

An Interrogation of the Phonological Similarities between Somor and Aror Sub-Dialects of the Tugen Dialect in Kenya

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ABSTRACT:

The paper sets out to find the extent of the phonological similarities of Somor and Aror sub-dialects of the Tugen dialect. Phonological and semantic structures are many and varied and cannot be studied within such a limited time. Thus the study focused on tone and length in Tugen sub-dialects. The selected structures were epenthesis, vowel deletion, fusion, demonstratives, negation, possessives and definiteness. In semantics, the study focused on meaning in general. Stratified and random sampling procedures were used to get samples of Somor and Aror speakers from the population of those who practice in the selected domains in Torongo and Kapuskei locations of Baringo County. The data for the study was a Swadesh list of one hundred and fifty words and fifty sentences. These were drawn from the fields of education, domestic life, religion, health and administration. Data was collected by use of language performance test, which were recorded, on an audiotape. These words were written in gloss and transcribed using the IPA symbols. This was in preparation for the phonological and semantic analysis, which was done by using Natural Generative Phonology and Descriptive Linguistics. This study adds knowledge in the area of theoretical linguistics of Nilotic languages and Kenyan languages in general.☐

Key Terms: Phonological Similarities, Somor sub-dialects, Aror sub-dialects

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Introduction

According to Jerono (2012), the Tugen dialect has two major sub-dialects. The Southern Tugen who are known as Somor and are also referred to as Lembus and the Northern Tugen, who are known as Aror. Somor occupy Eldama Ravine Division and Aror occupy Kabartonjo Division. These sub-dialects tend to understand each other, though mutual intelligibility decreases to nearly zero because of geographical distance resulting in variations at significant levels (Kanana, 2011). Today, Tugen practice a mixed economy involving agriculture, livestock rearing and a number of them being found in diverse professions. For the purposes of the present research, it is assumed that there are phonological and similarities between the Tugen sub-dialects. The Tugen dialect has been presented as a composite dialectal group. However, within Tugen, are different sub-dialects that have specific delineating characteristics in their own right. These sub-dialects have not been characterized and have all along been put together as Tugen in the context of it being seen as one dialect. This study is, therefore geared towards pointing out the phonological similarities in the sub-dialects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The structure of Tugen sub-dialects

The following is a discussion of the basic linguistic structure of Tugen dialect focusing on the phonological and semantic aspects, as in other languages (Ochieng, 2013). The phonemic inventories and phonemic combinations presented here are based on the data collected. Tugen phonological system includes segmental and suprasegmental elements. Under segmental phonology, inventories of sounds (phones) and phonemes are

identified. The following is an inventory of the Tugen dialect.

Tugen consonant phonemes

Table 1: Tugen consonant inventory

	Bilabial	labio-alveolar	alveolar	post alveolar	Palatal	Velar
Plosives	P		t			K
Fricatives			s			
Affricates				tʃ		
Lateral			l			
Trill			r			
Semi vowels					j	

The following are some of the consonant sounds in which the phonemes occur.

Somor sub-dialect

[m] a voiced bilabial nasal as in/ moita/ [moita]
calf

/n/ a voiced alveolar nasal as in/ erene / [erene]
snake

/t/ a voiceless alveolar plosive as in / itit/ [i:tit] ear

/k/ a voiceless velar plosive as in /kelto/ [kelto] leg

/p/ a voiceless alveolar plosive as in panta [panta]
journey

/s/ a voiceless alveolar fricative as in/suswek/[suswek]
grass

/tʃ/ a voiceless postalveolar affricate as in/chi/ [tʃi]
someone

/l/ a voiced alveolar lateral as in longe/ [loe] shield

/r/ a voiced alveolar trill as in/rop/ [rop] rain

/j/ a voiced palatal approximate as in iyoo [iyoo] mother

/n/ a voiced labio velar approximate as in/ asis/ [asis] sun

/ŋ/ a voiced palatal nasal as in nyo [ŋo:/] nyo] come

/ŋ/ a voiced velar nasal as in ngweny /ŋwen/ earth

Aror sub-dialect

| m| a voiced bilabial nasal as in / mor/ [mor] rat

/n/ a voiced alveolar nasal as in/ nai/ [nai] know

/t/ a voiceless alveolar plosive as in / tai/ [tai] ahead

/k/ a voiceless velar plosive as in / kitok/ [kitok] bed

/p/ a voiceless alveolar plosive as in / ipun/ [ipun] bring

/s/ a voiceless alveolar fricative as in/ sai/ [sai] mature

/tʃ/ a voiceless postalveolar affricate as in/ chepto/ [tʃepto]] girl

/l/ a voiced alveolar lateral as in tala[tala] polite

/r/ a voiced alveolar trill as in ru[ru] sleep

/j/ a voiced palatal approximate as in iyoo[iyo;] mother

/n/ a voiced labio velar approximant as in asis [asis] asissun

/ŋ/ a voiced palatal nasal as in nyu [ŋo:/] nyo ŋ] earth

/l/ a voiced alveolar lateral as in tala[tala] polite

/r/ a voiced alveolar trill as in ru[ru] sleep

/j/ a voiced palatal approximate as in iyoo[iyo;] mother

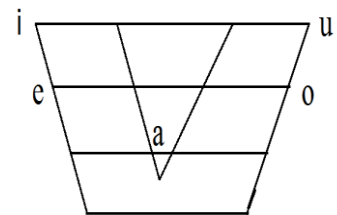
There are two semi-vowels in Tugen sub-dialects a palatal approximant [y] and the labio-velar approximant [w] as illustrated below.

Somor		Aror
	gloss	
Yos	[yos]	yos
[yos]	old	
ngwony	[ŋwon]	ngony
	[ŋwon]	earth
kwany	[kwaŋ]	kwany
[kwaŋ]	cook	

The Tugen vowel phonemes

Tugen vowel inventory

There are ten vowels in the Tugen dialect. Five short vowels, which are contrasted with five long vowels. These vowels vary according to the context and the type of sounds that precede or follow them. Sounds tend to change by their environments and +lengthening is one of the modifications as Pike & Pike (1966) points out. The following examples are the vowel phonemes.



Examples of Tugen vowels are given below with their brief description and use in words.

Aror sub-dialect

/a/ this is an unrounded open low vowel.

It is used in words such as:

[pan] journey

[ar] way

[e] This is an unrounded mid-high front vowel. It is used in words such as:

[pet] disappear

[ket] tree

[i] This is an unrounded high front vowel. It is used in words such as:

[rip] take care

[nai] know

/o/ this is a rounded mid-high back vowel. [ɔ]

It is used in words such as:

[olo] no

[ano] where

/u/ this is a rounded high back vowel. It is found in words such as:

[urwe] shadow

[ayu] when

Somor sub-dialect

/a/. This is an unrounded open low vowel.

It is used in words such as:

[pal] dig

[sas] hate

[e] This is an unrounded mid-high front vowel. It is used in words such as: [ɛ]

[kwei] collect

[wes] run

[i] This is an unrounded high front vowel. It is used in words such as:

[ilu] light

[kerti] bush

/o/ this is a rounded mid-high back vowel. [ɔ]

It is used in words such as:

[sorom] kidney

[ko] house

/u/ this is a rounded high back vowel.

It is found in words such as:

[put] destroy

[ui] go

Allophonic rules

Sounds of a language or a dialect can be distinguished by using abstract underlying units called phonemes. Below are some examples in the Tugen sub-dialects that indicate sound distribution as they occur in various linguistic environments.

Somor sub-dialect

Orthogr rep.	phon..repr.	Gloss
/par/	[par]	kill
/mpar/	[mpar]	shamba
/tap/	[tap]	vomit

Aror sub-dialect

Orthogr.repr	phon.repr	Gloss
panta	[panta]	journey
chepto	[tʃepto]	girl
rop	[rop]	rain

In the data above, [p] is a stop sound and it exists in all environments in Somor and Aror sub-dialects.

The sound [tʃ] occurs at initial positions mid and word-final positions.

Somor	phon repr.	Aror	orthogr.rep.
orthogr.rep.	phon repr.	orthogr.rep.	
phon.repr.	Gloss		
/chepchep/	[tʃeptʃep]	chepchep	
	[tʃeptʃep]	hurry	
/puch/	[puʃ]	puch	
	[puʃ]	useless	
/menkech/[menketʃ]	menkech	[menketʃ]	small

At the phonological level, the study revealed some phonological variation between Somor and Aror sub-dialects, as shown in the table below. ☐

Somor	Aror	Gloss
[ri:r]	[rer]	cry
[pe:k]	[pei]	water
[ku:ine]	[kuina]	horn

From the table above, it was observed that in Somor subdialect, the pronunciation of the vowels tends to be relatively longer than those of Aror sub-dialect. The study further noted that in Somor sub-dialect, a horn is /ku:ine/[ku:ine] while in Aror sub dialect it is /kuina/[kuina]. The vowel /e/ in Somor sub-dialect changes to /a/ in Aror sub-dialect.

The sound /t/ occurs at the initial position, mid position and word final position.

Somor	Aror	Gloss
/tʃepto/	/tʃepto/	girl
/nuatʃ/	/nuatʃ/	short
/ketʃirek	/putʃ/	useless
/ketʃirek	/ketʃire:k/	sheep

In Tugen sub-dialects, there are both long and short vowels. Vowel length is phonemic. This is illustrated by the example below.

Somor	Aror	Gloss
/Ker/[ker]	/ker/	close
/Keer/	[ke:r] /ke:r/	see

The word above word [ker] which means “close” has a single phoneme /e/ but an addition of another /e/ brings forth a change in meaning, thus [ke:r] which means “see.”

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Natural Generative Phonology (NGP) associated with Noam Chomsky, developed by Venneman (1974) and expounded by Hooper (1976).

Natural Generative Phonology (NGP) examined features and the natural characteristics of segment classes and the processes that apply to them. It has an aim of constraining abstractness in phonology (Clark and Yallop 1995). Abstractness in phonology is the degree to which an underlying representation of a morpheme may deviate from its associated phonetic representation. This abstractness is due to the fact that in phonology, two levels of phonological representation are posited: the underlying representation and the concrete phonetic or surface representation. Natural generative phonology tries to limit this by introducing generalization across surface forms to replace rules. As opposed to earlier generative theories, natural generative phonology captures what is possible in the sound system of natural languages.

Natural Generative Phonology main tenets are:

1. The true generalization condition.
2. The no- ordering condition.
3. The strong naturalness condition.

The true generalization condition

Is a constrained or phonological rule that requires that a form posited as underlying should have a surface manifestation if it is to be accepted as a correct underlying form. Here, not all changes have phonetic conditioning. All the rules express transparent surface realizations. Native speakers should formulate rules that relate to surface forms to other surface forms that eliminate abstractness (Clark & Yallop 1995). In Tugen sub-dialects, word final phonation through the insertion of vowels would be accepted as a process in natural generative phonology since it experiences a true generalization that all word finals are made up of vowels.

The No-ordering condition

Rules should not be forced onto a language but apply when a structural description of a rule is met. The rules should also apply sequentially on the products of other rules so that they have their own intrinsic ordering. This condition also states that special rules always apply before the general ones. The no- ordering condition was used in relation to phonological rules to explain any changes in sounds in Tugen sub-dialects. This was relevant to the study, particularly in fusion/coalescence and definiteness. When a certain condition has been met, then a certain rule has to apply and so special rules apply before the general rules.□

The Strong Naturalness Condition

To be able to show the changes that are taking place, there should be a relationship between the underlying and surface forms. This rule, therefore, limits the abstractness of the underlying forms. This was an important condition in the phonological and semantic process which were written in gloss and phonetically translated.□

In natural generative phonology, there are certain rules that are important for the study. These include:

- i) Phonetically conditioned rules (P-rules).
- ii) Morphophonemic rules (MP rules).
- iii) Generative CV-Phonology theory.
- iv) Via rules.

Phonetically Conditioned Rules

These rules describe the alternations that take place in environments that are specified in phonetic terms. They are natural and are conditioned by the physical articulatory process. These changes are universal, regular and productive. They consist of natural rules such as assimilation rules, strengthening and weakening rules.

They express allophonic variations that are entirely phonetically motivated. They apply even in the phonological processes that bring out the similarities and differences in Tugen sub-dialects.

Via Rules

The second category of rules in natural generative phonology is that of via rules. These rules show a relationship between two terms at the lexical level. They

express a relationship between surface forms directly deriving the surface form from a common underlying form. Hooper (1976) argues that forms related by via rules are entered as separate items in the lexicon and the rules exist to show that there is some relationship in the two terms, although there can be no claims that one is derived from the other.☐

She gives the example of “divine” and “divinity which applies to /ai/ and /i/. Via rules are used to show the relationship between the two forms at the lexical level.

Natural Generative Phonology makes strong claims about natural language process, and changes hence is a tool to use to analyze phonological differences in Tugen sub-dialects. This theory will, therefore, be used to illustrate how its rules are applicable in the description of Tugen sub-dialects.☐

Word Formation Rules

The third category of rules is word-formation rules. These are rules that specify the various morphological elements that can be combined together and the order in which these combinations can be done to form a word in a grammar of the language. These rules are morphologically related.☐

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Phonological Level

This study revealed some phonological rules involved in the phonological variations between Tugen sub-dialects. These phonological rules include:

Palatalization

This is a process whereby non-palatal sounds become palatal or palatal-alveolar. As a sound change, it is usually triggered by mid and close high front vowels and semi-vowels [j] in consonants it may cause a conserve to change its manner of articulation from a stop to fricative or affricate. The diacritic ʃ or palatalisation is a superscript [i]

In Tugen, palatalization occurs when a consonant is followed by the high vowel [i] for example:

/a/	Kiim /	I am strong
/a	Ki:m/	
/kiit/ ne o	[ki:ˈt neo	big thing

The rule for palatalization can be formalized as shown below:

$$C \longrightarrow [+pa/] / - \left(\begin{array}{l} [+syll] \\ [+high] \\ [-back] \end{array} \right)$$

Labialization

This is a secondary articulatory feature of sounds in languages which involves modification resulting in lip rounding and consonants acquiring colouring (Sambu, 2011). It is a type of assimilation involving the lips while the remainder of the oral cavity procedures another sound.☐

For example, /k/ may become /k^w/ in the environment of /o/ and /a/ may become /o/ in the environment of /p/ or /K^w/

In Tugen, labialization occurs in the following examples:

/rut teta/	
[r ^w ut/ teta]	Inʃect the cow

/sut lole/ carry the bag
[S^w ut lole]

The rule for labialization is as shown below.☐

C → [+round] - / -cous
+ round

The rule for labio-velar glide can be formalized as follows:

{ + high
+ back } → { yll
- cons } / { + low (v) }

Assimilation

Trudgil (2000) describes assimilation as the modification of a sound in order to make it more similar to other sounds in its neighbourhood. Assimilation can be through nasalisation, which involves nasal sounds forcing non-nasals to acquire a nasal quality. In Tugen sub-dialects, there is progressive voice assimilation in that the feature [+voice] of the processing nasal is carried over to the following voiceless consonants. This is shown in the following examples.

S: tu:m + ta → tu: mta
A: tu:m + ta → tu: mta
S: Pana + ta → pana: nta
A: Panan+ ta → pananta

S: pa:n+ ta → pa: nta
A: pan+ta → pa:nta
S: Iman + ta → imanta
A: Iman + ta → imanta

The examples above are evidence that there are phonological similarities between Tugen sub-dialects.

From the above data, a rule for voicing can be formalized as follows:

{ + cons
- son
- cont
- voice } → { + voice } / { + cons
- nasal } #

Vowel coalescence

This is the merger of features from two or more segments into single segments. Vowel coalescence is found in the development of nasal vowels, which become phonemic when final consonants are lost from a language. In this phonological process, the resulting vowel is often long. In Tugen sub-dialects, this is shown in the following examples under negation.

I will not go
Somor /mowenti ane/
[mowenti ane]
Aror /mowentan/
[mowentan]
I will not take care
Somor /moripe ane/
[moripe ane]
Aror [moripa:n]

[moripa:n]

In the above examples, in Aror sub-dialect, the negation. /moripan/ has the ma [a] before for the nasal [n] coalescence to form the diphthong [a].

In relation to defumteren, the following examples illustrate vowel coalescence.☐

Somor a) /lakwe ne nyo/ - my child
 / akwe ne no/

Aror / lakwenwane/
 /lakwenwane/

b) My goat

Somor: /arte ne nyo/

[arte ne no/

Aror: /artengwane/

[artenwane/

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The phonological similarities included vowel insertion, deletion and vowel lengthening. The study provided evidence that the two sub-dialects have some linguistic variations at the level of linguistic analysis employed in the

study, the phonological level. At the phonological level, various phonological processes brought out the similarities in the sub-dialects. The study, therefore, met the objective under investigation. Having carried out the investigation successfully, the following are the recommendations. Since the Kalenjin language has many dialects and only one of these was considered, it is recommended that a larger study that would include all other dialects, including those outside Kenya, be carried out in order to come up with a more meaningful dialectological study of the Kalenjin language. Further research on phonology and morphology of the Tugen dialect, using modern theories of morphophonemic description is needed. More studies should also be done on the Somor attitude towards Aror and Aror attitude towards Somor.☐

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