adjective, the article still comes after the adjective:

Example: /Óshárè ógrógrò nà [ɔʃare ogrogro nà] Le grand homme.

Pluralization of the Definite Article

The plural form of the French definite article /Les/ is used to represent both masculine and feminine genders.

Example:	Singular	Plural
	L'homme	Les hommes
	La femme	Les femmes
	Le garçon	Les garçons
	La fille	Les filles

This implies that the plural article /les/ does not distinguish between the masculine and feminine nouns. The determination of the gender therefore depends on the nature of the noun. The Urhobo plural form does not distinguish between the masculine and the feminine gender either. This therefore is a similarity in the plural articles of both languages. What happens in the case of the Urhobo article “nà” is that while “nà” remains, the initial vowel for the noun in its singular form modulates into a plural vowel as in the case of /o/ (singular form) changing to /e/ (plural form). This implies that it is the initial vowels of the nouns that show the effect of pluralization. This is what Oyiborhoro (2005, p. 77) implies when he says that: “Pluralization in Urhobo is essentially achieved by replacing the vowel at the beginning of the word with another vowel and change from a singular prefix to a plural prefix”. The singular prefixes are usually a, e, and i, depending on the nature of the word in question. The plural prefixes are generally e, i, and a. The following examples were extracted from Akpofure (op. cit., p. 200).

Example	Singular	Plural
	/ómō nà/[ɔmɔ̄ ná] l'enfant.	/émō ná/[emō ná] les enfants
	/ómóshārè nà [ɔmóʃáre ná] – Le garçon/éméshārè nà [emeʃáre ná] – Les garçons	
	/ómōtè nà / [ɔmóté ná] - la fille	/émētè nà/[emeté ná] - les filles
	/óshārè nà / [ɔʃáre ná] - l'homme	/éshārè nà/[eʃáre ná] - les hommes
	/àyē nà/[aye ná] - la femme.	/éyā nà/[eyá ná] - les femmes.
	/éwūn nà/[ewu] – La robe	/íwūn nà/[iwu ná] – les robes

Indefinite Articles

Ade Ojo (op. cit., p. 58) and Alden (op. cit., p. 197) affirm also that the indefinite articles in French grammar are: /un/, /une/, and /des/. /Un/ is the masculine singular article and /une/ the feminine singular article while /des/ indicates the plural nouns. The Urhobo equivalent of /un/ and /une/ is /óvó/ [ɔvo].

Example:	French	Urhobo
	Un garçon	ómóshārè óvó [ɔmóʃáre ɔvo]
	Une fille	ómōtè óvó [ɔmóté ɔvo]
	Un homme	óshārè óvó [ɔʃáre ɔvo]
	Une femme	àyē óvó [aye ɔvo]
	Une personne	òhwō óvó [ohwo ɔvo]. Akpofure (op. cit., p. 201)

This means that while in French the indefinite article serves as a prefix, in Urhobo it serves as a suffix.

Pluralization of the Indefinite Article

The plural form of the Urhobo indefinite article is /évó/ as opposed to /óvó/ as used above. Note that there is a replacement of the singular vowel /ɔ/ [ɔ] with a plural vowel /e/ [e]. Like the French singular indefinite article, the plural French indefinite article also precedes the noun but it does not distinguish between genders.

Example:	French	Urhobo
	Des garçons	éméshārè évó [emeʃáre evó]
	Des filles	èmētè évó [emeté evó]
	Des hommes	éshārè évó [eʃáre evó]
	Des femmes	éyā évó [eyá evó]

	Des gens	íhwó évó [ihwo evo]. Akpofure (2015, p. 201)
Urhobo:	Singular	Plural
	ómóshārè óvó [ɔmɔʃare ovo]	éméshārè évó [emeʃare evo]
	ómōté óvó [ɔmote ovo]	èmētē évó [emetə evo]
	óshārè óvó [ɔʃare ovo]	éshārè évó [eʃare evo]
	àyē óvó [aye ovo]	éyā évó [eyə evo]
	òhwō óvó [ohwo ovo]	íhwō évó [ihwo evo]

The Partitive Article

French grammar features partitive articles. Concerning this, Ade Ojo (op. cit., p. 79) says: “The partitive, compressed form of de + definite article (du, de l’, de la. Des) meaning some, part of and from is used before concrete nouns that are uncountable or of undetermined quantity to express a certain quantity of something”. Alden (1965, p. 200), means the same thing when he says: “The partitive article consists of “de + the definite article agreeing with the noun modified... the partitive article is the plural of the indefinite article (which is omitted in English or expressed by the word some”. This notion of some has an equivalent in Urhobo - /évé/. But it is not necessarily used with uncountable nouns. The Urhobo (article) /évé/ [evo] meaning /des/ in French is used with countable nouns as in /èmētē évó/, /éshārè évó/, etc., the singular form being /óvó/ meaning un/une.

Example: ómōté óvó [ɔmote ovo] **Une fille / èmētē évó [emetə evo] des filles**
 óshārè óvó [ɔʃare ovo] **Un homme / éshārè évó [eʃare evo] des hommes**

/Du/ is more closely expressed by the Urhobo article /émé/ [eme], this being the prefix for /émērhà/ meaning /un peu/. “émé” is taken from the Urhobo word “émērhà”. It is used for uncountable nouns such as /ámé - eau/, /émú - repas/, /èrhárè - feu/, /ùdí - boisson/, and /oké - temps/.

Example: Bíkó, kè vwe áma ámè [biko keve am ame] S'il te plait, donnez- moi un peu de l'eau.

Kèvwe éme émù [kev em emu]- Donnes-moi un peu de repas / Donnes-moi du repas.

Kèvwe éme érhárè [kev em erhare] Donnes-moi du feu

Úmūdí je èrò ? [umudi ʒ erɔ] Il reste toujours du boisson?

Mè guōnè ómó ókè [me gwən ɔm oke] Il me faut un peu du temps / Il me faut du temps

With the intransitive verb /aller/, the article + prepositions /a + le/ or /a + les/ result in /au/ or /aux/ as the case may be.

Example: /Je vais à + le marché/Je vais au marché = Mí kpoo ékí.

This translation does not indicate a contraction of article + preposition. (No article is seen to have been used in the Urhobo sentence here.) This sentence indicates vowel elongation. In the Urhobo sentence, /Kpó/ is the verb /to go/ = aller. /ékí/ is the noun. This noun does not have an article. The partitive as well as the tense (present) is expressed in the lengthening of the vowel /o/.

Example: Mí kpoo... Je vais au...

ékí Marché

Mí kpoo ékí / Je vais au marché

Demonstrative Adjective (Determiners)

Ade Ojo (op. cit., p. 217) also affirms that the demonstrative adjective helps to show or indicate other words; it points to the noun and agrees with it in number and gender. The demonstrative adjective precedes a

noun. He notes the simple form of the French demonstrative adjectives or determiners as: Ce, Cet, (masculine), Cette, (feminine) Ces, (plural). Their Urhobo equivalents are as follows: Ce, Cet. = Náná; Cette = Náná; Ces = Náná. These are shown in the following table:

Examples:	Masculine	Feminine	Plural
French	Ce garçon	Cette fille	Ces garçons / ces filles
Urhobo	/ómóshārè náná	ómōté náná	éméshārè nana / èmētè náná
French	Cet homme	Cette femme	Ces hommes / ces femmes
Urhobo	óshārè náná	àyē náná	éshārè náná / éyā nana . Akpofure (op. cit., p. 201).

The following examples show their usage in sentence structures. These sentences are taken from Martinet and Evans et al. (1971, p. 139).

(1) Ce disque, Paul me le donne / ósēté r ùnè náná, Ípólù vwērō kēvwè.

[ɔsete r une náná ipolù verɔ kewɛ]

(2) Cette serviette est à vous ? / óriābò nànà, ówēwé yí vwóró? ówēwé yí vw (e) óriābò nànà ?

[oriabɔ náná owewɛ yi voro] [owewɛ yi vo riabɔ nana]

The compound form of the demonstrative adjectives is created by adding the suffix /ci/ to the simple forms.

Examples:	Ce-ci/cet-ci	cette-ci	Ces-ci, ces-là
French	Ce garçon-ci	Cette fille-ci	Ces garçons-ci / ces filles ci
Urhobo	ómóshārè náná	ómōté náná	éméshārè náná / èmētè náná
French	Cet homme-ci	Cette femme-ci	Ces hommes-ci / ces femmes-ci
Urhobo	óshārè náná	àyē náná	éshārè náná / éyā náná

The Urhobo demonstrative article “náná” does not really translate the French “ci”. For example, in “ómóshārè **náná**” the “ci” is simply implied. On the other hand, if one says óshārè étinē nà, while it expresses “ci”, the demonstrative adjective **náná** is thrown off. To retain it one would have to say óshārè **náná**.

Demonstrative Pronouns

Ade Ojo (2002, p. 217) as well as Lawless (2015, p. 1) affirm that the demonstrative pronoun refers to a noun that has just been mentioned and which we do not want to repeat, so the pronoun is used instead of the noun. Also, according to Lawless (op. cit.), “They must agree with the gender and number of the noun they replace”. Lawless explains further and says that “Each of the four demonstrative pronouns can refer to something nearby or far away” but that if one wants to stress one or the other a suffix can be used. Ade Ojo also indicates clearly the French demonstrative pronouns by splitting them into various groups: the neuter, simple and compound forms as follows:

Neuter Forms: (**Masc sing**) Ceci (**Fem sing**) Cela (**Masc plu**) Ceux-ci /ceux-là

Simple Forms: (**Masc sing**) Celui (**Fem sing**) Celle

(**Masc plu**) Ceux (**Fem plu**) Celles

Compound Forms: (**Masc sing**) Celui-ci, celui-là (**Fem sing**) Celle-ci, celle-là

(**Masc plu**) Ceux-ci, ceux-là (**Fem plu**) Celles-ci, celle-là

In the following table we have paired them with their Urhobo equivalents.

	Masculine	Feminine	Plural
Fr.	Ceci	Cela	Ceux-ci / ceux-là

Urh.	óñaná	Óyēná	Éyēná
Fr.	Celui	Celle	Ceux / Celles
Urh.	ó ré	ó ré	É ré
Fr.	Celui-ci	Celle-là	Ceux-ci, ceux-là / Celles-ci, celles-là
Urh.	óñā rō étinē nā	óyē rō óbóyī nā	Énā re étinē nā / Éyé rē óbóyī nā

As touching the group of pronouns under study, it is noted that whereas French distinguishes between the masculine and feminine genders Urhobo does not. In Urhobo language grammar, the demonstrative pronouns refer to all nouns whether masculine or feminine. Here are some examples.

French	Urhobo
(1) Ceci est le jour de joie.	óñaná édē rē ághóghò [ɔnana ede r aγɔγɔ]
(2) Cela est grande	Óyēná rhórò [ɔyena rhoro], óyēná órode [ɔyena orode]
(3) Ceux-ci sont rouges	Énāná évwávwärè [enana evavare]
(4) Ceux-là sont blancs	Éyēná éfuāfó [eyena efwafo]
(5) Celui-ci est mon sac	óñā rō étinē nā ékpō mè [ɔna rɔ etine na ekpo me]
	óñaná ékpō mé [ɔnana ekpo me]
(6) Celle-là est sa serviette	óyē rō óbóyì nā ékpō re ísíkúrù ro yé [ɔye rɔ oboyi na ekpo r isikuru rɔye]
(7) Celles-là sont mes robes	Éyēná íwūn mè [eyen iwū me]

It had been noted earlier that Urhobo pronoun has no gender distinction but it does distinguish between singular and plural by way of vowel modulation as can also be seen from the above five examples. To serve as examples the following sentences are drawn from Martinet and Evans (1971):

(1) Je ne veux pas celui-ci .	Je voudrais celui-là .
Mé guōne óñā rō étinē nāá. [me gwɔn òna rɔ etine na'']	Mé guōne óyē re óbóyī nā. [me gwɔn ɔye rɔ oboyi na]
(2) Je ne veux pas celle-ci.	Je voudrais celle-là.
Mé guōne óñā rō étinē nāá. [me gwɔn òna rɔ etine na'']	Mé guōne óyē re óbóyī nā. [me gwɔn ɔye rɔ oboyi na]
(3) Je ne veux pas ceux-ci.	Je voudrais ceux-là.
Mé guōne énā re étinē nāá. [me gwɔn ena re etine na'']	Mé guōne é re óbóyī nā. [me gwɔn e re oboyi na]
(4) Je ne veux pas celles-ci.	Je voudrais celles-là.
Mé guōne énā re étinē nāá. [me gwɔn ena re etine na'']	Mé guōne éyē re óbóyī nā. [me gwɔn eye re oboyi na]

(Celui qui / ó ré), (celui que / ó ré), (celui de / ó ré).

Ade Ojo (op. cit.) further explains that: "In principle, the simple forms of the demonstrative pronoun are always followed by the preposition /de/ or any of the relative pronouns: qui, que, à qui, auquel, à laquelle (and their plurals). In Urhobo, this preposition is /re/, /o/ being the demonstrative pronoun. It responds to the question /Qvə/ [ɔvɔ] - /Quel?/, /laquelle?/, /lequel?/.

Example: Ómó shārè vó wó mré rē? [ɔmɔʃare vɔ wɔ mre re] = óró étin è nā [ɔ rɔ etine na]
Quel garçon as-tu vue? Celui-ci.

Óyēná vwo ? [ɔyena vo] Et celui-là?
 Mè mre Óyēná à [me mr ɔyena ' '] Je n'ai pas vue celui-là.

For all the prepositions which follow the French demonstrative pronouns, Urhobo has only one form. That is /ó ré/. It does not distinguish between masculine and feminine. It could be qui, que, à qui, auquel, à laquelle. The following examples are taken from Capelle et Capelle (1970, p. 70).

A. Celui qui/ ó ré :

- i. Il a lu la lettre **qui** annonce ton arrivée / **qui** est arrivée hier soir / **Celle que** tu as reçue.

Ó se óbē **rę ó** vuę ñvuę **rę** Échá wē ná rę / **rę ó** rhērè vwę óvwōvwó ódēyè / **ó ré** ótēwe óbò.

[o s ɔbe r ɔvwo vwę r eʃa we na re] [r ɔrhērē vwɔvwɔ oðeyɛ] [ɔ ro te wobɔ]

- ii. J'ai vu le film **qui** passe au Logos, **qui** a gagné le Grand Prix à Cannes. **Celui que** Pierre n'a pas aimé.

Mé mrę üghé **rę** é djēphià vwę iLógosi. **ó rę ó** mu úkō ródē nà **rę** iPierre guònó rēè

[me mr uya re dʒeΦja v ilogosi] [ɔ ro mw uko rode na] [ri pjɛ gwɔnɔ re']

B. Celui que / Ó ré

- i. **Ceux qui** sont venus me voir habitent à côté d'ici

Ítū **rę** é rhé mrē vwè diá kēre étinè [itu re rhe mrɛ ve djakere tine]

- ii. Celles que mon père a reçues sont trop chères.

Íri í te ñosémę óbō ghàré nò [ir i tɔ səm obɔ γare nɔ]

C. Celui de / Ó ré

- i. J'ai pris mon parapluie Moi, j'ai pris celui de ton oncle

[zɛ pri mɔ paraplui] [mwa zɛ pri səlɔ̃pi də tɔn okl(ə)]

Mē réyę éhārhá mē rę Ómèvwè, mē réyę Ó rę óniōvó rę ósēwè

[me rey eharha mɛ re] [omevɛ me rey ɔro njɔvo rɔ sewɛ]

- ii. J'ai pris mes livres Moi, j'ai pris ceux de ma sœur

Mē réyę ébé mē rę Ómèvwè, mē réyę é rę óniōvó mè

[me rey ebe mère] [omevɛ me rey e r onjɔvo mɛ]

- J'ai pris mes photos Moi, j'ai pris celles de mes parents.

Mē réyę ihohò mē rę Ómèvwè, mē réyę ē re ósémè vę ónímè

[me rey ihoho me re] [omevɛ me rey e r ñosemɛ v onime]

Phonological Processes

Urhobo phonological processes which feature in this work include: (1) assimilation and (2) elision. One of the rules in Urhobo grammar stresses that though all letters in the word are written but not all of them should be pronounced. This means that like the French language, Urhobo words are not pronounced as written.

Assimilation

Akpofure (2015) also discussed assimilation. She quoted Aziza (2007) as saying that: “Assimilation is a process whereby a segment takes on some or all of the features of a neighbouring segment... In Urhobo, where there are contiguous vowels, and one does not delete, assimilation occurs...” (p. 288). The following sentences indicate the points at which assimilation occurs in Urhobo articulation of these words. The sentences in French used in the following examples are taken from Martinet and Evans (1971, p. 139):

Example (1) Ce disque, Paul me le donne /ósēté r ùnè náná, Ípólù vwērō kēvwè.

[ɔ̃sete rune nana ip̄olù v̄erɔ̃ k̄ev̄e]

In this sentence the vowel [u] assimilates the vowel /e/. This compresses the two words /re/ (de) and /une/ (song) into one word /rune/, modulating the sound yet retaining the meaning.

Example (2) Ces disques, Paul me les donne /íſēté r̄ iné nānā, Ípólù vwāyé kēvwè.

[iſete rine nana, ip̄olù v̄aye k̄ev̄e]

In this sequence what happens to /re une/ above also happens to /re ine/. Actually, this assimilation occurs at the point of speech articulation, which is why /re ine/ is transcribed as [rine]. This calls to mind the fact that the last letters of French words are not usually pronounced. While this can be said to be a similarity, it should be noted that the unpronounced letters in French are not necessarily assimilated. They are just not pronounced in speech articulation.

Example (3) Cette serviette est à vous? óriābò nānā, ówé? [oriab̄o nana ɔ̃we]

óriābò nānā, ówēwé yí vwórò? Ówēwé yī vw(e) óriābò nānā?

[oriab̄o nana õwe w̄e yi voro] [ow̄ew̄e yi v̄ oriab̄o nana]

In this sentence, /vw̄e óriābò/ also indicates assimilation when it is transcribed as [v̄ oriab̄o]

Example (4) Je ne veux pas celui-ci. Je voudrais celui-là.

Mé guōnō ɸnà rō étinè nāá. Óyé re óbóyī nà mé rhá guōnò

[me gw̄on̄ ɸna r̄ etin̄e na''] [ɔ̃ye r̄ oboyi na me rha gw̄on̄o]

Mé guōnō ɸnà nāá [me gw̄on̄ ɸnana''] óyēnà mē guōnō r̄e [ɔ̃yen̄a me gw̄on̄o re]

/guōnō ɸnānā/ [gw̄on̄ ɸnana] as well as /guōnō óyēnà/ [gw̄on̄oyen̄a] are also points of assimilation.

Elision

It had been noted earlier in this work, that at the level of the definite article, vowel elision is observed when two vowels come together as in /la église - l'église/, /la école - l'école/, or when a vowel comes in contact with the aspirate /h/, as in /le hôpital - l'hôpital/. It is not so in Urhobo. Both vowels are left in place in written form but elision takes place during speech articulation.

Conclusion

So far this work has treated various forms of articles as well as demonstrative structures. To conclude, we present a summary of the findings of this study.

(1) Unlike the French article, the Urhobo article has no parts other than one—“Nà”. It is used to express

the definite as well as the indefinite article. The Urhobo article “na” does not come before the noun. It comes after it;

(2) In Urhobo neither the article /nà/ nor the noun takes an /s/ to form the plural as with the French plural form. The initial vowel of the Urhobo noun modulates to another vowel according to the nature of the vowel in question. Ex: ómò (sing) = Émò (plural);

(3) Quite like the French plural form, the Urhobo plural form does not distinguish between the masculine and the feminine gender;

(4) The Urhobo indefinite article /óvó/ does not indicate the gender of the noun whereas the French indefinite article /un/ and /une/ do so. Like the definite article, the indefinite article /óvó/ does not precede the noun. It comes after it;

(5) The partitive article /du/ does not exist in Urhobo. It has an equivalent which is the prefix of an Urhobo adjective /émèrhà/ meaning /un peu/, émé being the prefix. Thus we have /kēvwe éme émù/ - Donnes - moi du repas. Literally, it translates as /Donnes-moi un peu de repas/;

(6) While in French the partitive article /au/ is got from article + preposition, in Urhobo, it is a process of vowel elongation that creates the equivalent of this process, hence the partitive article /au/ and /aux/ would seem not to exist in Urhobo;

(7) In French the demonstrative adjective comes before the noun. In Urhobo it comes after the noun. French demonstrative adjectives indicate genders; Urhobo demonstrative adjectives do not indicate genders;

(8) French demonstrative pronouns indicate genders. Urhobo demonstrative pronouns do not indicate genders.

General Differences as Observed in This Study

The Use of the Plural “Vous”

The French pronoun /vous/ calls into play the Urhobo pronoun /òvvá/. Apart from the generic plural form of /vous/, Coffey (2014, pp. 2-3) explains that “vous” is commonly used in formal or polite speech, generally, when speaking to older persons, or superiors as in a hierarchy for instance, or to unfamiliar persons. “Vous” can also be used to express displeasure or contempt. This implies that the French pronoun /vous/ is used in various contexts. The Urhobo plural pronoun /òvvá/ simply refers to the generic plural form as in “/òvvá ihwò mè...”/“vous mes gens”, “òvvá émònà”/Vous les enfants/; “òvvá ihwò re ínaijírià...Óghéné cha òvvá ūkò!/Vous les nigérians!... Que Dieu vous aide!”

Negation

It was also noted that whereas in French negation was expressed with two words “ne...pas” with the verb in between; Urhobo simply adds another vowel to the end vowel as in /Mè guōnò réè/ [me gwɔnɔ re''] Je ne veux pas. Note that the additional vowel /e/ is transcribed with an extra tone mark. /Ó diɛ ómèvwéè/ [ɔ diɛ omɛvɛ''] Ce n'est pas moi; /Mè chà réè/ [me ʃa re''] Je ne vais pas manger.

Voudrais

Je **voudrais** celui-là. From the verb “vouloir”—to want. Urhobo does not provide a direct word to word equivalence of the conditional tense used in this sentence. For example:

Óyénà mé **rhà** guōnò/J’**aurais** voulu celui-là. In this example, “j’aurais voulu” translates “mé **rhà** guōnò”. Meanwhile, “aurais” is the past conditional mood of the verb “avoir”. But “avoir” does not feature in the

French sentence “Je voudrais celui-là”. Urhobo amplifies the sentence in order to provide an acceptable translation, hence /je voudrais/ translates into “me rha guono”. Why not “Mé rhá guōnó óyēnà” “Je voudrais celui-là ”.

iLogosi

The vowel /i/ comes in here because, according to Aziza, cited in Akpofure (2015, p. 208), “That is a syllable structure constraint in Urhobo”. It is common therefore to hear Urhobo people say: /ígógōnó/ instead of /gógōnó/ - seau. /íMishēlù/ - Michel, /íPier/ - Pierre. As touching a noun that already begins with a vowel as in /ámé/ - /eau/, /ódjá/ - /savon/, /áphiá/ - /couteau/, Urhobo has no problem. It was also noted that these initial vowels are most commonly used with borrowed words such as: /égānásè or égālásè - glass/, /ifōtō - photo/, /ótásò - tasse/.

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