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PHONOLOGICAL PROCESS OF VOWEL INSERTION OF ENGLISH LOANWORDS INTO HAUSA.

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Abstracts

Cet article étudie le phénomène de l'insertion des voyelles dans les emprunts Hausa à la langue anglaise. Nous y examinons à la fois les mécanismes d'anaptyxis et d'épenthèse. La structure morphémique dans laquelle sont subsumées les conditions de la structure des segments et la condition de séquence structurelle se présentent comme la plus plausible explication phonologique du phénomène de l'insertion des voyelles empruntées de l'anglais au Hausa

The paper examines the phonological phenomenon of vowel insertion in Hausa loanwords from English language. Both anaptyxis and epenthesis processes are examined. The morpheme structure condition in which are subsumed the segment structure conditions and the sequence structure conditions is shown to be the most plausible phonological explanation of the phenomenon of vowel insertion in Hausa loanwords from English.

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic borrowing is a fact of language. Since no two languages have the same phonological system, it is only natural therefore that the borrowed language(s) undergo(es) some phonological modifications to fit the phonological system of the borrowing language. This phenomenon has a very strong linguistic relevance, because linguistic borrowing enhances the survival of the borrowing language. In fact, languages capacity of borrowing determines largely their continued survival, because the linguistic world is dynamic and must accommodate many innovations in different languages.

A uniform attempt of the analysis of the phenomenon of vowel insertion in Hausa loanwords from English based on all the possible Hausa dialects would be too ambitious; this is due to the widespread usage of the Hausa language by both the natives and non-natives as well as the divergent conditions in the various areas

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in which it is used. This reason doesn't make the phenomenon of vowel insertion of Hausa loanwords from English to be uniform.

For the above reason, a uniform treatment of vowel insertion of English loanwords into Hausa purporting it to be true for the various Hausa dialects will be misleading and too ambitious. The paper therefore treats the phenomenon based on Kano Hausa.

Vowel insertion

Vowel insertion, technically known as epenthesis and anaptyxis, is the process of inserting a vowel especially in loanwords where it does not occur in the original language. According to Hooper vowel insertion is a natural rule, because it is so predominant in the various languages of the world. The process of vowel insertion in loanwords raises the crucial question of why does it occur at all.

Hooper (1976) proposed that vowel insertion could be the result of the morpheme structure conditions of a particular language. He maintains that various languages have different morpheme structure. The morpheme structure condition specifies the feature values that are predictable or redundant in the lexical entries of a language.

There are two types of morpheme structure conditions: segment structure condition and sequence structure condition. The segment structure condition specifies the redundant feature values regardless of their environments. For example in Hausa vowel system the two- non-low back vowels /u/, /u:/ are round, and all front vowels /i/, /i:/, /e/, /e:/ and /a/ are non-round. This vowel system rule can be represented formally thus:

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \{- \text{low} \\ \{x \text{ back} \end{array} \right\} \left. \begin{array}{l} \{+ \text{Syllabic} \\ \{x \text{ round} \} \end{array} \right\}$$

From this rule it could easily be deduced that roundness is predictable, redundant or non-distinctive for the underlying system.

The sequence structure condition states the permissible consonant sequence in a given language. The sequential condition states the phonotactic constraint, the statement concerning which segment may follow and precede other segments. The sequence structure condition could be seen as essentially a syllabification process. Within this domain, different languages have different syllable structure which is imposed on the loanwords. Once the foreign word has been syllabically adjusted to fit the native syllable structure, the nativized form with the inserted vowel is listed in the lexicon.

Syllabification theory of vowel insertion in borrowed words is in fact one of the most theoretically adequate framework within which to capture the phenomenon of vowel insertion. Hyman (1975: 235) sees the theoretical supremacy of the syllabification processes to account for vowel insertion in loan words. He noted:

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The analysis of epenthesis using syllable structure condition is more highly valued than one that attributes the process to an isolated rule... because it captures the significant relationship between phonotactic constraint and loan word treatment'.

Hyman (1975) postulates that vowel insertion in loan words is a natural rule for languages to adjust to the more natural syllable structure type i.e. the CV. According to him the most natural syllable structure type is the CV type:

"This is the only syllable type which is found in all languages; in addition it is the first which is learned in child language acquisition, even in languages having other syllable types.... A cvc syllable is somewhat unnatural..."

Hausa Syllable Structure:

Hausa has three syllable types:

- i. consonant vowel type (cv)
- ii. consonant vowel type (cvv) - where vv can represent a long vowel or a diphthong.
- iii. Consonant vowel consonant (cvc)

Except in ideophones, Hausa words always end with a vowel i.e., the word final syllable is always open. The language does not permit a consonant cluster in a syllable.

Schane (1973), Chomsky (1964), Halle (1964) and Chomsky and Halle (1968), state that the morpheme structure condition within which both the segment structure condition and the sequence structure condition are subsumed, combine to define a possible morpheme structure for the language.

Insertion to break consonant cluster (anaptyxis)

As earlier stated, the syllable structure of Hausa does not allow consonant sequence in a syllable. Therefore any loan word with consonant cluster is nativized by breaking the cluster in the syllable by way of vowel insertion.

Bulu	"Blue"	Karanshaf	"Crankshaft"
Bulo	"Block"	Pilanki	"plank"
Birkila	"bricklayer"	siminti	"cement"
Burushi	"brush"	sikeli	"scale"
Puloti	"plot"	sipirin	"spring"
Petir	"Petrol"	sitadiyam	"stadium"
Tireda	"trader"	supo	"spokes"
Duro	"draw"	kulob	"club"

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Sipana	"spanner"	Silipa	"Slipper"
Gilashi	"Glass"	Giris	"grease"
Farfela	"propellor"		

Insertion to open a closed syllable (epenthesis)

This is an attempt to open a close syllable. Although Hausa has a cvc syllable type, this obtains only in the case of ideophones e.g. fat, kal, fal, rak, tam etc. Therefore the cvc structure is somehow unnatural. In each of the following loanwords, a vowel has been inserted to make it accommodated into Hausa lexicon.

Kotu	"court"	inki	"ink"
Tanki	"tank"	pulanki	"plank"
Kulochi	"clutch"	banki	"bank"
Teburi	"table"	panti	"paint"
Geji	"gauge"	birki	"break"
Bokiti	"bucket"	chanji	"change"
Sampuri	"sample"	wili	"wheel"
Bariki	"barracks"	puloti	"plot"
Kofi	"cup"	siminti	"cement"
Rodi	"rod"	fansiri	"pencil"
Gilashi	"glass"	burodi	"bread"
Maki	"mark"	inchi	"inch"
pakiti	"packet"		
Ringi	"ring"	fanka	"fan"
Firji	"fridge"	chochi	"church"
Sukari	"sugar"	lodi	"load"
Kwalbati	"culvert"		

The vowels inserted

Hooper (1976) claims that all vowels that are inserted in purely phonetic environment are predictable on the bases of two universals:

1. The inserted vowels must always be the minimal vowels or vowels whose features are copied from a nearby segment, usually such vowels are identical to a nearby vowel, although in some cases surrounding consonants have an effect.
2. Stress languages which have vowel reduction processes insert the minimal vowel. Tone languages and vowel harmony languages insert vowels that are identical to some nearby vowel.

Hausa is a tone language and vowel insertion rule depends largely on the neighbouring vowel. There is hence a sort of vowel harmony.

In each of the following examples the inserted vowel shares some common characteristics with the neighbouring vowel:

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Bulo	'block' determined by /o/ rounding
Bulu	is determined by /u/ height
Birkila	is determined by /i/ frontness
Kotu	is determined by /o/ rounding
Tireda	is determined by /e/ fronting
Giris	is determined by /i/ fronting
Girin	is determined by /i/ fronting
Karanshaf	is determined by /a/ fronting

In addition to the determining influence of the neighbouring vowel, vowel strength hierarchy plays an important role in determining which vowel is to be inserted. The vowel strength hierarchy seems to be that the high vowels /i/ /i:/ /u/ and /u:/ are weaker than the vowels /o/, /o:/, and the front vowels /i/, /i/, /e/ are weaker than back vowels. Following this therefore, the minimal inserted vowel in Hausa is /i/. It is weaker than /u/ because /u/ has an extra feature of rounding in the following borrowed words, the inserted vowels are the typical high vowels:

Direba	"driver"
Piramare	"primary"
Pilanki	"plank"
Tebur	"table"
Tireda	"trader"
Kilina	"cleaner"
Kirista	"christian"
Kebur	"cable"
Birki	"brake"
Pilaya	"pliers"
Sipana	"spanner"
Turoza	"trouser"
Kilak	"clerk"
Durowa	"drawer"
Giris	"grease"
Sampuri	"sample"
Gulob	"globe"

Thus the inserted vowels appear to be the typical weak vowels. This rule appears to be somehow universal. Cross linguistic study of loan words confirms that weak vowels are ones typically inserted. In Japanese, for instance, the high vowels are the weakest, of the high vowels, /u/ is the preferred inserted vowel because it is the weakest (the high back vowels in Japanese have little or no rounding at all).

Evidence to support the plausibility of vowel weakness as one of the basis for vowel insertion is found in the following instances of Japanese vowel insertion Hooper (1976:237).

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Huransugo	'french'
Supeinggo	'spanish'
Bureeki	'break'
Biiiru	'beer'
Napukin	'napkin'

The universal rule could further be substantiated by data of vowel insertion from Brazilian Portuguese. In this language both /i/ and /u/ appear as reduced vowels, but only /i/ acts as epenthetic vowel. It is preferable to /u/ because /u/ is stronger as a result of its added feature of roundness. The following data proves the hypothesis, Hooper (1976:236)

Portugal	Brazil	
Substituysao	subistituysao	'substitution'
Advokadu	adzivocadu	'Lawyer'
Futbol	futsibol	'soccer'
Admiraval	adzimiraval	'admirable'

Similarly, in English / ə / is the minimal vowel and therefore typically inserted especially in rapid speech.

CONCLUSION

Vowel insertion in Hausa could be treated within the Generative Framework of phonology. Its ubiquitous nature in several other languages proves the fact that it is a natural phonological process. The morpheme structure condition within which the segment structure and sequence structure conditions are subsumed so far proves to be the most adequate to prove succinctly the phonological phenomenon of vowel insertion cross linguistically.

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