



Sociolinguistic analysis of surname as marker of identity among Ilorin Indigenes in Nigeria

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Abstract

Every being has name as identity, and surname can mark identity among people within a community. Thus, this study seeks to examine surname as markers of identity among the Ilorin people through a sociolinguistic approach. The study, based communication accommodation theory, surveyed 150 indigenous Ilorin surnames from respondents, library, archive and scheduled interview with ten elders as principal informants. Data collected were analysed and the surnames subjected to socio-linguistic analysis. The study revealed that Ilorin surnames can be Yorùbá-based, Hausa/ Fulani, foreign and clerical names with gods/goddesses substituted with professional names. Surnames indicating 'ownership' have 'Oní' as their root prefix and underwent; deletion, assimilation and denasalization when the suffix starts with a vowel and remain untransformed when a consonant starts the suffix. Ilorin surnames are unique to Ilorin indigenes, hence signified ethnic identity but with similar syntax, semantics and structure as other Yorùbá names.

Keywords: surnames, Ilorin, marker, identity, sociolinguistic

Introduction

Human language which was thought to have originated from early hominins changed over time as a result of social convention and learning. It has basic properties of productivity, recursion and displacement. Estimate of world languages vary between 5000 and 7000 depending on the criteria for distinguishing between language and dialect. Language as a multifaceted system of communication used by human beings serves a means of social construction in depicting identities and ideological views in everyday life. Wacewicz and Zywiczyński (2014), in Hockett characteristics of human language opined that human language is learned, discrete, recombinable, intuitive, interchangeable, reflexive, arbitrary, redundant, displace and productive. They believed that language evolved in two steps involving blending which occurred when human ancestors began to produce new calls by combining two old ones and in the duality of patterning stage, humans acquired the ability to produce arrangements of blended sounds. Spoken languages depict peoples' personality and identity (Gisbon, 2004). Aside personal identity, Spolsky (1999), noted that "a language is a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity" (p. 181) and joins individuals in a speech community to reflect togetherness and hence solidarity as distinctive "quasi-beings which express their identities" (Auer 2007, p. 2).

According to Harder (2008), names are tags for living or non-living, concrete or abstract being. Name is a linguistic item classified under language and it performs communicative functions. The concept of naming is universal, thus, every object of creation, abstract or real once in existence has a name. Therefore, name is defined as a word by which a person, animal, place, thing or concept is known and spoken to or of. It offers a means with which identity is specified. No matter where a

person hails from, East or West, North or South; s/he has a name, hence it is ubiquitous across all cultures of the world, modern or ancient. Names of human can be; personal names/ proper name/ first name/ fore name is gifted at birth, and last name/ family name or surname. According to Mphande (2006), is ubiquitous and non-discriminatory to race, gender and nations though with certain peculiarities.

Scholarly works have been done on compilation of dictionary (Babalola & Alaba, 2003), structure (Sangotoro, 2002), sociolinguistic (Akinnaso, 1980) and pragma-sociolinguistic (Ajileye & Ajileye, 2003) of Yoruba names/ nicknames. Although, Ikotun (2014), showed that surname can mark identity among some Yoruba ethnic groups, he however did not include any Yoruba tribe in North Central of Nigeria. Hence, there is dearth of information. Thus, the present research seeks to x-ray surname as markers of identity among the Ilorin Yoruba sub ethnic group which is one of most populous Yoruba speaker in Kwara State. Also, it intends to examine the sociolinguistic basis of such names since they are social phenomena in the society.

Research objectives

The present study aims to address the following objectives:

- 1.To highlight and categorize surnames of the Ilorin sub ethnic group.
- 2.To examine the uniqueness of Ilorin surnames.
- 3.To analyze the linguistic features in Ilorin Yoruba surnames.
- 4.To analyze the word transformation pattern of the surnames of Yoruba Ilorin people.

Hypotheses

H01: Yorubanised Ilorin surnames have similar socio-linguistic classification and perceptions like other Yoruba surnames.

H02: Yorubanised Ilorin surnames are not peculiar to Yoruba Ilorin Indigenes.

H03: Yorubanised Ilorin surnames have similar semantic, structure and syntax like other Yoruba surnames.

H04: Yorubanised Ilorin surnames have similar morphological features associated with word transformation like other Yoruba surnames.

Literature review

Concept of Yoruba

‘Yorùbá’ is both the language and people that dominate south-western Nigeria. They are of different dialects though mutually understandable. The word Yorùbá’ is used to rebuke and also commend one who conducts him/herself in an improper manner and good conduct respectively. According to Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) world book fact (2013), the Yoruba are about 40 million with most of them in Nigeria and others West Africa. Yorùbás are also among the majority in Kogi and Kwara states. In Kwara, Ilorin is one of the major Yoruba- speech communities.

Ilorin in brief

Ilorin (*ilo irin* meaning iron sharpener) as a Yoruba settlement is widely believed to have been built by a hunter called Ojo who is from Gambe near Oyo-ile (Jimoh, 1994). The present-day indigenized Yoruba speakers in Ilorin are a conglomerate of many tribes among the Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Malian and Yoruba. According to Hermon-Hodge (1929), the claim to the ownership of Ilorin as a town is between Afonja (the Are Ona Kakanfo of Old Oyo) and Mallam Alimi, a Fulani associated with Gwandu. Thus, giving rise to the dichotomy ‘Ilorin Afonja’ (Ilorin the town of Afonja) and Ilorin Garin Alimi (Ilorin the town of Alimi) (Omoiya, 2003). The surnames of Ilorin indigenes are linked to the historical war-lord blocks as Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani names. These names have the propensity to depict the bearers’ identity.

Ethnic Identity in Yoruba land

Identity is the distinctive features of an individual or a group that is intrinsically connected to naming and self worth. **De Pina-Cabral (2008)**, opined that “naming processes carry with them implications concerning what a person is and how he or she is placed in the world” (p. 5). **Norton (2000 p. 5)**, viewed identity as “how a person understands his/her relationship to the world, how this relationship is constructed in time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future”. **Park (2007)** saw identity as “an inherently social product that is jointly created by interactants, rather than as a pre-determined, psychological construct that is lodged within each individual's mind” (p. 341). **Reicher (2004)** opined: “we clearly belong to a variety of social groups that are differentially salient to us in different conditions. It is the shift from personal to social identity that underlies the behavioural shift from interpersonal to intergroup behaviour” (p. 928). According to Val and Vinogradova (2010) identity is a changing and fluid concept in a society and its relationship with language is "complex" and "continually shifting" (**Ansaldo, 2010, p. 615**).

Ethnic identity is communal features shared by a speech community, different from others, that make them associate and have sense of togetherness and solidarity as a single entity. Yorùbá as an entity has its origin in Oduduwa and Ile-Ife. The tie to Yorùbá is based on blood-relation, otherwise called *Ebi*, and the link to Ile-Ife, the *Orisun* (source) of Yorùbá race.

Concept of Name and Naming Practice among the Yorùbá

Onomastics is the study of forenames and their origin which could be sub-divided into study of: proper names (anthroponymy), name of places (toponymy), animals (Zoonymy), stars (astronymy) component of the universe (cosmonymy), gods (theonymy) (Coates, 2005). From the foregoing, anthroponomastics can be defined as a branch of onomastics which studies the names of human beings: given names, surnames, clan names, matronyms (personal name based on the name of feminine antecedent), patronyms (personal name based on masculine relations), teknonyms or paedonymic (practice of referring to parents by the names of their children), nicknames, ethnonyms (names applied to a given ethnic group) (Coates, 2005).

A name among the Yoruba is engraved stamp that relates the bearer to his/ her family and the society. Yoruba name at a glance can reveal family history, religion, events at birth and state of birth.

Surnames as Markers of Identity

A surname is an ancestral name variously called last name or family name (Turnbull, 2010). According to Harder (2008), last name indicates a person's family background. Ikotun (2014), opined that Yoruba surnames are syntactically noun phrase and a simple clause reflecting gods or goddesses and dialectic lexical items respectively. Ikotun (2014), studied surnames as marker of identity among some Yoruba ethnic groups using data sourced from JAMB registration list of some universities in South-western Nigeria. He found that most traditional-based Yoruba names are associated with some particular ethnic groups thus serving as marker for them. For instance, he opined that surnames such as Soyinka, Sowumi, Odukoya are associated with Ijebu; Afonja, Ajuwon, Gbadegesin with Oyo; Ikuesan, Okunuwa, Ebibowale with Ilaje; Omisakin, Elufidipe, Orafidiya with Ife; Okebukola, Okegbemi, Oketade with Oyo-Ibadan; and Ogunsanwo, Ogunbewon with Egba. On the mention of these names, one can tag the bearer to an ethnic group, thus depicting a collective identity.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

This study is predicated on Speech theory promulgated by Giles (1973), and currently known as communication accommodation theory (CAT). It links language and identity and assumes that language blending results from interaction and ultimately convergence which adapts, seeks similarity and approval or divergence which manifest and magnify difference to reflect identity. The third is over-accommodation wherein a group overbear to accommodate the excesses of others. The link between CAT and identity can be explored through sociolinguistics. A sociolinguistic study of

language use exposes social constructs (identity) and, individual and ethnic identity (Holmes, 2001). The interdependence of language and society underscore the enormous effects they have on the inhabitants of a particular society and his/her identity.

Research Tools

Data gathering on Surnames

150 indigenous Ilorin surnames were collected from respondents, from the library and archive. The surnames were not collected based on any predetermined criteria once they are of Ilorin surnames. The survey and archive search were stopped as soon as the 150th surname was obtained. These surnames were thereafter grouped based on their origins into the Hausa, Fulani or Yoruba or colonial-based surnames or names of clerics adopted as surnames. In addition, ten (10) elders of Ilorin origin were selected and interviewed as principal informants to corroborate information on meaning and origin of the surnames. They were from different backgrounds such as clerics, academics, artisans and politicians in order to get a balance view (see Table 1). The opinions of these elders on the likely origin of these surnames, their meanings and imports were harmonized. Also, the personal experience and observation of the researcher was used to implement these instruments.

Data Analysis

Demographic data such age and sex were obtained from the subjects. Percentages of respondent for each of the measured variables and elicitors were computed. All the surnames obtained were subjected to socio-linguistic analysis. The contextual meaning of the names as used in Ilorin were revealed, socio-classifications of the names were portrayed and their morphological features assayed. Surnames were classified based on their meanings and analysed using linguistic feature such as semantics- to reveal their meanings, syntactic- to reveal syllabic abdication and lexical and structural analyses which show the tense composition of each name.

Results

Demographic Data of the Ten (10) Respondents Interviewed on Surnames Borne by Ìlòrin Indigenes

All the respondents interviewed were aged above 40 to 79. 20% were above 40-50, 40% above 50-60, 30% above 60-70 and 10% above 70. 7 males and 3 female were interviewed (Table 1). Their occupations range from political office holders, lecturers, traders to artisans.

Classification of Surnames Borne by Indigenized Ìlòrin People

The findings showed that the surnames borne by indigenized Ìlòrin people can be classified into four groups. The groups are as follows:

1. Yorùbá-based surnames

In accordance with the saying 'Ìlòrin Àfònjá', signalling the presence of Yorùbá, Yorùbá-nized surnames are borne by indigenized Ìlòrin people. Out of the 150 names sampled, 112 constituting about 75% were Yorùbá-nized. Appendix 1 showed the examples of names in this category and they include: Solágberú, Aláró, Èléyínlà, Bàbáíta, Eléwúré, Olódodo, Olóyín, Ìdíàgbòn.

2. Hausa/ Fulani surnames

Also, indigenized Ìlòrin people bear surnames that have Hausa/ Fulani origin thus reflecting Ìlòrin Gari Alimi. In this study, however, 30 individuals out of the 150 surnames sampled bore surnames having Hausa/ Fulani origin (constituting 13.33%). The relatively low percentage obtained could be because this study concerned itself with Yorùbá names. The surnames borne by Hausa/ Fulani progenitors of Ìlòrin were mostly Arabic/ Islamic names e.g. Alimi, Sarumi, Sanusi, Salman, Sa'adu, Solihu. Appendix 1 depicted the examples of Hausa/ Fulani surnames as Sulu Gambari, Na'Allah, Shehu.

There is a sub-class which are sub-zoomed in Hausa/ Fulani group. They are surnames other than family name with Islamic origin. They are second generation names. Examples include surnames such as Musa, Ibraheem, Lawal, Kareem, Mustafa.

Table 1: List showing demographic distribution of the elders of Ilorin origin selected for the interview on surnames

S/N	Age	Sex	Occupation
1	79	Male	Politician/ contractor
2.	Above 50	Male	Administrator
3.	Above 40	Male	Lecturer
4.	Above 50	Female	Trader
5.	70	Male	Islamic cleric
6.	48	Male	Businessman
7.	52	Male	Industrialist
8.	Above 60	Female	Artisan
9.	56	Female	Seamstress
10.	Above 60	Male	Cab driver

3. Foreign surnames

The third category of surnames is those adopted by indigenized Ilorin people after their servitude, business or work with the colonial master or whites in general. Five out of the 150 surnames sampled constituting 0.03% fall in this category. Appendix 1 indicated such surnames as Cook and Gold.

4. Names of clerics adopted as surnames

The last category constitutes names of Islamic scholars adopted by their allies and which continues to be their surnames. Three out of the 150 surnames constituting 0.02% form this group. Appendix 1 portrayed such surnames in this group as Sasili, Soláti and Jabata.

Sociolinguistic Classification of Surnames of Yorùbáized Ilorin Indigenes YII

Based on the ways YII are being used within the society, they can be classified as follow from the extract in appendix 1:

1. Trade based names: These classes consist of names laying claims to trade e.g.:

Semantics

- i. Alábéré One who sells/ owns needles
- ii. Aládiẹ One who owns/ rears and sells chicken
- iii. Alábidun One who sells dates

2. Craft-based names: These classes consist of names associated with traditional craft such as knitting and sewing. For example:

Semantics

- i. Asínlébé One who sew charms/ talisman
- ii. Asínlẹkẹ One who knits beads
- iii. Arómọkọlà One who inscribes native marks

3. Deliberate free giving names 'Orúko àbiso': these are names that were hitherto used to appease and psych up the bearers. They are however being used as surnames by some Ilorin indigenes presently. Examples include surnames like Àkànbí (as in Justice Mustafa Àkànbí, pioneer ICPC chairman), Àdisá (General Àdisá).

4. Attribute- describing names: These classes of names describe the personal attributes of the bearer. For example:

Semantics

- i. Olóhùnoyin One who has melodious voice
- ii. Olódodo One who speaks the truth
- iii. Aláyà One who is brave

Also, surnames could be based on physical attributes, e.g. 'Orísánkókó' meaning one whose head is filled with bumps.

5. Place-based surnames such as *Ọlójé*, *Agáka*, *Gegele*, *Ọlómódá* which are community names and surnames in *Ìlọrin*. They do not have translatable equivalents.
In brief, surnames of YII are classified into trade-base, craft-base, deliberate free given names, attribute describing names and place-based names.

Hypotheses testing

H01: Yorubanised Ilorin surnames have similar socio-linguistic classification and perceptions like other Yoruba surnames.

From the foregoing, it is shown that surnames of YII, contrary to other Yorùbá surname bear surnames after places, trade and craft. *H01* is therefore rejected as surnames of YII have differing sociolinguistic classifications from other Yorùbá groups.

Surnames of Yorùbánized Ìlọrin Indigenes (YII) as Marker of Ethnic Identity

Uniqueness of Surnames of Yorùbánized Ìlọrin Indigenes (YII)

The surnames of Yorùbánized Ìlọrin indigenes (YII) are unlike other Yorùbá surnames which usually have noun prefixes signifying god and goddess such as ‘ògún’ as in *Ògúnrẹmí*, *Ògúnwálé*, *Ògúnmákin*; ‘Ọsun’ as in *Ọsunlọlá*, *Ọsunniyi*, *Ọsunbùnmi* and ‘Oya’ as in *Ọyatómi*, *Ọyabuyi*, *Ọyafémi* (Ikòtún, 2014). Table 2 depicted that YII rather have prefixes indicating ownership, producer or seller of something. The exclusion of god or goddess from surnames of YII is probably as a result of their Islamic faith background. Also, YII have names of places or ownership of places as their surnames which is uncommon or in non-existence among other Yorùbá ethnic group. Examples include *Agáka*, *Gegele*, *Ọlójé* and *Ọlómódá* which are surnames and community names in *Ìlọrin*. This is rather common among the Hausa/Fulani who bear names such as *Tambuwa* (a town in Sokoto state) and *Kutigi* (a town in Niger state). This habit of the Ìlọrin people could be as a result of the interaction with Hausa/ Fulani at the inception of her existence. These showed clear distinction between YII and the surnames of other Yorùbá blocks, thus affirming their uniqueness. Table 2 and appendix 1 showed that YII such as *Oníyangí*, *Onímágó*, *Elélu*, *Aláró* etc are almost exclusive to Ìlọrin indigenes and thus could reflect their identity.

Hypothesis testing

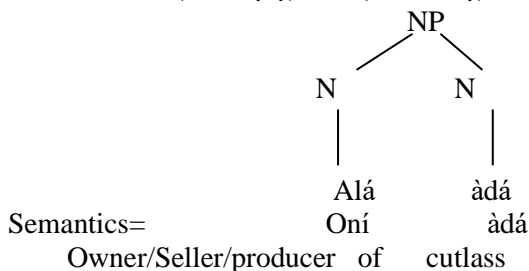
H02: Yorubanised Ilorin surnames are not peculiar to Yoruba Ilorin Indigenes.

From the foregoing qualitative distinction and peculiarity, the researcher reject *H02* and accepted that Yorùbánized Ìlọrin surnames are unique to Ìlọrin sub ethnic group.

Structure of surnames of Yorùbánized Ìlọrin Indigenes (YII)

Structurally, YII sentences can be classified into four categories:

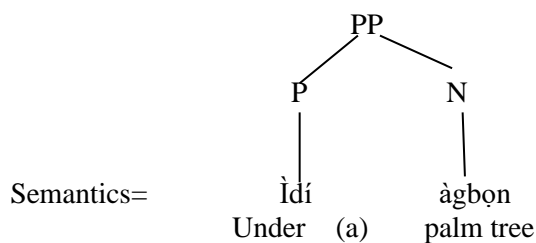
- a. Noun phrase (NP): Most YII are a combination of nouns as shown in Table 2. Examples include *Aládá*, *Alábéré*, *Elélu*, *Eléwuré*, *Onímágó*, *Oníyangí*



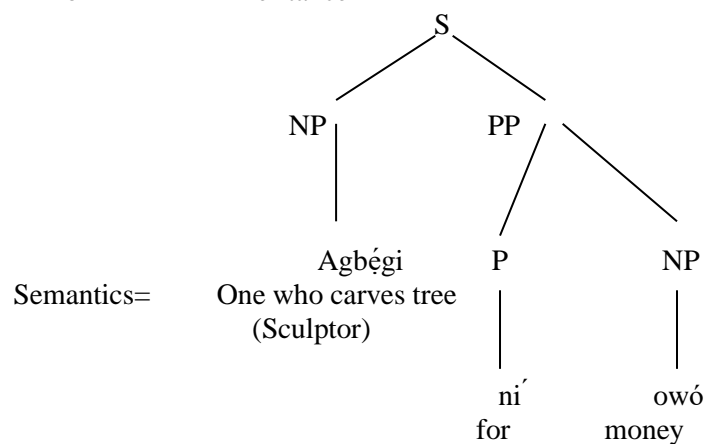
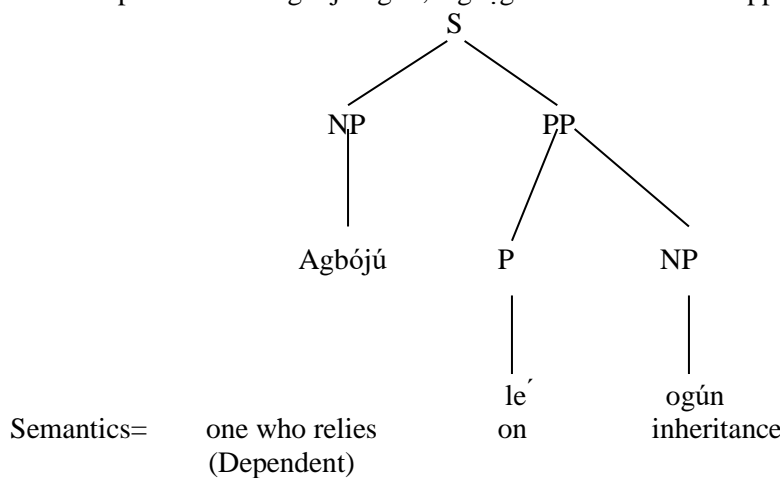
- b. Prepositional phrase (PP): This is a combination of preposition (P) and a noun (N) as portrayed in appendix 1. For example *Ídíàgbon*, *Bàbáita* (father (living) at the outskirts (of a compound))

Table 2: Surnames of Yorùbáized Ilorin Indigenes (YII) with noun prefixes

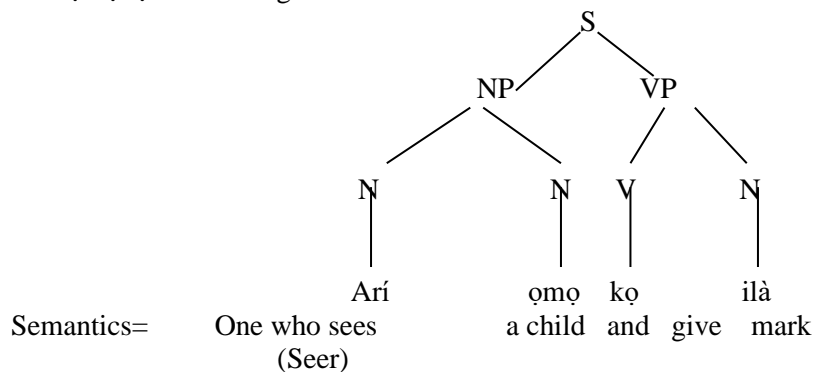
S/N	Noun prefix	Noun + item	Surnames	Semantics (Meaning)
1.	Oní/ Al'	+ àdá	Aládá	One who makes or sells or owns cutlass
2.	Oní/ Al'	+ aró	Aláró	One who owns or produces and sells dye
3.	Oní/ Al'	+ awọ	Aláwo	One who owns or produces or sells hide/ animal skin
4.	Oní/ El'	+ èédú	Eléédú	One who owns or sells charcoal
5.	Oní/ El'	+ éran	Eléran	One who butchers and sells meat
6.	Oní/ El'	+ ésin	Elésin	One who owns or rears or sells horses
7.	Oní/ Ol'	+ odó	Olódó	One who makes and sells mortar
8.	Oní/ Ol'	+ ori	Olori	One who produces and sells shear butter
			Nasalization	
9.	Oní	+ yangi	Oníyangí	One who sells gravel
10.	Oní	+ waasi	Oníwaasi	One who preaches



c. Combination of noun phrase (NP) and prepositional phrase (PP): This sentence combines NP and PP. Examples include Agbójúlógún, Agbégilówó as shown in appendix 1



d. Sentence that combines NP and verbal phrase (VP). Appendix 1 illustrated examples such as Arómokòlà and Àdágunduro.



S= subject= surnames

Although, surnames of YII have similar structural categorization like NP + VP, VPs and NPs as indicated by Ìkòtún and Aládésanmi (2014), however, surnames of YII have NPs + PPs and PPs in addition but lack VPs.

H03: Yorubaised Ilorin surnames have similar semantic, structure and syntax like other Yoruba surnames.

Thus, from the linguistic analysis of surnames, surnames of YII have essentially similar semantics and structure but with additional syntax. Therefore, surnames of YII and other Yorùbá surnames have similarity in semantics, structure and syntax. Hence, the researcher accept *H03* and concluded that surnames of Yorùbáized Ìlòrín indigenes have the similar semantics and syntax as other Yorùbá surnames irrespective of the bearers' ethnic groups.

Morphological features of surnames of Yorùbáized Ìlòrín indigenes (YII)

Also, surnames of YII follow a definite syntactic pattern. Analysis of their extracts from appendix 1 showed that all surnames indicating 'ownership' have 'Oní' as their root prefix. These 'Oní' prefixes are thereafter transformed through deletion, assimilation and denasalization to Alá, Elé, Elé, Oló and Oló when followed by suffixes starting with a vowel shown in Table 3.

From the forgoing, all surnames of YII such as Aláró, Alábéré, Alásọ with 'Alá' prefix had /i/ in Oní deleted, thereafter, /a/ of the suffix assimilate the /o/ in oní. Then, lateral denasalization occur by changing /n/ to /l/. Also, oní is transformed to in 'ele' and elé by deleting /i/ in Oní, then, /e/ or /é/ of the suffix assimilate the /o/ in 'oní' before lateral denasalization as in Elésin, Eléédú and Eléwúrẹ. Similar trends occur in changing oní to 'Oló' except that assimilation occurred between /o/ of 'oní' and O of the prefix. Where a consonants begin the suffixes of surnames of YII, no deletion or assimilation occur, instead, nasalization occurs and the /n/ in oní is retained. For instance, Oníyangí, Oníkíjípá and Oníwaasi.

Hypothesis testing

H04: Yorubaised Ilorin surnames have similar morphological features during word transformation like other Yoruba surnames.

The linguistic analysis of the morphological features of surnames of YII based on their word transformation pattern remains unique to them as the surnames themselves. Therefore, surnames of YII and other Yorùbá surnames differ in their word transformation patterns. Hence, the researcher rejects *H04* and concluded that surnames of Yorùbáized Ìlòrín indigenes have essentially unique word transformation pattern different from other surnames among other Yorùbá ethnic groups.

Table 3: Morphological features of surnames of Yorùbáńízéd Ìlòrín indigenes (YII)

S/N	NP +	N		Deletion	Assimilation	Denasalization	Semantics (Meaning)
1.	Oní +	àdá	→	On + àdá	→ an + àdá	→ Aládá	One who makes or sells or owns cutlass
2.	Oní +	aró	→	On + aró	→ an + aró	→ Aláró	One who owns or produces and sells dye
3.	Oní +	awọ	→	On + awọ	→ an + awọ	→ Aláwo	One who sells hide/ animal skin
5	Oní +	asọ	→	On + asọ	→ an + asọ	→ Alásọ	One who sews or sells cloths
6	Oní +	èédú	→	On + èédú	→ en + èédú	→ Eléédú	One who owns or sells charcoal
7	Oní +	éran	→	On + éran	→ ẹ́n + éran	→ Èlẹ́ran	One who butchers and sells meat
8	Oní +	ẹ́sin	→	On + ẹ́sin	→ ẹ́n + ẹ́sin	→ Èlẹ́sin	One who owns or rears or sells horses
9	Oní +	ewúré	→	On + ewúré	→ en + ewúré	→ Eléwúré	One who rears or sells goats
10	Oní +	odó	→	On + odó	→ on + odó	→ Olódó	One who makes and sells mortar
11	Oní +	ori	→	On + ori	→ on + ori	→ Olori	One who produces and sells shear butter
12	Oní +	Ọmódá	→	On + Ọmódá	→ ọ́n + Ọmódá	→ Olómódá	One who owns Omoda community
				Deletion	Assimilation	Nasalization	
13	Oní +	yangi	→	-	-	Oníyangí	One who sells gravel
14.	Oní +	waasi	→	-	-	Oníwaasi	One who preaches
15.	Oní +	kíjìpá	→	-	-	Oní kíjìpá	One who sells kente

Discussion of findings

When people talk, they can easily be identified with a particular speech community. The study considered how surnames and their linguistic features can be associated with ethnic identity. The result of study which seek to understand the extent to which surnames of Yoruba Ilorin indigenes can mark identity was centred around elderly and experienced people in Ilorin. They were the respondents because they are perceived as 'living library' and custodian of historical facts, as the subject, surnames required their long standing historical experience (Maina, 2013; Haines, Du, Geursen & Gao, 2017)

Surnames borne by Yorùbáized Ìlòrín indigenes (YII) were illustrative of their historical background and genealogy (Zhang, 2019), make up and mix, religion, interaction with foreigners or slave masters and Islamic clerics (Farkas, 2009; Igboin, 2014) with no impact of modernization or globalisation as observed by Jaiyeola et al. (2018), on nicknames among Yoruba Ilorin people. The surnames were classified into (i) Yorùbá-based surnames borne by Àfònjá' descendants, (ii) Hausa/ Fulani surnames borne by Shehu Alimi progenitors (iii) Foreign surnames borne by children whose ancestral had interaction with the white and (iv.) Names of Islamic clerics adopted as surnames. This classification generally showed that the surnames borne by YII have their root in their origins (Yorùbá, Hausa, and Fulani) as influenced by Islam and impact of colonization. From a socio-linguistic perspective, YII surnames were classified into (i) Trade based (ii) Craft-based (iii) Deliberate free giving names 'Orúko àbísò' (iv) Attribute- describing names and (v) Place-based surnames. Yorùbá surnames outside those of Ilorin indigenes are not trade, craft and place based. This practise is traceable to Hausa/Fulani, Nupe and some other tribes in Northern Nigeria. This habit might have been infused into the Ilorin people during their formative stage, as the present Ilorin indigenes share kinship with Hausa/Fulani and Nupe. Ìkòtún (2014), and Zhang (2019), noted that interaction with other culture has influence on surnames.

Yorùbá surnames usually have noun prefixes signifying god and goddess such as 'ògún' as in Ògúnrémí, Ògúnwálé, Ògúnmákin; 'Òsun' as in Òsunlólá, Òsunníyì, Òsunbùnmi and 'Oya' as in Oyatómí, Oyabuyì, Oyafémi (Ìkòtún, 2014). However, in surnames of YII, god or goddess were excluded and names of places or ownership of places as their surnames were rather included. This practice is alien to other Yorùbá ethnic group but common among the Hausa/Fulani who dominate Northern part of Nigeria. This habit of the Ìlòrín people could be as a result of their interaction with Hausa/ Fulani at the inception of her existence (Ìkòtún, 2014; Zhang, 2019). These showed clear distinction between YII and the surnames of other Yorùbá blocks, thus affirming their uniqueness. Also, surnames such as Oníyangí, Onímágó, Elélu, Aláró etc are almost exclusive to Ìlòrín indigenes and thus could reflect their ethnic identity.

Based on Syntax, surnames of YII can be Noun phrase (NP), prepositional phrase (PP), NP + PP, and NP + verbal phrase (VP). Although, YII have similar structural categorization like NP + VP, VPs and NPs as noted by Ìkòtún and Aládésanmi (2014) for other Yorùbá surnames, YII surnames however, have NPs + PPs and PPs in addition but lack VPs. Thus, essentially YII and other Yorùbá surnames are similar based on socio linguistic features.

From the result, it was also observed that, 'ownership' based surnames with 'Oní' as their root prefix were transformed through deletion, assimilation and denasalization to Alá, Elé, Oló and Oló when followed by suffixes starting with a vowel, and where a consonant begin the suffix of surnames of YII, no deletion or assimilation occur, instead, nasalization occurs and the /n/ in *oní* is retained. These word transformations in surnames of YII are also peculiar to them.

From the foregoing, it is shown that surnames of YII differ greatly from other Yorùbá surname from their origin, lexis, syntax and sociolinguistic classifications. They are however similar structurally. The uniqueness and exclusiveness of these surnames to Ìlòrín indigenes showed ethnic identity. Any other Yorùbá group that bear Ìlòrín surnames such as Ídíàgbò, Onímágó, Oníyangí, Aláró, Alá, Elélu could be as a result of adopting such names, intermarriage, intermingling and historical trading relationship. This is in consonance with the findings of Ìkòtún (2014), and Zhang (2019), who in their separate studies asserted that though surnames could be unique to an ethnic group, few individuals outside the group could bear such surname as a result of past interactions.

Conclusions

From sociolinguistic analysis of surnames of Ilorin origin as marker of identity, the following conclusions were reached. First, surnames borne by indigenized Ilorin people can be classified into these four groups based on their origin, namely Yorùbá-based surnames, Hausa/ Fulani surnames, foreign surnames and names of clerics adopted as surnames. On the other hand, the Yorùbá-based surnames could be trade based, craft-based, deliberate free giving, attribute- describing and place-based surnames. Second, Gods or goddesses were totally exempted as affixes in Yorùbáized Ilorin indigenes (YII) surnames but instead, names of professions are affixed. They also bear names of communities within the metropolis as their surnames. Third, surnames of YII are predominantly unique to Ilorin indigenes and they signify ethnic identity but are sentential with similar syntax, semantics and structure as other Yorùbá names. Fourth, surnames indicating 'ownership' could either undergo deletion, assimilation and denasalization or not even transformed depending on whether it was succeeded by vowel or consonant. This research filled the information gap on surnames as markers of identity among Ilorin indigenes through a sociolinguistic approach. The research revealed that Yorùbáized Ilorin surnames were mostly unique in content and context to Ilorin indigenes but share some linguistic features with other Yorùbá surnames. Anyone who bears such names is mostly traceable to Ilorin thus marking ethnic identity.

Recommendation

The study recommends that individuals and group should have second thought when they want to change or adopt others' surnames. For surnames are known to link individuals back to their origin and genealogy. Thus, serving as reference for history. As a change in surname or adoption of others' surnames could disrupt linkage to history.

Implication to English studies

Word transformation in surnames is dependent on the first letter of the suffix. A vowels allows for transformation while consonant does not.

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