

Re-Visiting the Status of North-West Akokoid in Relation to Yorùbá

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Abstract

The North-West Akokoid speech forms are spoken by over 250,000 people in Akoko North-West Local Government of Ondo State, Nigeria. The origin of these people, as well as their speech forms is shrouded in mysteries. Majority of them refer to themselves as Yorùbá and regard their speech forms as dialects of Yorùbá. To compound this problem, some scholars in the intellectual circle appear to have agreed to this claim without any attempt to use established linguistic principles to confirm the claim. This paper presents systematic proofs to assert that these speech forms though, distantly related to Yorùbá, are not its dialects. The Ibadan 400 wordlist was used to elicit data from 34 informants across the nine communities where these speech forms are spoken. In analysing our data, Pike's discovery procedure in phonological analysis and Swadesh's principles of lexicostatistics were employed. Of the 200 lexical items extracted for the lexicostatistic analysis, 60 items which constitute 30% are cognate with Yorùbá. This establishes Akokoid and Yorùbá as members of a macro-family called Defoid, and not as dialects of the same language.

Keywords: North West Akokoid, Yoruba, Status, Relationship, Lexico statistics

1. Introduction

North-West Akokoid (henceforth N/W.Ak.) as used in this paper refers to the nine speech forms spoken in Akoko North West Local Government Area of Ondo State in South Western Nigeria. Though Akinkugbe (1978) refers to them as ‘Northern Akoko Cluster’; Hoffman (1974) refers to them as ‘Northern Akokoid’. Capo (1989) opines that the term is misleading because it presupposes the existence of a ‘Southern Akokoid’, which is not the case. So, he suggested that ‘Akokoid’ should be adopted. However, the term ‘Akokoid’ will still present its own problems because the speech forms so captioned are just nine out of the numerous ones that are spoken in Akokoland. Or what should we say about Ikaram, Ibaram, Gedegede, Iyan: Ikaan, Akpes, Daja, Esuku, etc? We can solve this problem partly by proposing ‘North-West Akokoid’, which would just refer to the exact location of the speech forms in Akoko North-West Local Government Area in Ondo State. Let us present a table to this effect.

Table 1. Benue Congo languages spoken in Akokoland according to group

	Language Groups	Varieties in Akokoland
1.	The Yoruboid	Oka, Ikare, Iboropa, Akungba, Ifira, Oba, Ikun, Supare, Irun, Afin
2.	(N/W Akokoid)	Comprising Arigidi, Erushu, Afa, Aje, Udo, Oge, Oyin, Igashi and uro
3.	Akpes	Akpes (Akunnu), Ase, Daja, Esuku, Gedegede, Ibaram, Ikaram (Ikorom), Iyani
4.	Ukaan (Ikani)	Auga (Igau), Ise (Ishieu), Kakumo-Akoko (Ikaan), Ayanran (Iyinno) (Ayanran is spoken in Edo State)
5.	Edoid	Ehueun (Ekinmi), Uhami (Ishua), Ukue.

Adapted from Oyetade 2007: 2.

2. Research Problem

Sometime in year 2008, in a postgraduate seminar presented at the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan by the researcher, the question arose on the status of Akokoid in relation to Yorùbá, a member of the Yoruboid group. From the viewpoint of the scholar who raised the question, these speech forms are ‘so closely related to Yorùbá’ that many people regard them as dialects of Yorùbá. Moreover the speakers themselves regard themselves as Yorùbá and to drive home this point, they traced their ancestry to Ifè, the cradle of the Yorùbá race, they even bear Yorùbá names. Apart from that, some scholars have called for more research on N/W.Ak. to establish their true status. For instance, Oyetade (2002: 40) observes as follows:

While the Yoruboid group has been extensively studied, much work has not been done on Akokoid. Our knowledge of the group still remains rudimentary ... concerning the

status of these languages in relation to Yorùbá, Williamson (1975) says dialects of Northern Akoko cluster are often referred to as dialects of Yorùbá although they belong to a language (as defined by linguists) quite distinct from Yorùbá'. The interesting thing, however, about the speakers of Northern Akoko is that while the Igala and Itsekiri do not see themselves as Yorùbá they see themselves as Yorùbá and bear names identical with their Yorùbá counterparts. (pp 40)

Furthermore, in his endnotes, Oyetade (2002) says:

The status of the languages in this area is still very much in doubt. Whereas some linguists believe they are more or less dialects of Yorùbá others believe they are more akin to Edoid languages. More works need to be done in this area to ascertain the true status of these speech forms. (pp 50). (Our emphasis)

As if this was not enough, in another postgraduate seminar in October, 2012 at the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, a postgraduate student said it openly that some scholars who are from Akoko still believe that the Akokoid speech forms are dialects of Yorùbá. Our reaction to this is that rather than engage in that kind of talk, a tested linguistic proof should be used to establish the claim. Our major preoccupation therefore is to make use of lexicostatistic investigation, coupled with mutual intelligibility and other proofs to establish the status of these speech forms in relation to Yorùbá. We shall also briefly talk about the sound systems of the languages, as well as their syllable structure and some syntactic structures.

3. Justification for This Work

The very first discovery of 'Akokoid' took place in 1973. According to Bamgbose (2006), (personal communication), the late Professor Kay Williamson accidentally discovered the group referred to as the 'Northern Akoko' while going through the 10 wordlist filled by students who came to register in the then Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages (now known as Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, Ibadan) for B.A. Linguistics/Yorùbá. After this, Hoffman (1974) carried out an initial study on Akokoid.

Materials are very difficult to come by, such that 'contemporary linguists' are beginning to raise the question about the relationship between the Akokoid speech forms and Yorùbá again. This paper readily comes in to fill this vacuum in a more elaborate way. Instead of the 100 wordlist used by previous scholars, especially, Akinyemi (2002), 200 lexical items, made up of 100 nouns and 100 verbs which are basic, day-to-day items used among the speakers and are not easily susceptible to borrowing are used, this means the effort put into this paper is a renewed effort to answer a recurring question. Also the data in the paper will serve as a documentary data source for future researchers who are increasingly finding it difficult to have access to previous scholarly materials on the speech forms in question.

4. Data Elicitation Procedure

Overall, 34 informants spread across the nine communities where these speech forms are spoken supplied the data. They are: Arigidi (5), Erushu (3), Afa (3), Oge (3), Oyin (5), Igashi (4), Udo (3), Aje (5) and Uro (3). Our intention initially was to elicit data from two individuals from each community, but in some cases, we needed to go beyond this, especially, when we discovered that we needed to consult the traditional rulers or chiefs as the case might be. The traditional rulers who participated in the process were the Oloyin of Oyin, the Oloje of Igashi, the Ajana of Afa and the Oluro of Uro. The other traditional rulers were either not around or too busy to participate personally, in which case they appointed trusted chiefs or elders to attend to us. Even though, the University of Ibadan 400 wordlist used as the researcher's guide in obtaining data, 200 lexical items were extracted to form the basis of the lexicostatistic calculation.

5. Data Presentation

Following Fadoro (2010) who classified the N.W.Ak. speech forms into two languages, Arigidi and Ọ̀wọ̀n, a speech form was taken from the two groups to represent each group. Thus, Arigidi was selected to represent the Arigidi group, while Aje was selected to represent the Ọ̀wọ̀n group. The standard Yorùbá is therefore presented side by side with Arigidi and Aje as follows:

Table 2. N.W.Ak. and Yorùbá Compared

Yorùbá	Arigidi	Aje	Gloss
or í	eg f í	ig fí	Head
iru	i f í	isi ri	Hair
od / ú	ó / ù	f / ù	Eye
et í	oto	út ó	Ear
imu	od / uw	úw	Nose
nu	o ru	òru	Mouth
e / i	é / i	é / i	Tooth
aw / ah	r	f	Tongue
àgb	àgb	à · mgb à	Chin
iru gb	ì r l	esi ri l	Beard

oru	úg	ut	Neck
omú	— p	́p	Breast (female)
oka	oka	oka	Heart
iku	og	́g	Belly (external)
idodo	—kp	́p	Navel
— ¼i	os	òsu	Back
ow	o w	úw	Hand
èka na	—k	í· à	Nail (finger or toe)
ì í	—d/— m	(— t)	Buttocks
okó	ok	̀ndù	Penis
ita	b ̀l ̀n t ̀a	b ̀l ̀a ̀u ̀o	Thigh
—s	ùh	ùh ò	Leg
òb ò	—h	h-a	Vagina
ara	ed/è	omid/è	Body
aw	(aw)	al à	Skin
egu-gu	̀kpe	̀kpi	Bone
— d/—	— d/—	— d/—	Blood
it	it	it	Saliva
ì	ùt	ì	Urine
im í gb	—m	ím í	Faeces
omi	ed/i	ùd/i	Water
ob	aj	äj	Soup

ar-a	ar-a	à-a	Meat
uh	o rà	o rá	Fat
ad/a	eso	í	Fish
ekpo	ógo	úgo	Oil
ijò	(owo)	ut<i	Salt
ot í	or à	ùr à	Wine
mu-/òg ùrò	umu	imu	Palm wine
i<u	i<	isi	Yam
g	òg òr òl ò	òg òr òl ò	Cassava
o k àb àb à	ì<	ì	Guinea corn
àgb àdo	g b àdo	g b àdo	Maize
wà	(r h)	àl/ì	Beans
ata	<	s	Pepper
Il á	du	í·u	Okra
òrom b ó/sa	òrom b ó	lòm í	Orange
kp à	kp à	kp à	Groundnut
ob ì	e<ó	it<è	Kolanut
t àb à	t àb à	t àb à	Tobacco
Òw ú	or úru	or úru	Cotton
ekpokpukpa	et<it<òg ò	it<ot<òg ò	Oil palm
èso	a<e	àsi	Seed
ko r ko	è< kí	è è r ì	Grass
i gi	o h	u .·	Tree
e w é	m	m	Leaf

— gu	— d/	u d/	Thorn
èédú	è/í	ési	Charcoal
èéfi	úù	ówú	Smoke
i na	et<o	ío	Fire
èéú	o do	u do	Ashes
kòkò	à<à	à<à	Pot
i gbá	e ku	ku	Calabash
o dó	e bú	ǎú	Mortar
o b	i s	ú	Knife
o kò	úh	· a	Hoe
àáké	o h	· g	Axe
àlá	— r	àlá	Matchet
o kò	o kò	o kò	Spear
ìwo	— h	i ·mwá	Horn
i ri	íu	úr	Iron
— ní	ì à	là<	Mat
a gbò /a kp r	e h	í ·á	Basket
àkpò	àkpò	àkpò	Bag
o ku	òku	o ku	Rope
a b r	i k n	ùn	Needle
òwú	o rúu	o rúu	Thread
f l à	éw à	i dú	Hat

b ǎ à	b ǎ à	b ǎ à	Shoe
o wó	òkùbà	e wó	Money
lú	ègú	hú	Town
ka~ ga	ka~ .:ga	kò~ .:ga	Well
o d↗à	a d↗a	ád↗á	Market
o kó	jà	ùwà	Farm
òku~	òku~	òku~	Sea
òkúta	__ ta	fa	Stone
òkè	àdè	ílì	Mountain
¾a~ ri~	.:~ .:~	¾a~ri~	Sand
m ǎ úù	àò go	m ǎ úù	Cow
àgu~ ta~	a dò~	ándá	Sheep
ad↗a	o fo	ópú	Dog
e ku	o d↗úwà	òdí	Rat
o bò	o bò	áká	Monkey
i l~	e si~	é<i~	Ground
j~kp~	i <a	f<a	Earth
òd↗ò	e d↗i~	ùd↗i	Rain
òòru~	ùhò	ùha~	Sunshine
ò<ùkpà	e ri d↗a	ò<ùkpà	Moon
o gu~	o lo	òo	War
o ri~	i <i~	ù<~	Song
d↗~	d↗o	d↗u	Eat

mu	bɔ	bɔ	Drink
gbéni /rɔmi	tɔ́ fɔ́ mi	s fɔ́ mi	Swallow
bì	kpà	pà	Vomit
tɔ	tɔ	tɔ	Urinate
jàgb	j	j-i	Defeat
bín	tɔ́ úwɔ	úwɔ	Give birth
kú	ku	kú	Die
su	ɔ	ɔ	Sleep
lɔ	k we	vè	Go
wá	k wa	va	Come
kpa dà	b ð /e hè	l ð i	Return
ɔ́ u bú	tɔ́	jé	Fall
ri	d /i	s	Walk
sá é	tu kɔ	ɔ́ i	Run
fò	k ò h ò	h ù	Fly
b	t á j á	b	Jump
r í	r í	g ò	See
gbɔ	ɔ	ɔ	Hear
fɔ wɔ bà	gbɔ hɔ ɔ́	fɔ wɔ bà	Touch
mɔ	r á	ra	Know
ra t í	j ð a	j ð á	Remember
kɔ	kɔ	kɔ	Learn
r — ri	wɔ	wɔ	Laugh

kɔ ri	<i <_	k ɔs	Sing
d / ɔ	r è	j	Dance
k í	b á	v à	Greet
ra	dɔ	nɔ	Send
kɔ	gɔ	gɔ	Refuse
gb à	b à	gb à	Take
d / í	d è	d à / i	Steal
r à	sa	t < a	Sell
fu	gb à - a	gb à - a	Give
r à	b à	d à	Buy
sa w ó	s m	< e w ó	Pay
k à	k à	k à	Count
kpi	mɔ	ma	Divide
j-i bɔ	mi	j-i bɔ	Shoot
kpa	k ó	kpú	Kill
< è	ra	ra	Cook
di	su	i	Fry
su	t < a	su	Roast
gu	bu	b ú	Pound
lɔ	rɔ	rɔ	Grind
k ó	b á	p à	Plait (hair)
f à	j á	j á	Pull
fɔ	fɔ	fɔ	Break
gb	gb	gb	Dig

gb_	gb_	gb_	Carve
gu_	gu_	g á à	Pierce
dé	. 'gù	. 'gù	Cover
t ì	tú	(w ú s ì)	Close
kò l é	kóso	ma_ é e	Build (house)
là	lá	la	Split
si_	lú	lu	Bury
gb é	gb é	gb é	Dwell
mu_	d / á à	gb à da	Hold (in hand)
mò_	ra_	ra_	Know
wú	(k_)	hu	Swell
gb á	tò_	d / _	Sweep
ra_	<_	<_	Sew
wò (wò <ò)	t < é	sa wù	Put on (cloth)
lù	s_	d / í	Beat (person)
lù	l é	l í	Beat (drum)
g é / _	ra_ d / ò	p_ d / u	Bite
d ìe	<i-j_	su_ w_	Stand (up)
d / ò k ó	<i_ <i_	t < e t < é	Sit (down)
gu_	j í	j í	Climb
ri_	d / i_	s_	Walk
wò l é	sò g ú b á ra	_	Enter
d é	bò	pò	Arrive

fi h_à	gb_àga	gb_àga	Show
w_á	bi	t<o	Want
fèsi/dáhu_`	d_áhu_`	g_ò h_`	Reply
b_èr_è	b_ìl_ì	b_ìl_è	Ask (question)
d_/_à	kp_ìl_/_i	kp_ìl_/_i	Fight
kp_è	s_ó	é	Call
b_` r_ù	s_ò h_ò	ro h_ó	Fear
b_ò (_ w_ù)	h_ó	h_ó	Take off (Clothes)
t_ì	ti_`	t_ì	Push
fu_ (a <o)	f_ò	f_ò r_ò o	Wring (clothes)
d_à	<u	s_ì	Pour
ta_`	ta_`	ta_`	Finish
m_ú	hu_`	h_u_`	Catch
gb_àgb_é	bi_`	wi	Forget
s_ò ku_`	(go g_ò)	w_ò	Weep
s_ò	(k_` r_ó)	d_/_e	Say
f_`ra_`	f_` ra_`	f_` ra_`	Like
s_òn_ù	(t<o_` hi_`)	r_áwu	Lose
r_`gb_à	d_í	r_í e	Get
s_á_é	s_ùk_ò	<í	Run
j_ìkpo	j_`kpo	kp_òj_ì	Turn around
t_` l_é	t_`è	òd_ò	Follow

mɔ	mɔ	m á	Mould
d↗ó	t↙a~	dɔ	Burn
si~	lú	lù	Bury
ro ko	kó	·'g à	Hoe
ta jɔ	k èv è	k èv é	Surpass

Having presented the data as shown above, let us now attend to the major question that engages our attention in this paper. Are the N/W.Ak. speech forms dialects of Yorùbá? To this question, we say a categorical 'No'! What then are our proofs? We shall examine this by doing a kind of comparative studies between N.W.Ak. and Yorùbá. That is, we shall examine the differences side by side with the similarities between them and then draw our conclusion

(i) The Consonant System

To examine the relationship between Yorùbá and Akokoid, let us present their consonant systems in a tabular form as follows:

Table 3. Consonants of N/W Ak. and Yoruba

		N/W.Ak.		Standard Yorùbá	
Plosive	Bilabial	p	b		b
	Alveolar	t	d	t	d
	Velar	k	g	k	g
	Labio-Velar	kp	gb	kp	gb
Nasal	Bilabial		m		m
	Alveolar		[n]		[n]
Affricate	Palato-alveolar	t↙	d↗	-	d↗
Fricative	Bilabial				
	Labiodental	f	v	f	-
	Alveolar	s		s	
	Palato alveolar	↙		↙	
	Glottal	h		h	

	Velar		—	
Lateral	Alveolar		l	l
Trill	Alveolar		r	r
Approximant	Palatal		j	j
	Labio-velar		w	w

A careful look at the table above reveals that N/W.Ak. has 23 consonants while the Standard Yorùbá has 18. The five consonants which exist in the consonant chart of these speech forms which are not in Standard Yorùbá are /p/, /t</, / /, /v/, and /_/. However, /t</, /_/ and /p/ occur in some dialects of Yorùbá, / / and /v/ do not occur in any of them.

(ii) The vowel system

Akokoid and Yorùbá operate a twelve-vowel system, consisting of seven oral vowels and five nasal vowels. Let us look at this in a vowel chart:

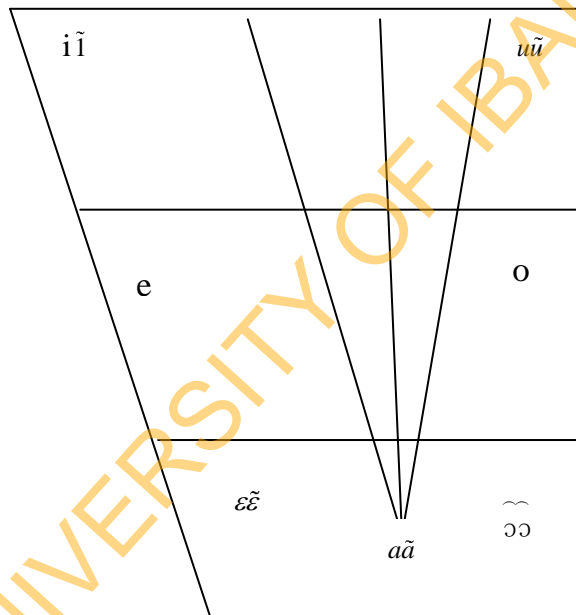


Figure 1. Phonemic Vowel Chart of N/W.Ak. and Yoruba

For details on how these vowels occur in words see the data on table 2 above.

(iii) The tone System

At the tonal level, Akokoid and Yorùbá are identical. They operate three-level tones, these are the high represented by / /, the mid, represented as /Ø/ and the low, represented by / \ /. Note Ø stands for nil or zero, which means that the mid tone is not represented by any

symbol. Let us see some examples of how these tones contrast below:

Table 4. The tone systems of Yroùbá and N.W.Ak

Yorùbá	Arigidi	Aje
ìgbá ‘garden egg’	úw̃ ‘child’	řá ‘send’
ìgbà ‘climbing rope’	u`w̃ ‘hunger’	řã ‘cook’
ìgba ‘two hundred’	ùw̃ ‘laughter’	řã ‘know’
ìgbá ‘calabash’		úw ‘hand’
		uw ‘bee’

As shown above, the three level tones are tonemic in that they occur contrastively in N/W.Ak. and Yorùbá.

(iv) The syllable structure

N/W.Ak. and Yorùbá operate a simple syllable structure. There is no occurrence of consonant clusters. Three phonetic syllable structures could be identified in these languages. They are V, CV and N (syllabic Nasal)

The V and CV syllable structures

V can be either an oral or a nasal vowel. The CV and the V syllables are significant in the languages.

Examples:

Table 5. The syllable structures of N/WAkoid and Yoruba

	V- CV	V – CV	V-C V
N/W.Ak.	ítia (earth)	e-si _~ (ground)	ù-hɔ (sun)
Yorùbá	è-dʒi (rain)	ù-si _~ (song)	à-ra _~ (goat)
	—dʒa (fish)	o-¾u _~ (pregnancy)	a-ta (pepper)

(v) The syllabic nasal

The syllabic nasal in N/W.Ak. usually occurs before a consonant and it is realized as homorganic with the following consonant. In other words, it is a single phoneme /m/, which has six variants: (allophones).

- i. [m] before bilabial consonants
- ii. [n] before alveolar consonants
- iii. [ɲ] before velar consonants
- iv. [ɲm] before labial-velar consonants
- v. [ɲ] before palatal consonants
- vi. [ɲ] before labiodental consonants.

Let us look at the following examples:

- (i) /òṛṛṃb ó/ → [òṛṛṃ^Δb ó] ‘orange’
- (ii) /áṛṛṃd á/ → [áṛṛṃ^Δd á] ‘sheep’
- (iii) /ṛṛṃg / → [ṛṛṃ^Δg] ‘Axe’
- (iv) /ùṛṛṃgb à/ → [ùṛṛṃ^Δgb à] ‘Horn’

As can be seen above, the variants are determined by the consonants that follow the syllabic nasal, therefore they are allophones of the same phoneme. This is exactly the way the syllabic nasal operates in Yorùbá e.g.

bím̀b̀o → bím̀b̀o (name)

róm̀d̀o → róm̀d̀o (small)

k̀m̀k̀ → k̀m̀k̀ (toad)

gbàm̀gb̀a → gbàm̀gb̀a (big)

bómǎfò → bómǎfò (short skirt)

(vi) **Syntax**

At the syntactic level, N/W.Ak. and Yorùbá also share word order in common. They operate the SVO constituent order in their sentences. Let us look at the following examples to buttress this point:

i. Èl é ó wu uw à (N/W.Ak.)

Ìyá wa lọ oko (Yorùbá)

Mother our go farm (Gloss)

‘Our mother went to farm’

ii. Mǎà se òwòn mé (N/W.Ak.)

Mi ò gbọ èdè yín (Yorùbá)

I don’t understand language your

‘I don’t understand your language’

iii. Olú dà àju (N/W.Ak.)

Olú ra işu (Yorùbá)

Olú buy yam

‘Olú bought yam’

Ùjí dà (N/W.Ak.)

iv. Òjò rọ (Yorùbá)

Rain fall

The rain fell.

v. Adé wò (N/W.Ak.)

Ade sọkún (Yorùbá)

Ade cried.

vi. Mu sèn (N/W.Ak.)

Mo rẹ̀rì-ín (Yorùbá)

I laughed.

Furthermore, in the area of syntax, Dada (2006) observes that N/W.Ak. are related to Yorùbá because they lack ‘conjugations and declensions that are characteristic of languages like Latin, Japanese and Swahili. He asserts that both (Yorùbá/N/W.Ak.) ‘are synthetic in that some of their grammatical relationships can be expressed by adding affixes to root morphemes’. He cites the following examples:

N/W.Ak.	Yorùbá
a. a ri v è	ó ní lọ
‘He/she/it goes’	‘He/she/it/is going’
b. a si v è	ó máa lọ/yóó lọ
‘He will go’	‘He will go’
c. a v è	ó lọ
‘He/she/it went’	‘He went’
d. irishọ	Èlẹ́ja
owner fish	owner fish
fish owner	‘fish owner’
e. irishẹ̀n	oniṣu
owner yam	owner yam
‘yam owner’	‘yam owner’

However, we are of the opinion that the languages are not purely synthetic, rather, they combine features of both. As expressed by Yusuf and Oyebade (1990), the typological classification must be approached with caution, as there are no pure types. A language may

be largely one type but also showing traces of others. From this, we conclude that Yorùbá and N/W.Ak. are largely synthetic, but they also show traces of agglutination.

Furthermore, Awobuluyi (2007) (personal communication) is of the opinion that 'these speech forms are dialects of a language that is distantly related to Yorùbá language'. He emphasized that N.W.Ak. has the same origin with Yorùbá in that there are some syntactic structures that are common to both the Yorùbá language, and these speech forms; which we cannot claim that these speech forms borrowed from Yorùbá or vice versa. According to him, the only plausible claim we can make is that both of them inherited these structures from the same source. Such structures are 'yes-no question', 'the rule that changes the low tone of a monosyllabic verb to a mid tone whenever such a verb takes an object' and so on.

(vii) Mutual intelligibility

There is clear absence of mutual intelligibility between Yorùbá and N/W.Ak. The only thing we can say is that all the speakers of N/W.Ak. speak and understand Yorùbá but the speakers of Yorùbá do not speak or understand N/W.Ak. The reason for this is clear, Yorùbá is the second language of the Akoko community. It is their language of immediate community and language of wider communication. It is their lingua franca and language of prestige. While the speakers of N/W.Ak. see the knowledge of Yorùbá as a necessity, the Yorùbá do not see the need to learn the N.W.Ak. speech forms. Dada (2006) captures the situation aptly by asserting that:

Yorùbá... in this community serves two functions: the in-group function, but it is also used as lingua franca to communicate with members of other 'ethnic' groups in that these people understand Yorùbá. Indeed for this group, Yorùbá is the language of regional public life: political rallies, post office, transport, banking, schools, church, etc. And the language of specialized communication is English language. By specialized communication, we mean domains such as higher education, parliament, high court, and the court of appeal, diplomacy, foreign trade and any other public functions in multilingual situations where neither Erushu ... (N/W.Ak.) nor Yorùbá ... is considered to be adequate or appropriate. (pp 153)

In the same vein, Oyetade (1981: iii) says:

going by mutual intelligibility as a criterion for distinguishing between language and dialect, Arigidi (N/W.Ak.) will be regarded as a language in its own right because it is not mutually intelligible to Yorùbá (speakers).

Our study confirms Oyetade's claims. During the field trip preparatory to this work, our experience shows clearly that N/W.Ak. speech forms cannot be classified as Yorùbá. In all the locations, we communicated with our informants in Yorùbá and they also replied in

Yorùbá However, each time they wanted to exclude us from their conversation, they switched to their local speech forms, which we did not understand at all. Furthermore, the data we gathered for this work shows clearly that Yorùbá is distinct from N.W.Ak..

(viii) **Scholars' classification**

Scholars like Williamson (1973), (1989) Hoffmann (1974), Akinkugbe (1978), Bennett and Sterk (1977), Capo (1989) did not at any point in time classify Akokoid as dialects of Yorùbá. Williamson (1973) earlier classified it with Yoruboid as a second subgroup based on genetic relationship. Capo (1989) proposed a new name for the same Hoffmann's Yoruboid-Akokoid group, which he called Defoid. Defoid was derived from 'ede' (the Yorùbá term for 'language') and 'Ife'. (The town believed to be the cradle of the Yorùbá race and 'oid' conventionally used as the group suffix.

Going by the above, Defoid has two groups:

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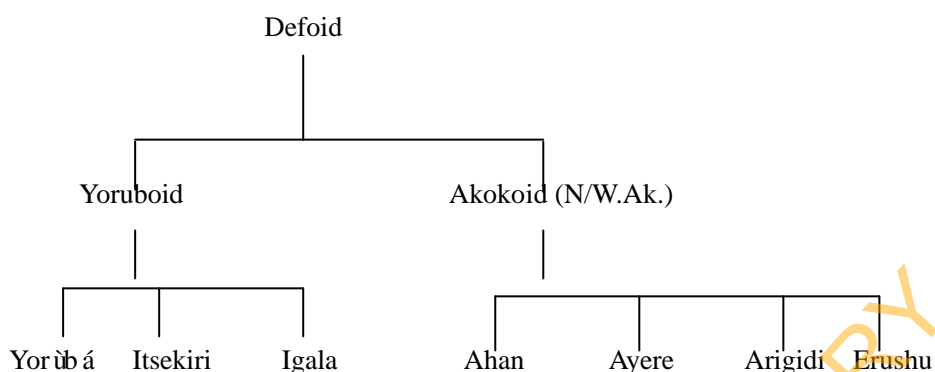


Figure 2. Capo's Defoid

From this we can imply that Itsekiri and Igala are closer to Yorùbá than N/W.Ak. As such, N/W.Ak. should be regarded as separate languages.

(ix) Lexicostatistics

A careful look at our data above shows that sixty (60) items are virtual cognates with the same items in Yorùbá. Though if we count partial cognates, we would get more than this figure. This implies that N/W.Ak. is 30% cognate with Yorùbá. Swadesh (1951) claims that language can be classified on the basis of cognation percentage as follows:

Table 6. Morris Swadesh's Cognation Percentage

Cognate %	Term
100 – 81	Language
80 – 36	Family
35 – 12	Stock
11 – 4	Microphylum
3 – 1	Mesophylum
Less than 1	Macrophylum

From Swadesh's table above, we come to the conclusion that with 30% cognates, N/W.Ak. belongs to a larger macro-family (the third category, which is 'stock') with Yorùbá. Borrowing Capo's term, we use the word 'Defoid' to capture this family. See figure 2 above.

6. Conclusion

From our discussion above, we have seen that N/W.Ak. is similar to Yorùbá in some ways. First, when we look at the vowel system of the languages, they are identical to that of Yorùbá. They operate a three vowel system. Secondly, when we look at the syllabic nasal, its behaviour in N/W.Ak. is identical to that of the Yorùbá language. At the morphological level, N/W.Ak. and Yorùbá operate a simple syllable structure in that there is no occurrence of consonant cluster. Finally, at the syntactic level, we have observed that N/W.Ak. and Yorùbá

share word order in common. They operate the subject/verb/object (SVO) constituent order in their sentences. All these similarities notwithstanding, we have presented five linguistic proofs that N/W.Ak. are not dialects of Yorùbá.

First, we have shown that their consonant system is not exactly the same with that of Yorùbá. They differ slightly. Secondly, N/W.Ak. and Yorùbá are not mutually intelligible. In fact, there is no intelligibility at all between them. Thirdly, lexicostatistic calculation shows that N/W.Ak. is 30% cognate with Yorùbá. Therefore, on the basis of cognation, percentage established by Swadesh (1951), N/W Akokoid speech forms are not dialects of Yorùbá. Fourthly, N/W.Ak. have been observed to be seriously endangered as a result of Yorùbá's overwhelming status. This cannot be said of dialects of Yorùbá, such as Ìjèsà, Èkiti, Ègbá, Ìjèbú, and so on. The simple fact is that dialects of a language cannot go into extinction as a result of the standard variety of that language. They are already together as an entity. Finally, previous works on N/W.Ak. (from Williamson (1973) to Fadoṛo (2010) have never classified N/W.Ak. speech forms as dialects of Yorùbá. What they have done was to emphasise the similarities between N/W.Ak. and Yorùbá. These five incontrovertible proofs establish the fact that N/W.Ak. are not dialects of Yorùbá, rather they belong to the same stock with it.

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