

THE RTR HARMONIC DOMAIN IN TWO DIALECTS OF
YORÙBÁ

by

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Abstract

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In this thesis, a process of vowel harmony is explored in two dialects of Yorùbá where the tongue-root values of adjacent vowels generally agree. In Standard Yorùbá, this process of tongue-root harmony affects only vowels within the prosodic word. However, in Mọba Yorùbá, tongue-root harmony affects vowels in the class of proclitics in addition to those contained in the prosodic word. It is argued that this difference in the domain of application of tongue-root harmony is captured by defining constraints that refer to different harmonic domains in each dialect. A prosodic domain that dominates the prosodic word, the clitic group, is posited in order to capture this dialectal difference.

Three different optimality-theoretic accounts that deal with tongue-root harmony in Standard Yorùbá are presented. The ability of these analyses to capture patterns within four dialects of Yorùbá (Ekiti, Ifẹ, Mọba, and Standard Yorùbá) and their general theoretical relevance are the main criteria for evaluation. An account utilizing alignment constraints (Pulleyblank 1996) succeeds in capturing the cross-dialectal patterns of tongue-root harmony in all four dialects of Yorùbá, however it relies on the formulation of gradiently evaluated alignment constraints. This is a situation that is theoretically undesirable. An account enforcing stem-control (Baković 2000) succeeds in capturing the patterns seen in two of the four dialects. I argue against a basic assumption that this account relies on: that all VCV nouns are morphologically complex. It is shown that if at least some of these nouns are not analyzed as morphologically complex, the stem-control account cannot succeed in capturing the attested pattern of tongue-root harmony in any dialect of Yorùbá.

Finally, an account that utilizes markedness constraints prohibiting certain featural sequences (Pulleyblank 2002) can capture the pattern seen in Standard Yorùbá. An adaptation of this account that includes positional faithfulness is offered to account for Ifẹ, Ekiti and Mọba Yorùbá. This positional faithfulness account avoids the need to use gradiently evaluated constraints and it does not rely on morphological constituency. Instead, it uses prosodic constituents as domains of reference for OT constraints.

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