Orthographic Variation And Linguistic Accommodation In App-Based Yoruba Hymns

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Abstract
This study examined variations in the writing systems adopted in three App-based Yoruba hymnals. Data consisted of 24 hymns drawn from the hymnals of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), Baptist Church and Christ Apostolic Church. Hymns that were present in all three hymn Apps were selected to facilitate a four-way comparison of orthographical conventions among the three churches and standard Yoruba. Results show that despite the presence of and teaching of the Standard Yoruba in schools and the expectation of computer-based applications to facilitate access to information, the App-based hymns still stick to old eccentric writing systems. In addition, there are widespread inconsistencies in the use of symbols and patterns within each of the hymns and across the three churches that make the use of the Apps laborious. These inconsistencies indicate lack of accommodation both to the Standard Yoruba orthography and to non-members of the respective churches. It is concluded that by persisting with these variations, the expected benefits of App-based hymns are undone as each church continues to maintain unconventional peculiarities to the exclusion of non-members. And also, it further undermines the progress of Yoruba involvement in Artificial Intelligent-related tasks.
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I.   Introduction

Many studies have been conducted on Yoruba hymns, especially from the musical perspective. Relating to musical perspective of hymns, Owoaje and Adegbola (2022) note that "The inappropriately translated Yorùbá hymn books have remained strong institutions within the church and have therefore, continued to promote the use of the translated hymns in the Yoruba church." This suggests that the early hymns, though inappropriate, have remained till date. Ozah and Bolaji (2020) studied Yoruba hymnody with the objective of showing the need to align hymns with the tonal structure of the language in order to preserve meaning (See also Owaje 2022). Tone-tune matching has been particularly explored in musical studies (McPherson and Ryan 2019; Schellenberg 2012; Carter-Enyi 2018; Olaniyan 2014; Schellenberg 2017; Blackings 1973; McPherson and Ryan 2019). This subject has been less studied from the linguistic perspective, but see (Ladd and Kirby 2019) and especially Akinbo et al (2022) who studied Yoruba particularly.

Orthography is a particularly problematic aspect of the use of Yoruba which has been extensively studied. Adeniyi (2018) studied how the irregular representation of the phoneme /h/ in the Yoruba orthography has resulted in spelling errors and inconsistencies. Fagborun (1989) studied disparities in the writing of vowels and tone and noted that users were ignorant of the conventions, and were thus not deploying them. Ajiboye (2013) assessed the standard orthographical convention itself and observed that it contains flaws some of which are tonal and symbol-related; some of these flaws are responsible for erroneous writings.

On the aspects of linguistic change that have had impact on the writing of Yoruba, Adeniyi (2015) shows how syllable codas and consonant clusters were becoming normalized in both spoken and written Yoruba, while Adebayo (2022, 2023) shows how Yoruba is now being written with clusters and codas that are not permitted in the standard convention. According to Adebayo, this is mostly going on in the new media.

The present study examines the hymns in the light of the Yoruba standard orthography, changes in the language, and current trends in the writing of Yoruba to see how suitable they are in contemporary worship. A personal experience will illustrate this clearly: one of the authors was attending a church service and during hymn singing, the choir leader gave the hymn to sing from the CAC hymn book, but did not say the hymn number. He typed the key word (a phrase) into the CAC hymn application on his android phone, but got nothing. He then typed another phrase and finally got the hymn when the first stanza was almost done. It turned out that the hymn book used an apostrophe which is alien to standard Yoruba orthography. Another worshiper noticed that he was using the application and came to ask how he got it. By the time the other worshiper located the hymn, the congregation was almost through with the singing and the essence of possessing the App-based hymn already

defeated. This study therefore examined the impact of the continued use of idiosyncratic conventions on the effective use of the App-based hymns of each of the churches.

Studies in variation were popularised by the pioneering work of Labov, and other seminal studies such as Trudgill and Wolfram (Labov 1966, 1972a, b; 1974; Wolfram 1997; Bamigbade and Jayeola 2021). The linguistic variable has been defined by Wardhaugh (1986,143) as "a linguistic item which has identifiable variants". For a long time, linguists described linguistic variable as 'free variation', which implied that the variants cannot be predicted by any factor (see Bamigbade and Jayeola 2021). However, following Labov's study on Martha's Vineyard in 1966, sociolinguists have amassed substantial evidence showing that speakers' variability can be constrained by both linguistic and non-linguistic factors (Chambers 2002). These evidences of socially-conditioned language diversity have been shown to be useful in the analyses of issues arising from various dimensions of language variation and change.

Variationists continue to investigate how non-linguistic factors affect linguistic variation both at the community and individual levels. Apparently, speech communities are composed of individual speakers, but the goal of many variationist studies has been to describe the variation of the speech community as an entity. Thus, the study of synchronic and diachronic variation has been presented as a study of the grammar of the speech community (Weinreich et al. 1968; Labov 1989). This is obvious in their argument against the homogeneous idiolect being the only theoretically viable entity for linguistic study (see Bloomfield 1933; Chomsky 1965; Saussure 1972). For the approach to variation as relating to the speech community and in relation to the individual, the non-linguistic factors influencing language variation are viewed differently. For instance, while variation seen in relation to an entire speech community may result in the formation of lects through divergence, that relating to the speech of an individual may achieve other purposes such as humour; it has been reported that popular a Yoruba preacher known as *Paito wa* deployed variation to accommodate his target audience (Adeniyi and Bamigbade 2017). We therefore investigated the differences in the hymns as variations aimed at achieving either of convergence or divergence.

II.   Yoruba Language And Orthography

Yoruba is one of the major languages of Nigeria which is widely spoken within and outside Nigeria. Within Nigeria, it is spoken in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Kwara, Kogi, Delta and Edo states of the country. The speakers of the language can also be found in other nations such as Benin Republic, Togo, Sierra-Lone, Cote-D'Ivoire, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America and Brazil.

The writing of Yoruba started with the works of the missionaries under the Church Mission Society who were working on the *Aku* (Yoruba) of Freetown; Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a native speaker was among their informants. Crowther would later work extensively on the writing of Yoruba using Latin alphabets without marking tone. Following the early efforts, different committees and groups have proposed orthographies for Yoruba; these include the conference on Yoruba orthography, held on 28th and 29th January, 1875, Practical Orthography of African Languages by the International African Institute (IAI), Western Nigeria Ministry of Education's Yoruba Orthography Committee (1966 and 1969). But it was the Joint Consultative Committee (J.C.C) by the Federal Ministry of Education that produced the current orthography in 1974 (YOR-1974) (Fagborun 1989; Ajayi 1960; Bamgbose 1965; Ajiboye 2013).

The current SY orthography has 18 consonants <b, t, d, k, g, kp, gb, j, m, n, f, s, ṣ, l, r, y, w, h>, seven oral vowels <i, e, ẹ, a, o, ọ, u>, five underlyingly nasal vowels <in, ẹn, an, ọn, un>, three level tones (high <á>, mid <ā> but usually left unmarked, and low <à>). The language also has two phonetic contour tones (rising <ǎ>, and falling <â>) which are not marked orthographically (Akinlabi 2004; Adeniyi 2009). There is also advanced tongue root (ATR) controlled vowel harmony whereby vowels <ẹ, ọ> that do not involve ATR in their production do not co-occur with ATR <e, o> within the first two syllables of disyllabic words (Awobuluyi 1978, 150; Bamgbose 1990, 28 – 29; Owolabi 2011, 148).

From findings however, the possible reasons for the differences in the Yoruba orthography used across the three hymnals of this work can be traced to the variations in the spelling conventions adopted by people who made efforts on the Yoruba orthography without any linguistic knowledge. They had very little or no formal training in the language studies of Yoruba (For instance, see Clapperton and Lander 1829; Johnson 1921; Ajayi 1960; Bámgbóṣé 1965; Oyèláràn 1973; and Arohunmọláṣé 1987 among others). In practice, the pre-YOR 1974 writing systems have not all been replaced with the 1974 convention. This explains the allowance for variations in written Yoruba.

III.   Methodology

Data were drawn from the hymn Apps of three churches namely, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion - AC), Baptist Church (BC), and Christ Apostolic Church (CAC). Data are presented in a five-way parallel template containing rows from each of the three churches, the standard Yoruba (SY) version, and the English version being the gloss. Only hymns attested in the three selected churches are selected. In the end 24

hymns were analysed in total. Data were analysed within the framework of accommodation theory with the aim of revealing the level of convergence and divergence of the orthographies of the App based hymns and the Standard Yoruba orthography.

IV. Data Analysis

Tone

A general observation through all the hymns analysed is the non-marking of tones. For the 24 hymns analysed, there was no single instance of tone-marking. As has been noted, the low and high tones are marked in Yoruba orthography; whereas the mid is left unmarked. This implies that any instance of non-marking of tone is understood to be a mid-tone. But with the general non-marking of tones, all appear the same and disambiguation becomes an additional task for the readers. In examples (1 – 26) below, the forms on the SY rows contain the tone-marked versions of each respective line, which can be compared with forms from each church. This non-marking of tones is not completely out of place in the light of the convention since the proposal in the 1974-YOR is to mark tone only where non-marking will result in ambiguity (Fagborun 1989, 77). However, the hymns omitted tones in their entirety, leaving a plethora of ambiguities all through for readers to navigate.

Vowel

Data show that the non-ATR vowels <ẹ, ọ> were consistently written as <e, o> respectively. This has significant effect on meaning, although native speakers manage to navigate the resultant ambiguity occasioned by the non-distinction between the vowel sets. It will be observed that in example (1) below, <ṣiṣẹ́ lọ> "keep working" is written as <sise lo> where the sub-dot meant to indicate that the vowels are non-ATR is omitted by the three churches; each of <sise> and <lo> written without the sub dots is consequently ambiguous as the first can be possibly misconstrued as "make mistake" and the other as "use". This is in addition to the ambiguity induced by the lack of tone marking. Also, the last part, <ṣàárẹ̀> "discouragement" which is written as <sare> is more straightforwardly read as "run" by somebody that is neither a member of the churches nor a regular user of the specific versions of the hymns.

(1)

AC[1] Hymn 125 S1, L1	**Ma** sise lo, **mase sare**
BC Hymn 452, S1, L1	**Ma** sise lo, **mase sare**
CAC Hymn 425, S1, L1	**Ma** sise lo, **mase sare**
SY	Má a ṣiṣẹ́ lọ, má ṣe ṣàárẹ̀
English	Work on without discouragement

Word boundaries

There were inconsistencies in word separation across the three hymns. This is illustrated in examples (2 – 7) below; in (2), <ti pẹ́> "long" of SY was represented three different ways by the three churches; AC lumps the words together in <tipe>, BC lumps <ti> together with the preceding word <Yio> to have <Yioti pe>, while CAC has <Y'o ti pe>, which, although is correct morphologically, violates other patterns of the orthography. In examples (3 - 4), the three churches were unanimous in lumping the words <bákan náàn> "like" and <ẹni tí> "the person that" together as <bakanna> and <eniti> respectively. Likewise in example (5), AC and BC lump <sì ń> "is" together as <sin> which then is more straightforwardly interpreted as "to burry" in the language. Although CAC did not commit the same error, it committed another one by lumping <ń> and the following word <mi> together to have <nmi> which is morphologically alien to Yoruba.

(2)

AC Hymn 171 S4, L1	Y'o **tipe** to, Olorun mi
BC Hymn 274 S4, L1	**Yioti pe** to, Olorun mi
CAC Hymn 838 S4, L1	**Y'o ti pe** to, Olorun mi
SY	Yóò ti pẹ́ tó, Ọlórun un mi
English	How long shall it be, my Lord

(3)

AC Hymn 55 S2, L1	Oluwa mbo; **bakanna** ko
BC Hymn 126 S2, L1	Oluwa mbo; **bakanna** ko
CAC Hymn 140, S2, L1	Oluwa mbo **bakanna** ko
SY	Olúwa ń bọ̀ bákan náàn kọ́
English	The Lord is coming unlike before

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(4)

AC Hymn 55 S4, L1	Eyi ha **li eniti** nrin
BC Hymn 126, S4, L1	Eyi ha **li eniti** nrin
CAC Hymn 140 S4, L1	Eyi ha **li eniti** nrin
SY	Èyí ha ni **ẹni tí** ń rìn
English	Is this the one who is walking

(5)

AC Hymn 73, S1, L4	O **sin** mi gbogbo **aiye**
BC Hymn 521 S1, L4	O **sin** mi gbogbo **aiye**
CAC Hymn 144, S1, L4	O sì **nmi** gbogbo aye
SY	Ó sì ń mi gbogbo ayé
English	And He shakes the whole creation

Example (6) further shows how significant the non-conformity to word boundaries can be in Yoruba writing. Each of <N> meaning "I" and <ó> meaning "will" may contain lone sounds, but they are independent morphemes/words respectively. By lumping them together, the churches arrived at words that are alien to Yoruba, but which members master all the same to the exclusion of non-members of the denominations.

Spellings

One significant feature common to the three hymn books analysed was their deviations from the SY spelling convention. This manifests in different forms, one of which is the use of graphemes for non-significant sounds in the language. Examples (6) and (7) are extracts from the same stanza of the same hymn; observe how the syllabic nasal form of writing the first-person singular pronoun <ń> is written differently; both AC and BC use the digraph <ng> in stanza 3, Line 2 (6) and <n> in stanza 3 line 7 (7), while CAC used <un> in stanza 3 line 2 and <n> in stanza 3, line 7. The same pattern is repeated in (8). The sound in question is [ŋ] which is a phonetic variant of /n/ for which an independent grapheme <ng> is used by AC and BC. Example (9) contains a similar example with the sound [j], which is normally written as <y>; but it is given an independent grapheme <ny> by AC and BC because of its nasalization in that phonetic environment. The same process of consonant nasalization is responsible for writing the <w> as <nw> by BC in (10) because the /w/ is nasalized in that environment. <wọn> "them" is then written as <nwon> which is significantly different from SY and familiar only to members of BC in this context.

Another point reflected in examples (4, 6 – 8) relates to the fact that in Yoruba, <a>, as well as syllabic and tone-bearing <m> and <n> can occur alone as syllables and words (Awobuluyi 1978, 147). This pattern can be seen in the SY forms in (4, 6 – 8) where these letters stand alone in the SY form, but not in the forms used by the three churches; in (6) and (8), two of these lone-segment words are adjacent <ń ó> and were lumped together in the three hymns, while in (4) and (7) <ń> "is" and <n> "I" are lumped with the following words respectively.

(6)

AC Hymn 205 S3, L2	**Ngo** kan ese mi mo
BC Hymn 566 S3, L2	**Ngo** kan ese mi mo
CAC Hymn 700 S3, L2	**Uno** kan ese mi mo
SY	N ò kan ẹsẹ̀ mi mọ́
English	I'll wash away my sins

(7)

AC Hymn 205 S3, L7	**Nki** yio dekun yin O
BC Hymn 566 S3, L7	**Nki** yio dekun yin O
CAC Hymn 700 S3, L7	**Nki** yio dekun yin O
SY	N kì yóò dẹ́kun yìn ọ́
English	I shall not cease praising thee

(8)

AC Hymn 171 S2, L3	**Nigbawo** ni **ngo** r'oju mi
BC Hymn 274 S2, L3	**Nigbawo** ni **ngo** r'oju Re
CAC Hymn 838 S2, L3	Nigba wo ni **uno** r'oju Re
SY	Nígbà wo ni n ó rójú ù rẹ
English	O when shall I behold thy face

(9)

AC Hymn 45, S1, L1	Wa, **enyin** olope, wa
BC Hymn 593 S1, L1	Wa, **enyin** olope, wa
CAC Hymn 655, S1, L1	Wa, **eyin** olope, wa

SY	Wá, èyin ọlọpẹ́, wá
English	Come, ye thankful people, come

(10)

AC Hymn 45, S4, L6	Ki won le ma ba O gbe
BC Hymn 593 S4, L6	Ki **nwon** le ma ba O gbo
CAC Hymn 655 S4, L6	Ki won le ma ba O gbe
SY	Kí wọ́n le má a bá Ọ gbé
English	So shall they abide with you

The use of phonetic variants of sounds is rampant in the three hymns; in (11), AC and CAC used <**m**bere> in place of <**ń** bèèrè> "is asking" while BC uses the appropriate symbol, but still lumped it with the following word and contained no tone marks. In (12) all three churches use <mbo> in place of <ń bọ̀> "is coming". The convention in these instances is <ń> separated from the following word, but the churches rather both merge it with the following word and assimilated it to the place of articulation of the adjacent sound in the word, which is a bilabial sound to arrive at [m]. This is against the SY convention of consistency in using the symbol without regard to allophonic variations.

(11)

AC Hymn 176 S1, L3	Eleda **nyin** ni **mbere**
BC Hymn 175 S1, L3	Eleda **nyin** ni **nbere**
CAC Hymn 188 S1, L3	Eleda yin ni **mbere**
SY	Ẹlédàá yín ni ń bèèrè
English	Your Maker is asking

There is the persistent use of old pre-YOR 1974 graphemes in the hymns. An example is the use of <aiye> in place of <ayé> by AC and BC in (12) while CAC uses the convention, but without tone-marking. In the same example, CAC then uses <yo> in place of the more conventional form <ó>, which introduces variation to the line. Also, in (13) AC and BC use the old form <enia> and CAC uses <eniyan> in place of the conventional <ènìyàn> "human". In (14) the three churches used <On> in place of <Òun> which is the convention. This persistent use of old orthography was also noted by Olumuyiwa (2013). But in the hymns studied, it not only indicates variation; it shows a continued lack of accommodation in spite of the modernisation occasioned by the Apps

(12)

AC Hymn 55, S1, L1	Oluwa **mbo**; **aiye o** mi
BC Hymn 126, S1, L1	Oluwa **mbo aiye o** mi
CAC Hymn 140, S1, L1	Oluwa **mbo**; aye **yo** mi
SY	Olúwa ń bọ̀; ayé ó mì
English	Our Lord is coming, the world will tremble

(13)

AC Hymn 223 S2, L4	K'O ba le gba wa la, O di enia
BC Hymn 122, S2, L4	K'O ba le gba wa la, O di enia
CAC Hymn 331 S2, L4	K'O ba le gba wa la, O di **eniyan**
SY	Kó ba à le gbà wá là, ó di ènìyàn
English	He becomes human to save us

(14)

AC Hymn 170 S2, L1	**On** ti fa o lowo
BC Hymn 557 S2, L1	On ti fa o lowo
CAC Hymn 889 S2, L1	**On** ti fa o lowo
SY	Òun ti fà ọ́ lọ́wọ́
English	He has held you by the hand

The form illustrated in (15) relates to the phenomenon known as downstepped high tone. Bamgbose (1967) refers to this as Assimilated Low Tone). This is a situation whereby a low tone lowers a following high tone and thereafter the low tone itself gets deleted. The two words affected in (15) are broken down in the derivations in (16a – b) to illustrate this point (orthographical symbols are used in the phonological derivations in order to accommodate the readers; the superscript down arrow <˅> represents lowering occasioned by downstep). In the two instances, the words involved are underlyingly bi-syllabic containing low and high tones in that order; in each case the initial syllable gets deleted along with its low tone, but the lowering and spreading effects of the low tone remains on the high tone on the following syllable such that it is realized as a rising tone. It is in line

with the rising nature of the high tone in (16a) and (16b) that the words are written as <hìn-ín> and <yìí> respectively (For fuller discussion on downstep in Yoruba, see Adeniyi 2009, 2020). But the church hymns continue to deviate from the convention to the exclusion of people who might be familiar with only the SY convention.

(15)

AC Hymn 170 S2, L2	O mu o de **'hinyi**
BC Hymn 557 S2, L2	O mu o de **'hinyi**
CAC Hymn 889 S2, L2	O mu o de **'hinyi**
SY	Ó mú ọ dé hìn-ín yìí
English	He brought you here

(16)   a.   ìhín → ⁺hín <hìn-ín> "here"
         b.   èyí → ⁺yí <yìí> "this"

Morphemes

Instances, which are similar to inconsistency in word boundaries, relate to entire morphemes that are not represented in the hymns. In (16) and the first word in (17), the verb <má> "to be" is followed by <a> the marker of the progressive aspect in the SY form; this is consistent with the intended meaning conveyed in the hymns, but the writing of the hymns by the three churches lacks the aspectual marker altogether. Also, in (18) the negative morpheme <í> which is written after <kì> in the SY form is missing in the hymns of the three churches. In all of these instances, the missing morphemes are those that contain only lone segments, which are typically either not being written in the hymns (16 – 18) or are lumped with adjacent segments (4 – 8), contrary to the standard practice.

(16)

AC Hymn 140, S2, L1	**On l'ao ma** gbadura si
BC Hymn 453 S2, L1	**On l'ao ma** gb'adura si
CAC Hymn 431 S2, L1	**On li ao ma** gbadura si
SY	Òun la ó má a gbàdúrà sí
English	For Him shall endless prayer be made

(17)

AC Hymn 125 S1, L1	**Ma** sise lo, **mase sare**
BC Hymn 452, S1, L1	**Ma** sise lo, **mase sare**
CAC Hymn 425, S1, L1	**Ma** sise lo, **mase sare**
SY	Má a ṣiṣẹ́ lọ, má ṣe ṣàárẹ̀
English	Work on without discouragement

(18)

AC Hymn 191 S6, L1	Ife Olorun ti **ki** ye
BC Hymn 420 S6, L1	Ife Olorun ti **ki** ye
CAC Hymn 564 S6, L1	Ife Olorun, ti **ki** ye
SY	Ìfẹ́ Ọlọ́run tí kì í yẹ̀
English	Love of God that is changeless

Apostrophe

The hymns analysed are characterized by inconsistent use of apostrophes. While an apostrophe can be used where a letter is omitted, it is not in all cases that it is used in Yoruba. This is because, in Yoruba, contraction processes such as vowel elision are effectively boundary elimination processes which is productive in the morphology. For instance, the word <ìgbéyàwó> "wedding/marriage" is derived from <ì> "nominaliser", <gbé> "carry", and <ìyàwó> "wife" via vowel elision and elimination of boundaries between the component morphemes. It will defeat the purpose therefore to insert an apostrophe where a vowel has been elided thus *<ìgbé'yàwó>. Why native speakers will still have no difficulty in accessing the meaning, it is unnecessary and not used in the orthography of the language. The hymns studied however show that the churches do not just use apostrophes in these unnecessary ways, they are also inconsistent in this respect. Apostrophe use is attested in examples (2, 8, 13, 15, and 16) above. Further examples are in (19, 21 – 22) below. Specifically, in (19), what is written <b'agbowode> "like the publican" is a derivation from five words and one morpheme and it involves the elision of four vowels as shown in (20). Two vowels <ì> and <i> are elided between <bi> "like" and <a-> "nominaliser", <a> is elided between <gbà> "collect" and <owó> "money", and again one <o> is elided between <owó> "money" and <òde> "street". However, it is in only one of these four instances of elision that an apostrophe is used, leaving the reader to wonder what parameter supports the use of apostrophe in one and not in the other

three. This unsystematic mode of writing is prevalent in the hymns and makes the use of the hymns tedious for users, especially those that are non-members of the denominations, or those familiar with SY.

(19)

AC Hymn 163 S1, L1	Oluwa, **b'agbowode** ni
BC Hymn 190 S1, L1	Oluwa, **b'agbowode** ni
CAC Hymn 280 S1, L1	Oluwa, **b'agbowode** ni
SY	Olúwa, bí i ágbowóòde e nì
English	O saviour, like the publican

(20)   bí-i-a-gbà-owó-òde → bagbowode (SY is bágbowóòde)
Like-Pro-nominaliser-collect-money-street   "Like the publican"

Also, in (26) AC and BC used < Ji'se> to mean "revive" where CAC wrote it as two different words <Ji se>; but the SY form is <jíṣé> as one word without apostrophe. The user therefore would not know whether the SY taught in school is in use or either of the other forms.

(21)

AC Hymn 542 S2, L2	K'o f'iye Re dabobo o
BC Hymn 488 S2, L2	K'o f'iye Re dabobo o
CAC Hymn 927 S2, L2	K'o f'iye Re dabobo **O**
SY	Kó fiyé rè dáàbò bò ó
English	Neath His wings protecting you

(22)

AC Hymn 195 S1, L1	Ma gesin lo l'olanla Re
BC Hymn 117 S1, L1	**Ma** gesin lo l'ola**nla** Re
CAC Hymn 287 S1, L1	**Ma** g'esin lo l'ola**nla** Re
SY	Má a geṣin lọ **lọ**lá ńlá **re**
English	Ride on in your wealth

(23)

AC Hymn 191 S7, L3	'Gba o nf'ibukun **f'elomi**
BC Hymn 420 S7, L3	'Gba o nf'ibukun **f'elomi**
CAC Hymn 564 S7, L3	'Gba o nf'ibukun **f'elomi**
SY	Gbà ó ń fibùkún félòmín-in
English	When he is giving blessing to others

The hymns contain several other patterns that are at variance with the standard convention of Yoruba writing. An example is the inconsistency in (24 – 25) below. While the use of <Yio> in place of <Yóò> "will" by all three churches in (24) is only stylistically different from the SY form, their choices then vary in (25) where BC used <Yio> without apostrophe, and AC and CAC then used <Y'io>. An important point to note here is that (24) and (25) are from the same hymn (Hymn 170 for AC and 889 for CAC) and both churches still varied their choices between <Y'io> and <Yio> in different lines.

(24)

AC Hymn 170 S1, L4	Yio fe mu u se
BC Hymn 557 S1, L4	**Yio** fe mu u se
CAC Hymn 889 S1, L4	**Yio** fe mu u se
SY	Yóò fé mú un ṣe
English	Will surely fulfil it

(25)

AC Hymn 170 S2, L3	**Y'o** pa o mo la ewu ja
BC Hymn 557, S2, L3	Yio pa o mo la ewu ja
CAC Hymn 889 S2, L3	Y'o pa o mo la ewu ja
SY	Yóò pa ọ mọ́ la ewu já
English	He would keep you safe through danger

Special Characters

The non-ATR vowels <ọ> and <ẹ> are consistently written as <o> and <e>, symbols representing two phonemically distinct vowels. This is illustrated in (22) and (27) below; in (22), the three church hymns use <e> in place of <ẹ> in < **ge**ṣin> "ride" and <o> for <ọ> in <lọ́lá> "in … wealth". The same is seen in (27) where <e> is used in place of <ẹ> by the three hymns three times and <o> for <ọ> once. The significance of this disregard

to vowel distinction does not only exclude non-members of each church from benefitting from the hymns, it makes it almost impossible for second language speakers of the language to read or sing the hymns.

(26)

AC Hymn 186 S1, L1	Ji'se Re nde, Jesu!
BC Hymn 427 S1, L1	**Ji'se** Re nde, Jesu!
CAC Hymn 389 S1, L1	**Ji se** Re nde, Jesu!
SY	Jíṣẹ́ rẹ ǹde, Jésù!
English	Revive your work, Jesus!

(27)

AC Hymn 171 S2 L1	**Orungbe** Re **ngbe** okan mi
BC Hymn 274 S2, L1	**Orungbe** Re **ngbe** okan mi
CAC Hymn 838 S2, L1	**Orungbe** Re **ngbe** okan mi
SY	Òǹgbẹ rẹ ń gbẹ ọkàn mi
English	My soul is thirsty for you

Punctuations

The point on punctuation relates to the inclusion of punctuations in the search parameters for the hymns. While punctuations constitute an essential part of writing, it becomes difficult to navigate through or locate parts of the hymns using the search facility without following the punctuation style of each church. If one church uses a semicolon and another uses a comma, then the search parameters for those two churches become different and one does not work for the other. In example (3), AC and BC use semicolon while CAC uses no punctuation; this renders a search with no punctuation useless on the Apps of AC and BC, just as one with punctuation leads nowhere on that of CAC.

V. Discussion

The first and possibly the most apparent feature of the hymns is the absence of tone-marking. This does not only make navigation through the hymns tedious; it often results in semantic confusion even for the regular users who are members of each of the denomination. YOR 1974 gives allowance for non-marking of tones in writing, and the impact of this leeway is obvious in terms of difficulty in disambiguation. This however does not account absolutely for the reality because many of the hymns that were written before the SY convention have been resistant to the necessary adjustment both in terms of tone and in other aspects. This includes the continued use of forms such as <enia> for <ènìyàn> "human" and <aiye> for <ayé> "earth/world" among others. These, and others like them continue to create a dichotomy between the hymns, the standard orthography and the direction in which language use is moving in contemporary times. Second language users are another consideration with regard to tone-marking. It takes the competence of readers to read, still laboriously, writings not tone-marked. This then becomes a near-impossible task for second language users who lack such competence and so are prevented from deriving the benefits of having the language in written form.

Another noteworthy problem with the Yoruba hymns is the fact that they have orthographical variations across the churches, which suggests that even among the churches, there is no harmonized writing system, an indication that those writing the hymns just wrote as they felt and attempts were not made to unify the writings. Even with the availability of the standard writing system taught in schools, they still choose not to adopt such. This practice, which is deliberate results in divergence between the church writings and the larger society where the church members belong.

Prior to the evolution of phone-based applications (Apps), worshippers were only using printed hymns during worships, and these hymnals were not reviewed. This may be due to the fact that they are considered as sacred. Even then, many worshippers struggle through them and often have to fall back on the prompts of the keyboardists and hymn leaders. The adoption of Apps in recent times has now replaced the flipping of pages in search of specific hymns with the use of key words for easy location of hymns. This is where challenges now exist because orthographical variations hamper this important navigational advantage. As shown in the previous section, these variations include spellings, choice of symbols, tone-marking, morphological and syntactic variations. This variation is not just across the different hymnals, but also within the same hymnals. In fact, it has been shown that within the same hymn stanza, there are variations also.

There is the possibility that the churches rather opt to keep with their styles as a marker of identity. Style in this instance being the hymns as originally written, which may be considered sacred by members, while some may also regard revisions as diminishing to the sacred perception. This can be clearly inferred from Ojo (2020) who consistently referred to the Baptist denomination as "the Baptist faith", which magnifies the peculiarity. Obviously, this points to the fact that the choice of orthographic style by each of the churches is a deliberate action to mark distinction and identity. This is also done to accommodate the members of each church, but is having divergent effect on others.

It is expected and should be predictable that the SY orthography should be the norm and paradigm that any Yoruba app-based hymn should follow. Apparently, the results in this work betrays this position. Instead of the orthography used in the Yoruba App based hymns of the three churches under study to accommodate to the SY orthography (convergence principle), it is accommodating from it (divergence principle). This phenomenon has many implications. For instance, it will encourage further proliferations of unfounded orthography patterns for Yoruba which is not beneficial for linguistic works in relation to orthographic reforms, standardization of Yoruba orthography and corpus planning. Moreover, works in computational linguistics and machine learning which are parts of the efforts in Natural Language Processing (NLP) in Artificial Intelligence to globalize Yoruba language and project it on an international scale is hampered. This is because the fundamental challenge will be which of the many forms of Yoruba orthography in parallel use will be considered as most appropriate for NLP. And if any one of them is eventually adopted as most appropriate for use, how are the others harmonized for AI, since the objective is for a harmonised orthographic form such that any and every available AI programme should be able to have a uniform orthographic pattern for Yoruba in order to project meaning in a consistent way.

In their present form, the implication of the variations is that only the regular users of the old-fashioned printed hymnals of each of the church denominations can use their App-based hymns in spite of their global availability. Even then, this use by members is a result of their long-repeated use whereby they have memorized the lines and are no longer conscious of the ambiguities. But non-members and new ones will have to navigate with difficulties. In spite of this, the members who also use the standard convention outside church must master different conventions for the same language and must consciously keep them separate. Thus, the convergence to the members of each of the denominations comes with a cost to the members.

If the variation is viewed from the perspective of obsoleteness of the orthographies, it can be argued that even hymns in languages such as English still exist in obsolete orthographies. But this goes beyond mere obsoleteness since there are prevalent inconsistencies even within the Yoruba hymns studied.

VI.   Conclusion

In this paper, the ways in which the use of unconventional writing systems in the App-based hymns of three Nigerian church denominations is resulting in divergence has been discussed. Data illustrating various instances of divergence and inconsistencies were discussed within the frameworks of accommodation theory and variation. The data show that while the churches may be promoting their religion and projecting their respective denominations, the purpose for adopting modern computer applications is being undermined by the limitations that the orthographic inconsistencies and divergences impose on their hymns. These limitations include the continued difficulty that readers experience in reading and comprehending the hymns as well as the exclusion of non-members of each denomination and second language users from sufficiently benefitting from their open-access hymns through the continued use of peculiar writing systems. It is therefore suggested that it will be in the interest of the religion, the denominations and the Yoruba language at large if the churches adopt the standard Yoruba orthographical convention for writing their App-based hymns for freer and wider accessibility and use.

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