



Research Paper

## A descriptive phonological study of consonant-insertion in the anglicisation of Yoruba names: An example of secondary school students in southwestern Nigeria

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### Abstract

It is obvious nowadays that Yorùbá youngster love to globalise their indigenous names, hence, attempt to make them look foreign. The focus of this paper is on the descriptive phonological study of consonant-insertion in the Anglicisation of Yorùbá names. The data for the study were collected from students in secondary schools who are of age brackets thirteen and seventeen. This set of secondary school students were chosen to find out whether the exhibition of the inborn morphological rules of word formation actually begins with these age groups or not. A corpus of anglicised names was elicited from secondary school students who have Yorùbá origin and bear Yorùbá names. These students who are spread across Yorùbá speaking states also have both Christian and traditional religions as their backgrounds. The students write these customised names on their chairs, lockers, school bags, notebooks and textbooks. Some of them also use it on their facebook pages as identifier. The paper examines the consonant that is mostly engaged among other consonants employed in the Anglicisation of Yorùbá names and the effect of such in the process. This study adopts Optimality Theory (OT) for the analysis its data. The study finds out that h records (70.4%) the highest score at both word-initial and word-final positions and that most of the time, insertion of h has no significant phonological effect on the Anglicisation process.

**Keywords:** insertion, phoneme, Anglicised name, syllable, Yorùbá

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### I. Introduction

One of the common practices in every society is name giving. A name could be traced to a background - family, tradition, religion, town, tribe and nation. The implication of this is that names have meanings; hence, names are not just given to children, especially, in this clime, without first considering the meanings. The main function of a name is to describe or distinguish a person from other animals, place or objects. The importance of naming among human beings is revealed in that whenever a child is born, it has a general name – baby, until it is given a specific name for distinction.

In some cultures, in Africa (e.g Nigeria), naming is an essential (ceremony) event, either elaborate or otherwise. There is a parlance in one of the tribes in Nigeria, Yorùbá, to be specific, that a name is given to a child in order to identify him whenever he foments troubles or commits crimes. In African countries, name has cultural embodiment. For example, in Yorùbá culture, names are traceable to the cultural background of individuals.

Furthermore, among other things the whites brought to Africa during colonial era were English names. English names were embedded in Christian religion. Christian religion was introduced through western education. In the literature, Samuel Ajayi Crowther was one of the early Africans that embraced the western names.

Since the advent of colonial Lords, there were dramatic changes in the socio-cultural life of African countries. This has also affected the naming of children. For example, those Africans that embraced Christianity always wanted to give their babies foreign names, especially, those that were found in the bible. This has however graduated to Anglicisation of traditional names by the youngsters of nowadays. This they do either by absolute conversion, e.g Ségun to Victor, Ìrètí to Hope or by substituting the sounds of the local names, e.g Adéjoké to Herdayjorke (Ojo 2017).

It has been noticed recently that the Anglicisation of Yorùbá names is taking a new form of the insertion of some consonants to make them sound western. Therefore, the present paper focuses on this consonant-insertion into Yorùbá names not at syntactic or morphological level but phonological among Nigerian Yorùbá-English bilinguals who are secondary school students.

## II. Review of Related Works

Insertion of vowels is a common phenomenon in the modification of foreign words to conform to the syllable template of the recipient language. Yorùbá, for example, has two different types of epenthetic vowels: /i/ and /u/. These two vowel sounds have been employed by many scholars to modify borrowed words (Salami 1969; Ufomata 2004; Ojo 2014). The central aim of these studies is the resyllabification of borrowed English words with a sequence of consonants to conform to the canon of the local (recipient) language.

Eze, Aboh, and Eze, (2020) while studying the Anglicisation of Yorùbá conventional names assert that even though, the prefix /-h/ attached to the instances of Yorùbá names is a common phenomenon but it has no serious structural implication on the morphological process. They also observe that addition of a sound at the word-final position, consonant clusters and deletion of glyphs characterise the prototypes of word formation in the Anglicisation of Yorùbá names.

While investigating Anglicisation of Yorùbá personal names among Nigerian youth, Fájóbí and Akómóláǹfẹ́ (2019) argues that, of all phonological processes involved (such as syllable modification, reduction, deletion and replacement), “stress-shift” is the prevalent suprasegmental approach employed. He posits further that the structure of the newly derived names has the semblance of English grammar, though in pronunciation, they are more of Yoruba’s.

Akinola (2014) says in the name of globalisation and modernisation, the significant cultural meanings attached to Yorùbá names has been altered through customisation. The implication of this is that the communicative roles that such names play have been eroded. He therefore discourages Anglicisation of names among the youth in order to preserve their cultural heritage.

According to Komolafe (2014), name customising is an evident that the youth possess that innate ability which enables them to form new words from existing ones. He however tagged the customised names “nonsense syllables” after recreation because the bearers of such names usually indicate them in different ways. The paper therefore cautions the users not to transfer this customisation of names to conventional day-to-day writing.

## III. Methodology and Framework

From the studies reviewed above, it is observed that most of the data were gathered among youth in tertiary institutions. On the contrary, data for this study were gathered from students in secondary schools. These students are in the age brackets of thirteen (13) and seventeen (17). Secondary students were chosen to find out whether the manifestation of the innate morphological rules of word formation as noted by Komolafe (2014) actually begins from higher institution or not.

A corpus of anglicised names was elicited from secondary school students who have Yorùbá origin and bear Yorùbá these names. These students who are spread across Yorùbá speaking states also have both Christian and traditional religious as their backgrounds. The students write these customised names on their chairs, lockers, school bags, notebooks and textbooks. Some of them also use it on their facebook pages as identifier. The summaries of the consonant insertion are captured in the Table 1 below.

Phoneme	Word-initial Position	Word-final Position	Total
/h/	76	100	176
/t/	0	61	61
/y/	0	13	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>250</b>

**Table 1: Summaries of Consonant Insertion**

It is revealed by the table above that three consonants are inserted in the Anglicisation process. The consonants are /h, r, y/. It is also obviously clear that they were inserted at the initial and final positions of the syllables involved. In all, there are 250 input segments distributed into frequencies as follows: /h/ 76 and 100 entries word-initially and word-finally respectively. /r/ was not inserted at the word-initial position but has 61 at the word-final position. /y/ has nothing at the onset but 13 at the coda.

This study adopts Optimality Theory (OT) for the analysis of data. In this theory, generator (GEN) generates all possible outputs of the given phonemes (consonants) and their possible outcomes are evaluated with a series of ranked constraints to ascertain the level of violation each candidate incurs. The candidate that incurs the least serious violations in the constraint ranking is selected as the winning (optimal) candidate. This phonological process is schematically represented in the form of a sample tableau given below as prescribed by Miao (2005).

Input	Constraint -1	Constraint- 2	Constraint- 3	Constraint- 4
☞ A				*
B		*!		
C			*!	

*Optimality Theory Mechanism (Adapted from Miao 2005)*

#### IV. Data analysis and Discussion

The three consonants that are of particular interest are: *h*, *r* and *y*. These consonants are inserted into Yorùbá names in an attempt to anglicise them. This consonant insertion discussion is not at the level of morphology but the changes that occur at phonological level. The general observable feature that is common to this insertion is the expansion of segments in a syllable. And the least of the syllables are trisyllabic words. Therefore, his section is discussed under three categories, viz: insertion of *h*, insertion of *r* and insertion of *y*.

##### 4.1 Insertion of *h*

It is observed from the data that *h* is inserted into polysyllabic words at word-initial and word-final positions. The phoneme is contiguously situated either before or after [o], [a] and [k] word-initially and word-finally. For instance, Moyinoluwa becomes Mohyinohlukwah. In this anglicised name, *h* is located after *o* (word-finally) in the first constituent, before *h* (word-initially) in the third constituent and after *a* (word-finally) in the fifth constituent. The syllable shapes of the original name are CV#CV#V#CV#CV but when /h/ is inserted, it becomes CVC#CV#V#CCV#CVC. The syllable template of Yoruba is C<sup>0-1</sup>V which neither permits consonant as the final element (CVC) nor a sequence of consonants (CCV). But the output here reveals that structure that is similar to English syllable template.

It is also noteworthy that /h/ has phonological influence on the phoneme that is adjacent to. The features of such phoneme are affected. Just like in English consonant aspirated variants (C<sup>h</sup>). For instance, Bùkòlá that is anglicised as Bukholar, here, the plain feature of /k/ has been influenced by /h/ that situated contiguously to it. /k/ has become an aspirated (k<sup>h</sup>) phoneme. Table 2 below reveals the influence that h-insertion has on [o], [a] [k], [b] and [d].

Position	Input (Phoneme)	Output			Faithful	Deviation
		Faithful	Deviation	Total	%	%
Onset	(o) [h]	0	26	26	0	100
	(a) [h]	0	27	27	0	100
	C <sup>h</sup>	4	7	11	36.36	63.64
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>6.25</b>	<b>93.75</b>
Coda	(o) [h]	0	7	7	0	100
	(a) [h]	0	55	55	0	100
	C <sup>h</sup>	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>36.36</b>	<b>63.64</b>

**Table 2: Influence of h-insertion on [o], [a] [k], [b] and [d]**

The above table shows that, both at the word-initial and word-final positions, 26 (100%) and 27 (100%) anglicised names wrongly attract h-insertion in an attempt to derive English /əu/ and the foreign /a:/

respectively. For example, (i) let us take a look at Olúwatòsìn that is anglicised as Holuwahtohsin. Insertion of [h] at the first and fourth constituents word-initially and word-finally respectively in this name has not changed the status of Yorùbá [o], rather, it increases the number of the segments in the name and this can be regarded as superfluous. (ii) h-insertion after [a] is irrelevant in Fahjanah (Fájánà). The implication of this deviant realisation is that insertion of /h/ into 53 anglicised names is insignificant in the conversion of Yorùbá names to English names. Also, the data reveals that [h] is contiguous to some consonants [ e.g k, b and d] in the Anglicisation process. In total, [h] is inserted into 11 Yorùbá names out of which 4 (36.36%) were faithfully inserted. This is attested in the following instances:

(i) in anglicised Kháyòrdéy (Káyòdé), /k/ enjoys additional puff of air which is a feature of variant realisation plain /k/;

(ii) in the first constituent, /b/ is aspirated in Bámidélé that becomes Bhamidehleh.

(iii) in Dholarpor (Dòlápò), /d/ is also aspirated. The remaining 7 (63.64%) are deviant in their realisation. Example of such deviant realisation can be found in Yemhie (Yẹmí), Whumie (Wùmí) etc. Another observable fact here is consonant cluster /kh, bh, dh/. Yoruba syllable canon does not recognise a series of consonant (cluster) because it is not permissible by the language. But the process here has violated the rule that forbids consonant cluster in the composition of Yorùbá syllable structure. When *h* is inserted next to another consonant in Yorùbá names, such as we have above, it confirms the possibility of consonant cluster in Yorùbá syllable template. The /kh/ cluster in the example above is also similar to the variant of the English aspirated /k<sup>h</sup>/.

#### 4.2 Insertion of *r*

Insertion of *r* in the phonological process of Anglicisation of Yorùbá indigenous names has its influence on vowels [a] and [ɔ], especially, at the word-final position. In the inventory of Yorùbá phonemes, /a:/ is not attested but when it is located next to *r* in the Anglicisation process, it changes to phoneme /a:/. For instance, Àlàbí → Harlabi [alabi → ha:labi]. This phoneme /a:/, which has been imported into Yorùbá names in the Anglicisation process, is present in the inventory of the English vowels. Also when /t/ is next to [ɔ] in some English spellings, it changes its lax feature to tense feature [ɔ:] which is absent in Yorùbá vowel sounds. For instance, Káyòdé becomes Khayordey[kajòde → khajò:dej].

Position	Input (Phoneme)	Output		Total	Faithful %	Deviation %
		Faithful	Deviation			
Onset	(a) [r]	0	0	0	0	0
	(ɔ) [r]	0	0	0	0	0
Coda	(a) [r]	22	17	39	56.41	43.59
	(ɔ) [r]	9	13	22	40.91	59.09
	<b>Total</b>	31	30	61	50.82	49.18

**Table 3: Influence of r-insertion on [a] and [ɔ]**

Table 3 above reveals that at word-initial position, insertion of [r] is inconsequential; therefore, there is no single instance in the data for this study. There are 61 anglicised names that attract h-insertion at the word-final position. [r] is located immediately after [a] in 39 of them. 22 (56.41%) shares the feature of foreign /a:/. For instance, in Horlarmidey (Ọlámídé), the vowel of the second constituent is similar to English /a:/. There are also cases deviant realisation of the intended segments. One of them is evident in Hardeyshewar (Adésewà). This example of anglicised name is a total aberration to the original meaning of the name. The correct morpho-phonological realisation of this anglicised name is [ha:dejfewɔ:]. From the close phonological examination of the final constituent of this example, it is pronounced as *war*, whereas, in the original name, it is *beauty*. The meanings of the two are far apart but to the users, the two (i.e the original and the anglicised names) are realised as the same entity.

#### 4.3 Insertion of /y/

The equivalent sound to this letter is /j/. There are instances of insertion of /j/ in the Anglicisation of Yorùbá names in the data for this study. For instance, Ọlóládé that becomes Horlohlahdey

[ɔlɔlade → hɔlɔlahdej]. The insertion of /j/ as the final element in this name is irrelevant, hence, redundant. To the users, it is intended to derive /əu/ of the English equivalent.

## V. Output of the Consonants Insertion

The intention of the users of these anglicised words is to transform the Yorùbá names to make them look like foreign names. In the process some English phonemes have surreptitiously entered into Yorùbá inventory of sounds. The outputs of the insertion of each of the phonemes are discussed in turn below.

### 5.1 Output of the Insertion of *h*

There are various manifestations of the insertion of *h* in the data for the study. The intention of the compilers or users of these anglicised names is to make them foreign but they got it wrong with the insertion of *h*. This h-insertion is divided into five categories as discussed below.

#### 5.1.1 Wrong Derivation of /eɪ/

The aim of the users of anglicised names by inserting *h* after *e* in their spellings is to derive the English diphthong /eɪ/. This is not so in English phonology: it has not been empirically proven. The phonological transformation that takes place in the derivation of the diphthong /eɪ/ is the glide of /e/ to /ɪ/ and the two sounds are articulated as one. For instance, in *Adéṣoba* that becomes *Hardehobar* → [ha:dehɔba:], insertion of *h* has not changed the phonological features of *e*. Therefore, it can be concluded that the insertion is unimportant.

#### 5.1.2 Wrong Derivation of /a:/

*h* is contiguously located to *a* with the intention to change its features from lax to tense but the glottis sound cannot be employed to achieve this. In English, /a:/ is a tense back vowel and it is commonly found in spellings such as ‘*ar*’ *park*, ‘*a*’ *father*, ‘*au*’ *aunt*, ‘*al*’ *half*, ‘*ass*’ *pass*, ‘*ast*’ *mask*, ‘*ear*’ *heart* and ‘*er*’ *clerk*. ‘*ah*’ in English spelling has not been realised as /a:/, therefore, inserting *h* after *a* in the spelling of anglicised name has no phonological effect. It is just an extension of the number of phonemes in a syllable, thus, redundant. For example, there is no crucial phonological role that the addition of *h* plays in *Bóláji* that becomes *Bolahji*[bɔlahji]. It has neither expanded the syllables in the word nor affected any of the letters or sounds contiguously located to it. The only result in the addition of *h* is CVCVCV → CVCVCCV which is phonologically insignificant.

#### 5.1.3 Wrong Derivation of /əʊ/

In the data, *h* is situated both word-initially and word-finally in the anglicised names. This is demonstrated for instance in the Anglicisation of ‘*Olúwadámílólá*’ *Holuwahdahmilolah* and ‘*Moyinólúwa*’ *Mohyinohluwah*. Take for example, in the first constituents of the two anglicised names, there are two different phonological realisations; the constituent of the first anglicised name is ‘*Ho*’ CV while the second is ‘*Moh*’ CVC, whereas, in the original Yorùbá names, the first constituents of the two names are V and CV respectively. The inconsistency noted in this type of h-insertion is an indication that the addition is irrelevant. It is however noteworthy that, CVC structure, which is a closed syllable not permitted in the template of Yorùbá but English has been covertly imported into Yorùbá syllable canon.

#### 5.1.4 Wrong Derivation of /i:/

Sound /i:/ is mostly found in English spellings that have the following combinations as their member-alphabets:

‘*ee*’ *see*, ‘*ea*’ *meat*, ‘*ie*’ *belief*, ‘*ei*’ *seize*, ‘*ae*’ *aesthetic*, ‘*eo*’ *people*, ‘*oe*’ *amoeba*, ‘*ya*’ *quay*, ‘*ey*’ *key*, ‘*ui*’ *suite*,

‘*e*’ *theme*, etc. All these are possible blends, and not *ih*, for the derivation of /i:/ as found in the data. For

instance, the insertion of *h* after *i* in *Títílàyò* *Tihtiylayor*[tihtiylajɔ:] has no phonological impact on the latter.

The two letters (*i* and *h*) cannot be conceived as a sound. Nevertheless, anglicised names that combined ‘*ie*’,

which is one of the possible combinations by which /i:/ could be derived, were found in data. Since the current

endeavour is on consonant insertion, this is reserved for a future study.

#### 5.1.5 Wrong Derivation of /ɔ:/

In order to derive the above vowel, some wrong combinations of letters were attested by the data. The bearers/users of these anglicised Yorùbá names insert *h* after *o* in an attempt to derive /ɔ:/; *oh* combination is not one of the blends by which /ɔ:/ is derived. In the data for example, the insertion of *h* after *o* into *Qlóládé* *Horlohladey* is irrelevant. This back tense vowel could only be found in English spellings such as ‘*ar*’ *war*, ‘*al*’ *talk*, ‘*au*’ *taught*, ‘*aw*’ *law*, ‘*oa*’ *board*, ‘*eor*’ *George*, ‘*or*’ *port*, ‘*oor*’ *door*, ‘*our*’ *court*, ‘*a*’ *water*, etc.

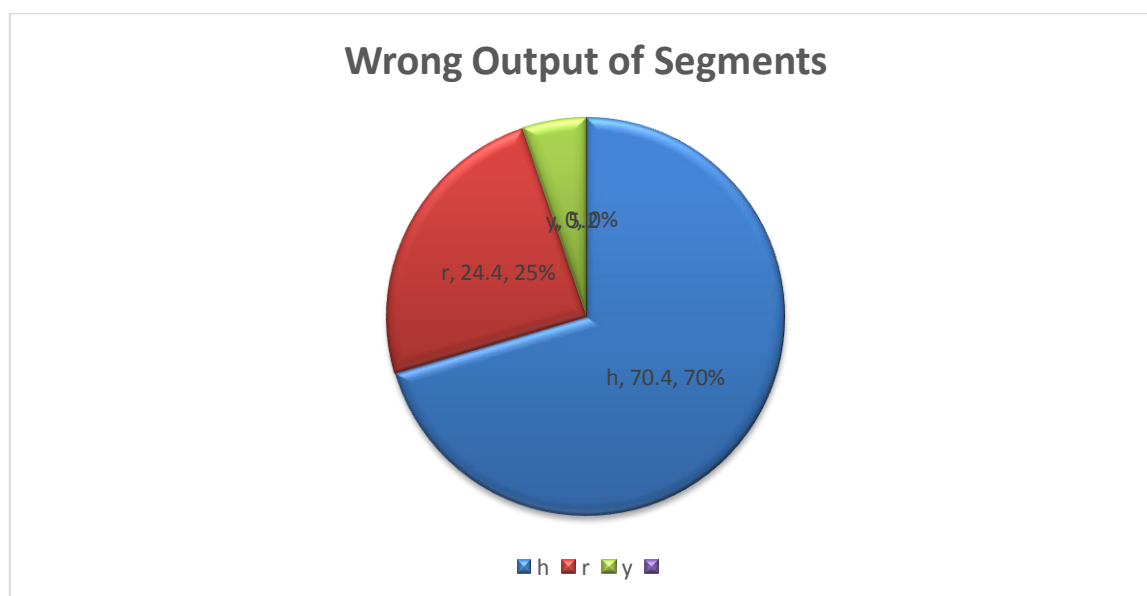
### 5.2 Output of the insertion of r

The insertion of /r/ into some Yorùbá anglicised names resulted into the derivation of /a:/. It has been established by various studies that one of the ways to determine /a:/ is when r is located immediately after a in some English spellings, such as *hard, large, park* etc. Data for this study manifest various instances of /r/ insertion after [a]. For instance, *Adépolá* is spelt as *Hardeholar* → [ha:deola:]. From this example, the foreign /a:/ has been imported to Yoruba vowels. It is also observed in the data that /r/ is adjacently situated to [o] in some spellings of the anglicised names. Again, according to linguists, when r is next to o in some English spellings, it resulted to /ɔ:/. This type of spelling is common in the data for this study. Take for instance, *Adébáyò* becoming *Hardeybayor* → [ha:dejbajɔ:].

Input	Intended Output	Frequency	Percentage
[h]	/ei/	26	10.4
	/a:/	82	32.8
	/əu/	33	13.2
	/i:/	7	2.8
	/ɔ:/	17	6.8
	C <sup>h</sup>	11	4.4
[r]	/a:/	39	15.6
	/ɔ:/	22	8.8
[y]	/ei/	13	5.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4: Summaries of Wrong Derivation of /ei; a:,əu; i:, ɔ:/

From the above table, there are 250 input segments of [h], [r] and [y] with varying intended outputs of /ei; a:,əu; i:, ɔ:C<sup>h</sup>/. Out of the total input, [h] has the highest as it records 176 (70.4%), this followed by [r] with the total of 61 (24.4%) and [y] with the least score of 13 (5.2%). This is represented below in a pie chart.



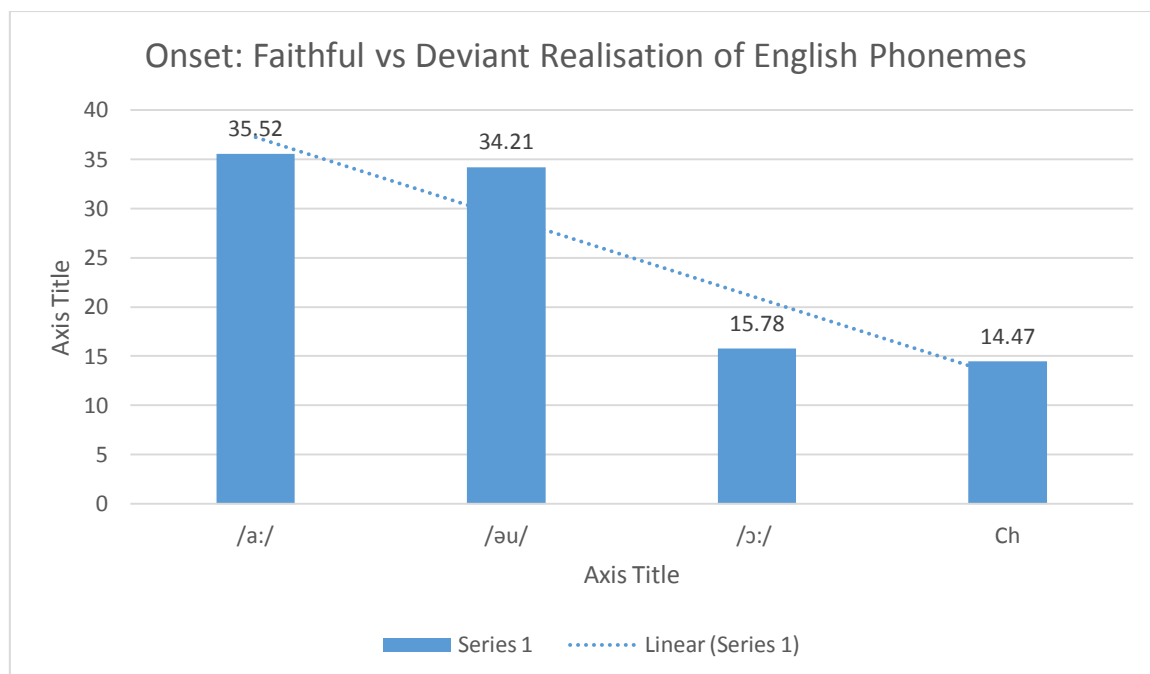
Position	Input (Phoneme)	Output				Faithful	Deviation
		Intended	Faithful	Deviation	Total	%	%
Onset	[h]	/ei/	0	0	0	0	0
		/a:/	0	27	27	0	100
		/əu/	0	26	26	0	100
		/i:/	0	0	0	0	0
		/ɔ:/	0	12	12	0	100
		C <sup>h</sup>	4	7	11	36.36	63.64
	<b>Total</b>		4	72	76	5.26	94.74
	/a:/	0	0	0	0	0	



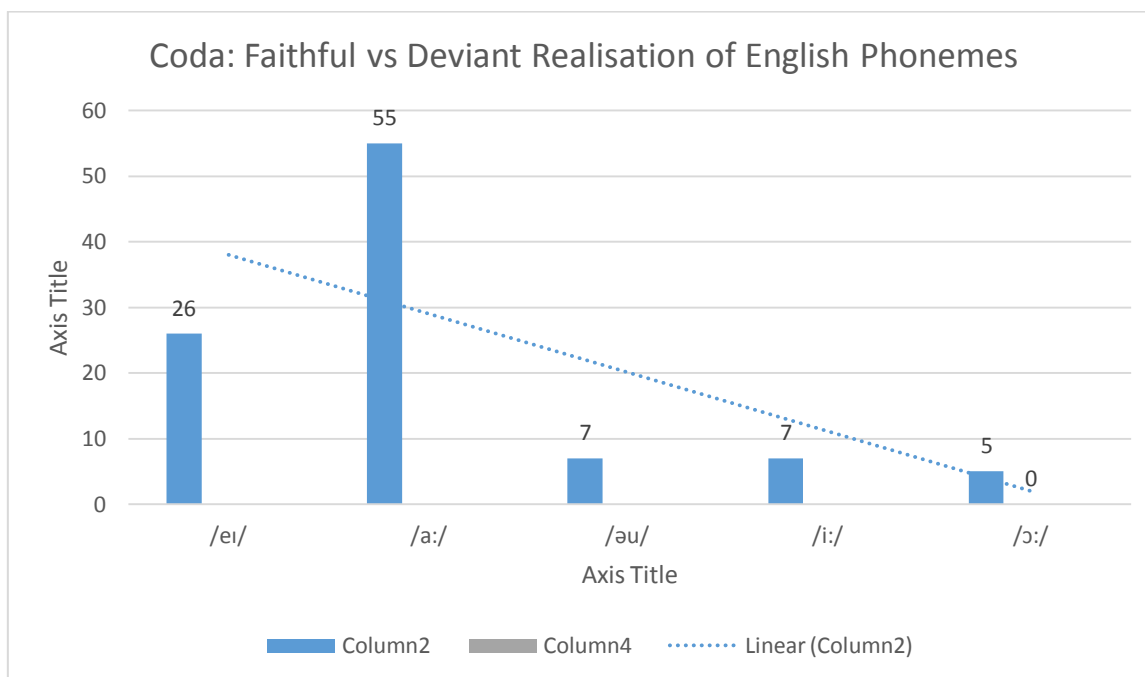
	[r]	/ɔ:/	0	0	0	0	0
	[y]	/ei/	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Coda</b>	[h]	/ei/	0	26	26	0	100
		/a:/	0	55	55	0	100
		/əu/	0	7	7	0	100
		/i:/	0	7	7	0	100
		/ɔ:/	0	5	5	0	100
		C <sup>h</sup>	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>		0	100	100	0	100
	[r]	/a:/	22	17	39	56.41	43.59
		/ɔ:/	9	13	22	40.91	59.09
	[y]	/ei/	0	13	13	0	100
<b>Total</b>		35	215	250	14	86	

**Table 4: Intended Faithful versus Deviation Outputs of [h], [r] and [y] Insertions**

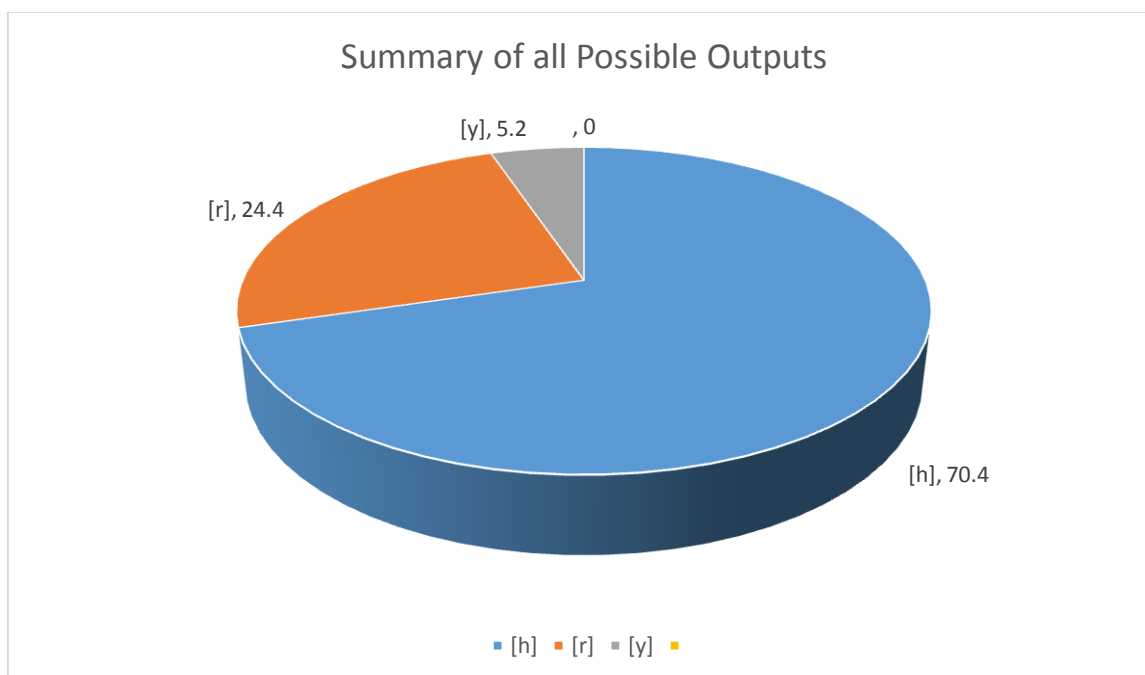
Table 4 above reveals various targeted Anglicisation processes through the insertion of [h, r, y]. In the process, some of the outputs are faithfully realised as attested in English. For instance, at the word-initial position, h is contiguously situated to some in attempt to realise some English vowels. Though, they all violated the process, their outcomes are as follow: /a:/ 27 (35.52%); /əu/ 26 (34.21%); /ɔ:/ 12 (15.78%). Also, the contiguous insertion of *h* to some consonants to realise aspirated (C<sup>h</sup>) phonemes records 4 (5.26%) word-initially. Though, this may be minimal but it is an evidence of faithful adaptation of English phonemes. The remaining 7 (9.21%) violates the process. There are no instances of insertion of the remaining two consonants (r, y). It is also worthy of note that many of the instances in the data completely deviated from faithful realisation of English phonemes. For example, the table shows that at the word-initial position, faithful realisation scores 4 (5.26%) while 72 (94.74%) violates the process. The chart below gives the summary of the above analysis.



At the coda, h was inserted to realise some foreign vowels but they all violated derivation rules of English phonology. The outcomes are /ei/26 (26%); /a:/ 55 (55%); /əu/ 7 (7%); /i:/ 7 (7%) and /ɔ:/ 5 (5%). This is represented below with a bar chart.



In all, h records the highest score in the insertion processes, it scores 176 (70.4%) at both word-initial and word-final positions. This followed by r which has no case word-initially but 61 (24.4%) word-finally. The least is y with 13 (5.2%) instances at the word-final position but zero case at the onset. Find below in a chart, the summary of the insertion processes.



## VI. Conclusion

Anglicisation of Yorùbá names is a common phenomenon among Nigerian Yorùbá youth as opined by some early studies. However, this study shows that the manifestation of this phonological transformation actually begins among the teenagers in the secondary school. The study established that among the consonants adopted in the Anglicisation process, h is mostly employed. This paper also found out some foreign phonemes have covertly entered into Yorùbá inventory of sounds. Finally, more than often, the insertion of these consonants has no phonological significance, rather, it alters the pronunciation of the names to give different



meanings; it even sometime results to oral incoherence, hence, meaningless. Therefore, the insertion is inconsequential as it serves as extraneous phoneme in the syllable.

Nevertheless, anglicised names that combined 'ie', which is one of the possible combinations of sounds by which /i:/ could be derived, were found in data. Since the current endeavour is on consonant insertion, this is reserved for further study.

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