TWO POETIC GRAMMARS IN YORUBA JÙJÚ MUSIC: AN OPTIMALITY-THEORETIC ACCOUNT

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Abstract
Standard Yorùbá generally tolerates vowel hiatus and employs vowel deletion, vowel coalescence, and vowel assimilation as its principal native hiatus-resolution strategies, however, the language does not productively employ intervocalic [r]-insertion to resolve vowel hiatus across morpheme boundaries. This article investigates a productive pattern of intervocalic [r]-insertion in the poetic language of Yoruba Jùjú music. Drawing on a corpus of performances by four prominent Yorùbá Jùjú musicians, the study demonstrates that the phenomenon occurs systematically across five morphophonological environments and therefore constitutes a productive phonological process rather than an isolated stylistic deviation. The article further argues that the process exemplifies Mukařovský's notion of foregrounding, whereby poetic language deliberately departs from the conventions of ordinary language to achieve aesthetic effect. Evidence from the corpus also suggests the coexistence of two poetic grammars within the same musical genre, reflected in the productive use of intervocalic [r]-insertion by lead vocalists and, where comparable renditions are available, the more conservative realizations of backing vocals. The study adopts Optimality Theory (OT) as its analytical framework and demonstrates that the coexistence of two poetic grammars in Yorùbá Jùjú performance can be accounted for through distinct rankings of the same set of markedness and faithfulness constraints. The findings contribute to Yorùbá phonology, performance linguistics, and Optimality Theory by showing how poetic performance may license a productive phonological process unavailable in the corresponding standard language.

Keywords: Yoruba Jùjú music; productive intervocalic [r]-insertion; vowel hiatus; poetic grammar; foregrounding; Optimality Theory; Yorùbá phonology.

1.0 Introduction

The origin of Yorùbá Jùjú music can be traced back to the early 1930s in the colonial capital of Lagos in Nigeria, with the primary pioneer, Abdulrafiu Babatunde King popularly known as Tunde King (Waterman, 1990). At the early stage, the genre was a blend of urban palm-wine guitar styles with Yorùbá vocal tradition, melodies influenced by Christian hymns, and percussive accomplishments which include tambourine. However, modern Yorùbá Jùjú music includes the use of local musical instruments which include among others, gángan (talking-drum), omele, ṣèkẹ̀rẹ̀, agogo, bàtá, and sophisticated foreign musical instruments such as drum set, guitars (bass, lead and Hawaiian), piano, congas, etc. The Jùjú pattern of singing consists of a lead vocalist and two or more backing vocals, who sing harmonically to the rehearsed rhythms played by the instrumentalists. Depending on the structure of their songs, the lead vocalist takes the verses while the backing vocals sing the chorus, or presents a call-and-response pattern where the lead vocalist sings the call lines followed by the response lines from the backing vocals. However, occasionally, the lead vocalist is at liberty to join the backing vocal roles either to sing the same lines or creatively introduce other melodious lyrics**.**

Vowel hiatus has long occupied a central place in the study of Yorùbá phonology because vowel sequences frequently arise within and across morpheme boundaries. Unlike many languages that obligatorily repair hiatus through consonant epenthesis, Standard Yorùbá generally tolerates adjacent vowels, although hiatus may be resolved through processes such as vowel deletion and vowel assimilation in appropriate morphophonological environments (Oyelaran, 1971; Bamgbose, 1990). Coalescence constitutes another hiatus resolution strategy, whereby two adjacent vowels fuse into a single vowel (Oyebade, 1998), while consonant epenthesis is not a productive strategy for resolving native vowel hiatus in the language.

Yorùbá Jùjú music, however, presents an intriguing departure from this generalization. In the performances of several prominent Jùjú musicians, an intervocalic [r] is regularly inserted between vowels across morpheme boundaries despite the absence of such a process in Standard Yorùbá phonology. The insertion occurs in noun–noun constructions, verb–noun sequences, clause-final particle *o* and noun sequences, between a clause-final vowel and a following vocative noun, and between the emphatic particle *àní* and the following noun. The pattern is especially characteristic of lead vocalists, whereas backing vocals generally preserve the hiatus expected in Standard Yorùbá.

The regularity of the phenomenon suggests that it is not an isolated performance feature but a conventionalized aspect of Jùjú musical expression.

The existence of a productive phonological process that is unavailable in Standard Yorùbá raises important theoretical questions concerning the relationship between poetic language and ordinary language. One influential explanation is provided by Mukařovský's (1964) theory of foregrounding, which maintains that poetic language deliberately departs from conventional linguistic norms in order to achieve aesthetic and expressive effects. From this perspective, deviations from ordinary language are neither accidental nor erroneous; rather, they are functional stylistic resources governed by the artistic conventions of a particular literary or performance tradition. Such deviations acquire communicative value precisely because they stand out against the background of ordinary language. Yorùbá oral traditions and musical performances have long been recognized for their linguistic creativity, aesthetic innovation, and artistic manipulation of language (Barber, 1991; Waterman, 1990; Ọlatúnjí, 1984). Productive intervocalic [r]-insertion may therefore be understood as a phonological manifestation of foregrounding within the poetic language of Yorùbá Jùjú music. Rather than representing a change in the grammar of Standard Yorùbá, the process reflects a conventionalized stylistic strategy that contributes to the aesthetic identity of the genre while remaining distinct from everyday speech.

While foregrounding explains why such phonological deviations occur in poetic performance, it does not formally account for how they are systematically represented in the grammar. Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky, 1993/2004) offers such a framework by modelling linguistic variation through the ranking of universal constraints rather than through language-specific rules. If intervocalic [r]-insertion is systematic in the performances of lead vocalists but largely absent from those of backing vocals, the variation may be analyzed as reflecting distinct yet related grammars operating within the same musical genre. Such an approach makes it possible to explain both the productivity of [r]-insertion in one performance style and its relative absence in another without positing a change in the phonological grammar of Standard Yorùbá.

Although previous studies have examined hiatus resolution in Yorùbá and described the linguistic characteristics of Yorùbá oral performance, little attention has been paid to the systematic occurrence of intervocalic [r]-insertion across morpheme boundaries in Jùjú music. More importantly, none of the existing literary works has provided an Optimality-Theoretic account of this phenomenon or explained the coexistence of the lead vocalists' and backing vocals' phonological patterns through distinct constraint rankings. This gap raises important questions about the interaction between phonological grammar, poetic license, and musical performance.

Accordingly, the study pursues four interrelated objectives. First, it demonstrates the existence of productive intervocalic [r]-insertion across morpheme boundaries in Yorùbá Jùjú music. Second, it interprets the phenomenon as an instance of phonological foregrounding in Mukařovský's sense. Third, it establishes evidence for the coexistence of two poetic grammars within the same musical genre. Finally, it demonstrates that Optimality Theory provides a principled account of the two grammatical systems through constraint ranking and reranking.

The following subsection presents representative data from four musicians that establish the empirical basis for these claims and motivate the subsequent Optimality-Theoretic analysis.

1.1 Data Presentation

Under this subsection, songs by four different Yorùbá Jùjú musicians are presented. Twelve relevant songs were selected from eleven tracks. The name of each lead vocalist is presented in uppercase, followed by the title of the track (a-c for each musician). The songs are transcribed in a broad phonetic style under each track heading, while the inserted [r] is boldfaced in all the morphophonemic environments in which it occurs in the lead vocalists' lines. In the call-and-response data involving the two poetic roles, LV and BVs stand for lead vocalist and backing vocals, respectively.

1. SERIFATU OLADUNNI ODUGUWA (QUEEN OLADUNNI DECENCY)

a. Nínú Ìgbàgbọ́ lèmi ó máa Yan	**I Will Walk in Faith**
[ìgbà méta nìgbà **r**èdá nílé ajé	human has three seasons in life
ìgbà alɛ́ **r**ìgbà **r**òsẃ **r**ìgbà **r**òwúrɔ̀	morning, afternoon, and night seasons
dʒɛ́ kó sã wá kalɛ́ **r**elédùmarè ɔba]	may we be fortunate till the end, Almighty King

b. Èmi ó máa Yìn Ọ́ logo **I Will Be Praising You**

[ɛ dʒé ka jɔ̀ ká dʒó — let us be joyful and dance
ká fìjì̩ fólú **r**ìkórè **r**ɔba — worshipping the Lord of the harvest, King
tó dá wa sí dɔdʒɔ́ **r**òní baba **r**a dúkpé — that keeps us till today, Father we give thanks
a wá ń belédùmarè kó má fèjí sòkpĩ — we are praying to the Almighty never to put an end to it
… — …
ɔ̀kpɔ̀lɔkpɔ̀ iʃɛ́ **r**ìjanu — many miracles
lɔlɔ́rũ ɛlɛ́dàá mi ń ʃe] — are what God, my creator is doing

c. Pègàn Pègàn **Scoffers**

[àwá dúkpé **r**elédùmarè — we give thanks Almighty
àwá ʃɔkpé] — we give thanks

2. PETER AKANNI AKOREDE (EMPEROR PICK PETERS)

a. Ọmọ Ọdẹ Dé **Ọmọ Ọdẹ Has Come**

[bɛ́ɛ̀ bá kpadà léjì̩ **r**ɔmɔdɛ — if you do not stop pursuing Ọmọdẹ
ɛ ní láti lu tàkúté ni — you have will enter a trap
àní bɛ́ɛ̀ bá kpadà léjì̩ **r**ɔmɔdɛ à — if you do not stop pursuing Ọmọdẹ
ɛ ní láti lu **r**èdìdì lájé — you will enter bewilderment in life
àní bɛ́ɛ̀ bá kpadà léjì̩ **r**ɔmɔdɛ — if you do not stop pursuing Ọmọdẹ
ɛ ní láti fara gbɔta ni — you will be shot
ɛ ní láti lu rèdìdì sɛ́] — you will enter bewilderment indeed

b. Peter Lájá Kan **Peter Has a Dog**

[bàbá tó bí mi lɔ́mɔ o **r**ɔdɛ ni o — my father is a hunter
àwá sì ti gbà — and we have agreed
… — …
ɛ̀jĩ lɛ dífá fṹ **r**ìjá ɔlɔ́dʒà — incantation
tíí ʃɛlɛ́kɔ **r**àjáàhũ — incantation
kpé kó ra **r**ìgbakɔ mɛ́ta] — incantation

c. Bó ti ń Yẹ Wá **As We Are Being Fortunate**

LV: [kó jɛ wá kalɛ́ ɔba **r**elédùmarè] — may we be fortunate till the end, King, the Almighty
BVs: [á ʃɛ] — amen

3. SUNDAY ADENIYI ADEGEYE (KING SUNNY ADE)

a. Merciful God

[gbogbo **r**ònà mi o — all my ways
tí mo ń rì̩ nílé **r**ajé — that I tread in life
lolúwa ń ʃáádʒú mi lɔ — the Lord goes before me to
ó tṹ ń ʃáádʒú mi bɔ̀ — He goes before me fro
gbogbo **r**ònà téʃù lè gbà — all the ways the devil can take
ló ń bá mi dí kpátákpátá] — he blocks them completely
E merciful God

b. Nítorí Àwa **Because of US**

LV: [tấ́ bá kúrò ní ʃɔ́ɔ̀ʃì — when they leave church
wɔ̃́ á gbalé **r**adáhũʃe lɔ] — they consult spiritualist
BVs: **[**nítorí àwa] — because of us

c. Ẹni Bínú Wa **The One Who is Angry with Us**

Lead Vocalist	**Backing Vocals**	
[òdʒò ni wá, a ò bɛ́nikã̀ ʃɔ̀tá	[òdʒò ni wá, a ò bɛ́nikã̀ ʃɔ̀tá	we are rain, we have no enemies
ɛni **r**edʒi rí ledʒi kpa]	ɛni edʒi rí ledʒi kpa]	dew forms on anybody

4. ADMIRAL DELE ABIODUN (ADAWA SUPER)

a. Tǫ́jú Wa Ọba Òkè (1)	**Take Care of Us Heavenly King**
[ɛ wo balùwɛ̀ tó lóũ ó dodò	look at a bathroom that wants to turn to a river
ɛ wá wajé **r**ìdʒàpá tó kɔ́lé **r**ikā́	come and see the life of a tortoise that built a termite mound
èèwɔ̀ **r**òrìʃà	abomination!
omi **r**adágū́ kò lè gbé màlúù lɔ	a stagnant river cannot sweep a cow away
ɔlɔ́dɛ kã̄ kò sí lájé ńbí	there is no hunter in this world
tó torí **r**atégū̃ lɔ gbébɔ̃]	that can shoot the air

b. Ìbà Olúwa	**Homage to the Lord**
LV: [alajé mo dʒúbà kíbà mi ʃɛ o **r**ɔba mímɔ́]	terrestrial powers, I pay homage, accept it, Holy King
BVs: [ìbà olúwa mo dʒúbà ɔba mímɔ́]	homage to the Lord, I pay homage, Holy King
LV: [ɔ̀rū́mìlà ní **r**ɔkɔ́ ni kó máa kɔ́ wɔ̃ lénu lɔ]	incantation
BVs: [ìbà olúwa mo dʒúbà ɔba mímɔ́]	homage to the Lord, I pay homage, Holy King
LV: [ɔ̀rū́mìlà wá ní **r**àdá ni kó máa dá wɔ̃ lóhū̃ lɔ]	incantation
BVs: [ìbà olúwa mo dʒúbà ɔba mímɔ́]	homage to the Lord, I pay homage, Holy King
LV: [àní **r**àlɔ**r**ìfɔ̀ ló ní kā́ má lè fɔhū̃ lájé ńbí sɛ́]	incantation
BVs: [ìbà olúwa mo dʒúbà ɔba mímɔ́]	homage to the Lord, I pay homage, Holy King
LV: [wɔ́̃ ti ní **r**àwònù	incantation
lɛkū̃ mí wɛyɛ **r**orí **r**igi o lájé ńbí]	incantation

c. Tǫ́jú Wa Ọba Òkè (2)		**Take Care of Us Heavenly King**
Lead Vocal	**Backing Vocals**	
[tɔ́dʒú wa o **r**ɔba **r**òkè lájé jìí o]	[tɔ́dʒú wa o ɔba òkè lájé jìí o]	take care of us, heavenly King in this world

The data presented above reveal a consistent asymmetry in the phonological behavior of lead vocalists and backing vocals in Yoruba Jùjú music. Examples (1a–c, 2a–b, 3a and 4a) represent the performances of the respective lead vocalists and consistently exhibit productive intervocalic [r]-insertion across a range of morphophonological environments. The recurrence of the process across different performers and linguistic contexts suggests that it is a systematic feature of the lead vocalists' poetic grammar rather than an isolated stylistic innovation.

Examples (2c, 3b and 4b) illustrate the call-and-response pattern that is characteristic of Jùjú performance. In these examples, the lead vocalist produces the call while the backing vocals provide the response. Although the lead vocalists consistently insert intervocalic [r], the backing vocals retain the vowel hiatus expected in Standard Yoruba. A similar contrast is observed in examples (3c and 4c), where the lead vocalist and backing vocals perform the same lyrical line simultaneously. Despite sharing identical lexical and grammatical material, only the lead vocalist inserts intervocalic [r], while the backing vocals preserve the hiatus. This indicates that the difference in output is not conditioned by the phonological or morphophonological environment but by the distinct performance practices of the two vocal groups.

The coexistence of the dominant lead-vocal pattern and the dominant backing-vocal pattern output motivates the proposal developed in this study that Yorùbá Jùjú performance accommodates two coexisting poetic grammars, whose interaction can be formally accounted for within the framework of Optimality Theory.

2.0 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate productive intervocalic [r]-insertion across morpheme boundaries in Yorùbá Jùjú music. The qualitative approach is appropriate because the study aims to describe and explain a naturally occurring phonological phenomenon in authentic musical performances rather than to quantify its occurrence. Descriptive phonological analysis is combined with Optimality Theory (Prince and Smolensky, 1993/2004) to account for the observed phonological outputs.

The data consist of recordings by four purposively selected Yoruba Jùjú musicians: Serifatu Oladunni Oduguwa (Queen Oladunni Decency), Peter Akanni Akorede (Emperor Pick Peters), Sunday Adeniyi Adegeye (King Sunny Adé), and Admiral Dele Abiodun (Adawa Super). Three songs were selected from each artist, yielding a corpus from eleven musical tracks. These musicians were chosen because preliminary observation revealed that productive intervocalic [r]-insertion occurs consistently in their performances.

The recordings were downloaded through Vidmate, a media downloader that allows users to download videos across different streaming and social media platforms, which now serve as important repositories for classic Yorùbá musical performances following the decline in the commercial availability of cassette tapes and compact discs. The researcher listened repeatedly to each recording and extracted utterances exhibiting intervocalic [r]-insertion. The selected examples were transcribed impressionistically in the broad phonetic style.

The analysis revealed that productive intervocalic [r]-insertion occurs across morpheme boundaries in five principal environments: verb–noun sequences, noun–noun sequences in both subject and object positions, between the sentence-final discourse particle *o* and a following noun, between a sentence-final vowel and a following vocative noun, and between the emphatic particle *àní* and a following noun. Despite their grammatical differences, these environments share the common phonological configuration of a vowel-final morpheme followed by a vowel-initial morpheme.

Data analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the extracted examples were subjected to descriptive phonological analysis to determine the distribution and productivity of intervocalic [r]-insertion across the corpus. Second, the data were analyzed within the framework of Optimality Theory using OT tableaux to evaluate competing output candidates. The analysis employs the constraints *HIATUS, R-ONSET, DEP-IO, and MAX-IO to account for the productive insertion pattern observed in the performances of lead vocalists. The same set of constraints is reranked to account for the phonetic realizations of the backing vocals which lacks [r]-insertion.

3.0 Hiatus Resolution in Yoruba

Yorùbá phonology is characterized by a predominantly open syllable (CV) structure in which consonant clusters and word-final consonants are generally absent in native lexical items (Bamgbose, 1966; Awobuluyi, 1978; Ọyádèyí, 1998). As a result, vowel sequences frequently occur both within words and across morpheme boundaries, making vowel hiatus a recurrent feature of the language. Unlike many languages that obligatorily forbid adjacent vowels, Standard Yorùbá generally tolerates hiatus. Nevertheless, previous studies have shown that hiatus may also be resolved through morphophonological processes such as vowel deletion, vowel coalescence, and vowel assimilation under appropriate grammatical conditions (Pulleyblank, 1988; Oyebade, 1998).

Another important aspect of Yorùbá phonology concerns loanword adaptation. Borrowed lexical items containing consonant clusters or word-final consonants are commonly adapted through vowel epenthesis in order to satisfy the phonotactic requirements of the language (Bamgbose, 1990; Oyebade, 1998). Although the consonant [r] appears in some borrowed forms, its occurrence is lexically determined and does not constitute a productive strategy for resolving vowel hiatus across morpheme boundaries in Standard Yorùbá. The productive intervocalic [r] insertion investigated in this study therefore represents a phonological pattern that lies outside the established grammar of Standard Yorùbá and requires an explanation within the linguistic conventions of artistic performance.

4.0 Foregrounding and Poetic Grammar

The distinction between poetic language and ordinary language has long occupied an important place in stylistics and literary linguistics. Mukařovský (1964) argues that poetic language achieves its artistic effect through foregrounding, whereby conventional linguistic norms are deliberately manipulated or violated to draw attention to the form of the message. Such deviations should not be regarded as linguistic errors but as functional stylistic devices that contribute to aesthetic expression.

Foregrounding may occur at every level of linguistic structure, including phonology. In oral performance traditions, performers frequently manipulate pronunciation, rhythm and sound patterns to achieve artistic and communicative objectives. Yorùbá oral traditions and musical performances are particularly noted for their linguistic creativity, allowing performers considerable freedom to reshape ordinary language while remaining intelligible to their audiences (Barber, 1991).

The productive intervocalic [r]-insertion observed in Yorùbá Jùjú music is interpreted in this study as an instance of phonological foregrounding. Rather than occurring sporadically, the process applies systematically across morpheme boundaries in five principal morphophonological environments: verb–noun sequences, noun–noun sequences in both subject and object positions, between the clause-final discourse particle *o* and a following noun, between a clause-final vowel and a following vocative noun, and between the emphatic particle *àní* and a following noun. Although these environments differ grammatically, they share a common phonological configuration in which a vowel-final morpheme is immediately followed by a vowel-initial morpheme. The recurrence of the process across these

environments demonstrates that it is a productive feature of the poetic grammar of Yoruba Jùjú music rather than an isolated stylistic irregularity.

5.0 Optimality Theory and Grammatical Variation

Optimality Theory, Proposed by Prince and Smolensky, (1993/2004) explains phonological outputs through the interaction of universal but violable constraints rather than ordered phonological rules. Candidate outputs generated from a common underlying representation compete against one another, and the optimal candidate is selected according to the ranking of markedness and faithfulness constraints.

The framework is particularly appropriate for the present study because it accommodates phonological variation through constraint reranking. The corpus suggests that lead vocalists and, where comparable data are available, backing vocals exhibit different phonological behaviors with respect to intervocalic [r]-insertion. Instead of assuming separate phonological systems, the present study argues that these contrasting outputs can be explained through different rankings of a compact set of constraints governing syllable structure, hiatus resolution, epenthesis and faithfulness to the input.

The analysis therefore demonstrates that productive intervocalic [r]-insertion is not merely a stylistic embellishment but a systematic phonological process licensed by the poetic grammar of Yorùbá Jùjú music. At the same time, the more conservative outputs produced elsewhere in the corpus remain compatible with the grammar of Standard Yorùbá. By modelling both patterns within a single Optimality-Theoretic framework, the study provides formal evidence for the coexistence of two poetic grammars within the same musical tradition.

6.0 Two Poetic Grammars in Yorùbá Jùjú Music

The corpus presented in examples (1-4) provides evidence that two phonological grammars coexist within the genre. Lead vocalists consistently employ productive intervocalic [r]-insertion, whereas backing vocals, where comparable renditions are available, frequently preserve the vowel sequences expected in Standard Yorùbá. The contrast does not imply that every performance exhibits both patterns; rather, it indicates that the corpus contains systematic evidence for two competing phonological realizations associated with different performance roles.

The following subsections discuss lead vocalist and backing vocals, highlighting their roles in Yorùbá Jùjú music.

6.1 Lead Vocalist

A lead vocalist in a musical performance is the primary singer who typically occupies a prominent position within a musical band. The lead vocalist plays a central role in determining the overall performances of the instrumentalists and backing vocals, conveying the intended message of the song, and engaging the audience during the performance. The lead vocalist is prominent in popular music because listeners commonly perceive the lead voice as a source of the song's emotional content (Middleton, 2000). Horn (2003) notes that the development of the lead-backing group format establishes a distinction between the singer who occupies the foreground, i.e., the lead vocalist discussed in this subsection, and the accompanying vocal group, i.e., the backing vocals discussed in the next subsection.

6.2 Backing Vocal

Backing vocals perform a supportive role in a musical performance. However, their contribution can vary from one song to another, as they perform different vocal roles from that of the lead vocalist. Backing vocals occupy a distinct role in music, contributing to the vocal texture and interaction of a performance rather than simply reproducing the lines of the lead vocalist (Fast, 2009).

In Yorùbá Jùjú music, the lead vocalist depends on the backing vocals for harmony, texture, and vocal depth. Depending on the structure of a Jùjú song, a group of backing vocals can sing the chorus, while the lead vocalist takes the verses. The lead vocalist can sing the call lines while the backing vocals render the corresponding response lines in a call-and-response pattern. In a Yorùbá Jùjú music performance, a group of backing vocals comprises of at least two singers. However, the lead vocalist must always be one except if there is a joint performance by two or more lead vocalists from different Jùjú bands. Waterman (1990) identifies the relationship between the lead vocalist (èlé) and chorus or supporters (ègbè) as a vital organizational feature of Jùjú performance.

The coexistence of two distinct outputs from the two vocal roles within the same genre poses an important theoretical question. How can one grammar license productive consonant insertion while another preserves vowel hiatus despite sharing the same underlying representations? This study addresses this question by analyzing the competing outputs within the framework of Optimality Theory. Using OT tableaux and a hierarchy of markedness and faithfulness constraints, the analysis demonstrates that the two poetic grammars can be derived through different constraint rankings without assuming separate phonological systems.

7.0 Distribution of Intervocalic [r]-Insertion in Yorùbá Jùjú Music

This section presents the distribution of productive intervocalic [r]-insertion across morpheme boundaries in the corpus. The objective is to demonstrate that the phenomenon is systematic rather than accidental and that it constitutes a productive feature of the poetic grammar of Yorùbá Jùjú music. Although the grammatical structures differ, all the environments involve the same phonological configuration: a vowel-final morpheme immediately followed by a vowel-initial morpheme. Examples are selected from the dataset presented in (1-4), and organized according to the morphophonological environments in which the process occurs. The extracts are arranged according to their relevance to the analysis under discussion rather than according to the order in which the songs were initially presented.

7.1 Noun–Noun Sequences

The first environment in which productive intervocalic [r]-insertion occurs involves noun–noun constructions occurring in both subject and object positions. In these contexts, the lead vocalist consistently inserts [r] between the adjacent vowels thereby eliminating hiatus as presented in example (5) below.

5a. [omi **r**adágű kò lè gbé màlúù lɔ] “a stagnant river cannot sweep a cow away”
water **R-**stagnant NEG can carry cow go
[Source: Data 4a]

b. [ìgbà méta nìgbà **r**èdá nílé ajé] “human has three seasons in life”
time three is-time **R-**creature in-house earth
[Source: Data 1a]

In (5a), [r] is inserted between two nouns in the subject position. However, in 5(b), it occurs between two nouns in the object position. The occurrence of the process in both syntactic positions indicates that its application is determined primarily by phonological structure rather than grammatical function.

7.2 Verb–Noun Sequences

The second environment in which productive intervocalic [r] insertion occurs is between a verb ending in a vowel and a following vowel-initial noun. Vowel hiatus across morpheme boundaries in a verb-noun sequence is resolved through the insertion of [r] by the lead vocalist as demonstrated in example (6).

6a. [ɛ ní láti lu **r**èdìdì sé] “you will be enchanted indeed”
you have to enter **R-**spell EMP
[Source: Data 2a]

b. [kpé kó ra **r**ìgbakɔ méta] “incantation”
[Source: Data 2b]

The recurrence of the process in this environment suggests that the insertion is not lexically restricted but applies productively whenever the relevant phonological configuration arises.

7.3 Between the Clause-Final Particle *o* and a Following Noun

The corpus further reveals productive [r]-insertion between the clause-final particle *o* and a following noun. Sachnine (1997) classifies the clause-final particle *o* as a light emphatic marker in Standard Yorùbá. This particle also occurs in the poetic language of Yorùbá Jùjú music to perform an emphatic function. In this morphophonological environment, the clause-final particle *o* is immediately followed by a noun. This is exemplified in (7).

7a. [tɔ́dʒú wa o **r**ɔba **r**òkè lájé jìí o] "take care of us, King of heaven, in this world"
take care us **O** **R**-king **R**-mountain in-world this **O**
[Source: Data 4c]

b. [bàbá tó bímí lɔ́mɔ o **r**ɔdɛ ni o] "my father is a hunter"
father that birth-me in-child **O** **R**-hunter is **O**
[Source: Data 2b]

The realization of [r] in this environment extends the productivity of the process beyond ordinary phrase-level constructions.

7.4 Between a Sentence-Final Vowel and a Following Vocative Noun

Another recurrent environment occurs when a vowel-final expression is immediately followed by a vocative noun. Instead of maintaining the hiatus, the lead vocalist inserts [r], producing a smooth phonological transition between the two morphemes. This is shown in (8)

8. [dʒɛ́ kó sã wá kalé **r**elédùmarè ɔba] "may we be fortunate till the end, Almighty King"
let may-HTS pay us till-night **R**-almighty king
[Source: Data 1a]

This pattern further demonstrates that the process is conditioned by the phonological environment rather than by any particular lexical category.

7.5 Between the Emphatic Particle *àní* and a Following Noun

The fifth environment identified in the corpus occurs between the emphatic particle *àní* and a following vowel-initial noun. As in the preceding environments, the adjacent vowels are separated by an inserted [r] as demonstrated in (9)

9. [àní **r**àlɔ**r**ìfɔ̀ ló ní kḿ má lè fɔhṹ lájé ńbí sɛ́] "incantation"
[Source: Data 4b]

The occurrence of the process following an emphatic particle broadens its grammatical distribution and provides additional evidence that the insertion is a productive characteristic of the poetic grammar rather than an isolated lexical phenomenon.

The distribution of the data reveals two competing phonological outputs. While intervocalic [r]-insertion predominates in the performances of lead vocalists, hiatus preservation is more common in the corresponding performances of backing vocals. These competing outputs are analyzed within the framework of Optimality Theory in the next section.

8.0 OT Analysis

This section analyses the observed pattern of intervocalic [r]-insertion within the framework of Optimality Theory. Optimality Theory, proposed by Allan Prince and Paul Smolensky (1993/2004) assumes that surface forms result from the interaction of a hierarchy of universal but violable constraints. Competing output candidates are generated from a given input, and the optimal candidate is the one that best satisfies the ranked constraint hierarchy of a particular grammar. Differences in surface forms may therefore arise from different constraint rankings rather than differences in underlying representations. This framework is particularly suitable for the present study because it accounts for the coexistence of two poetic grammars in Yorùbá Jùjú performance through distinct rankings of the same set of constraints.

8.1 Proposed Constraints

Relevant constraints for this research are presented and defined as follows:

1. *HIATUS: Adjacent vowels occurring at the juncture of two morphemes are prohibited.
2. R-ONSET: Where vowel hiatus is resolved through consonant insertion, the inserted consonant must be [r].
3. DEP-IO: Every segment in the output must have a correspondent in the input.
4. MAX-IO: Every segment in the input must have a correspondent in the output.

8.2 Constraint Ranking for the Lead Vocalist

The markedness constraint R-ONSET, which requires the repair of hiatus through the epenthesis of [r] outranks the faithfulness constraint DEP-IO, which resists segment insertion between two vowels which occur across morpheme boundaries. This is demonstrated in the tableau below using example (5a).

R-ONSET ≫ DEP-IO

Tableau 1: /omi adágǘ/ [omi **r**adágǘ**]** **“**stagnant river”

/omi adágǘ/	**R-ONSET**	**DEP-IO**
a. ☞ omi **r**adágǘ		*
b. omi jadágǘ	*!	*

The tableau above shows that candidate (b) is eliminated because it repairs the hiatus by inserting an incorrect consonant, thereby violating R-ONSET, while candidate (a) emerges as the optimal candidate because it satisfies the high-ranked constraint and incurs only a violation of the low-ranked faithfulness constraint DEP-IO.

The markedness constraint that forbids vowel hiatus across morpheme boundaries, *HIATUS dominates the faithfulness constraint which prohibits segment insertion, DEP-IO. This is shown in the tableau below.

*HIATUS ≫ DEP-IO

Tableau 2: /omi adágǘ/ [omi **r**adágǘ**]** **“**stagnant river”

/omi adágǘ/	***HIATUS**	**DEP-IO**
a. ☞ omi **r**adágǘ		*
b. omi adágǘ	*!	

In the above tableau, candidate (b) is knocked out for incurring a fatal violation on a high-ranked constraint that prohibits adjacency of vowels across morpheme boundaries, *HIATUS, while candidate (a) is the optimal candidate for a minimal violation.

In the tableau below, the faithfulness constraint that disallows segment deletion, MAX-IO, ranks higher than the constraint that prohibits segment insertion, DEP-IO. This is demonstrated in the tableau below.

MAX-IO ≫ DEP-IO

Tableau 3: /omi adágǘ/ [omi **r**adágǘ**]** **“**stagnant river”

/omi adágǘ/	**MAX-IO**	**DEP-IO**
a. omi dágǘ	*!	
b. ☞ omi **r**adágǘ		*

The tableau above shows that candidate (a) is eliminated for incurring a fatal violation on MAX-IO that prevents segment deletion, while candidate (b) emerges the winner for a minimal violation.

The two markedness constraints, *HIATUS and R-ONSET, as well as the faithfulness constraint, MAX-IO rank equally and dominate DEP-IO. The first three must be minimally violated by any optimal candidate.

Presented below is the cumulative ranking for the lead vocalist’s grammar.

*HIATUS, R-ONSET, MAX-IO >> DEP-IO

8.3 Analysis of the Optimal Candidate Using the Proposed Constraint Ranking

This subsection presents more candidates, and evaluates them on the Optimality Theory tableaux using the constraint ranking to produce the optimal candidate. Relevant phrases are selected from each of the morphophonological environments presented in Section 7.

The next tableau demonstrates [r]-insertion in noun-noun sequence using example (5a).

Tableau 4: /omi adágű/ [omi **r**adágű] "stagnant river"

/omi adágű/	*HIATUS	R-ONSET	MAX-IO	DEP-IO
a. omi adágű	*!			
b. omi jadágű		*!		*
c. ☞omi **r**adágű				*
d. omi dágű			*!	

From the tableau above, candidate (a) fails for incurring a fatal violation on a high-ranked constraint *HIATUS which prohibits adjacency of two vowels across morpheme boundaries, while candidate (b) is knocked out for fatal violation of R-ONSET by not inserting a correct consonant to resolve the hiatus. Candidate (d) also fails for violating the faithfulness constraint that requires the preservation of input segments at the output, MAX-IO. Candidate (c) is the optimal candidate for minimally violating the high-ranked constraints.

[r]-insertion in verb-noun sequence is analyzed with data from example (6a) in the following tableau.

Tableau 5: /lu èdìdì/ [lu **r**èdìdì] "be enchanted"

/lu èdìdì/	***HIATUS**	**R-ONSET**	**MAX-IO**	**DEP-IO**
a. lu èdìdì	*!			
b. ☞ lu **r**èdìdì				*
c. lu dìdì			*!	
d. lu wèdìdì		*!		*

Candidate (a) loses for incurring a fatal violation on a high-ranked constraint which disallows hiatus across morpheme boundaries. While candidate (c) fails for deleting an input vowel at the output, candidate (d) is knocked out for inserting a wrong consonant for hiatus resolution. For minimally violating the high-ranked constraints, candidate (b) is the optimal candidate.

The next tableau shows [r]-insertion between the clause-final particle *o* and a following noun presented in example (7a)**.**

Tableau 6: /o ɔba/ [o **r**ɔba] "king"

/o ɔba/	***HIATUS**	**R-ONSET**	**MAX-IO**	**DEP-IO**
a. o ɔba	*!			
b. o ba			*!	
c. ☞ o **r**ɔba				*
d. o wɔba		*!		*

In the tableau above, candidate (a) is ruled out for violating the high-ranked constraint that forbids adjacency of vowels across morpheme boundaries. Candidate (b) is eliminated for deleting an underlying vowel at the output level, while candidate (d) is disqualified for inserting a wrong consonant to resolve hiatus thereby violating a high-ranked constraint. Candidate (c) emerges the winner for minimally violating high-ranked constraints.

The following tableau demonstrates [r]-insertion between a sentence-final vowel and a following vocative noun using example (8).

Tableau 7: /kalɛ́ elédùmarè/ [kalɛ́ **r**elédùmarè] "till the end, Almighty"

/kalɛ́ elédùmarè/	***HIATUS**	**R-ONSET**	**MAX-IO**	**DEP-IO**
a. kalɛ́ jelédùmarè		*!		*
b. kalɛ́ elédùmarè	*!			
c. kal elédùmarè			*!	
d. ☞ kalɛ́ **r**elédùmarè				*

Candidate (a) is knocked out of the competition for violating R-ONSET by inserting a wrong consonant to fix vowel hiatus, while candidate (b) fails for allowing hiatus across word boundaries. Candidate (c) is eliminated for deleting a vowel thereby violating MAX-IO. Candidate (d) emerges as optimal output for maximally satisfying the undominated constraints.

The next tableau shows the insertion of [r] between the emphatic particle *àní* and a following noun as presented in example (9).

Tableau 8: /àní àlɔ/ [àní **r**àlɔ] "incantation"

/àní àlɔ/	***HIATUS**	**R-ONSET**	**MAX-IO**	**DEP-IO**
a. àní àlɔ	*!			
b. ☞ àní **r**àlɔ				*
c. àn àlɔ			*!	
d. àní jàlɔ		*!		*

From the tableau above, candidate (a) is ruled out for violating a high-ranked constraint that disallows hiatus at morpheme boundaries. Candidate (c) is eliminate for violating MAX-IO by deleting an input vowel, while candidate (d) fails for not inserting the right consonant for hiatus resolution. For minimal violation of high-ranked constraints, candidate (b) wins.

8.3 Constraint Ranking for the Backing Vocals

In the previous sub-section, the markedness constraints *HIATUS, R-ONSET and the faithfulness constraints MAX-IO outrank DEP-IO to account for the [r]-insertion output of the lead vocalists. However, in the phonetic realization of the backing vocals which lacks [r]-insertion, the faithfulness constraint that prohibits segment deletion at the output, MAX-IO dominates the faithfulness constraint that forbids adjacency of vowels across morpheme boundaries at the output, *HIATUS. Analyzing example (3c) where the lead vocalist and the backing vocal sing the same line simultaneously, the tableau below shows the ranking.

MAX-IO >> *HIATUS

Tableau 9: /ɛni edʒi/ [ɛni edʒi] "dew person"

/ɛni edʒi/	**MAX-IO**	***HIATUS**
a. ☞ ɛni edʒi		*
b. ɛni dʒi	!*	

Candidate (b) fails for violating MAX-IO that preserves input segments at the output, while candidate (a) is the optimal candidate for a minimal violation.

The faithfulness constraint that forbids segment insertion at the output, DEP-IO dominates the markedness constraint that prohibits adjacency of two vowels across morpheme boundaries, *HIATUS. This is demonstrated in Tableau 10 below using example (3c).

DEP-IO >> *HIATUS

Tableau 10: /ɛni edʒi/ [ɛni edʒi] "dew person"

/ɛni edʒi/	**DEP-IO**	***HIATUS**
a. ☞ ɛni edʒi		*
b. ɛni **r**edʒi	!*	

Candidate (b) is eliminated for a fatal violation on DEP-IO that prohibits segment insertion at the output, while candidate (a) emerges the winner for a minimal violation.

From the foregoing, the faithfulness constraints DEP-IO and MAX-IO dominate the markedness constraints *HIATUS and R-ONSET yielding the proposed cumulative ranking for the backing vocals' grammar below.

DEP-IO, MAX-IO >> *HIATUS, R-ONSET

Using the same example (3c) analyzed in the previous tableau, the tableau below shows how the constraint ranking account for the output of the backing vocals which is phonetically realized without [r]-insertion.

Tableau 11: /ɛni edʒi/ [ɛni edʒi] "dew person"

/ɛni edʒi/	**DEP-IO**	**MAX-IO**	**R-ONSET**	***HIATUS**
a. ɛni **r**edʒi	*!			
b. ɛni jedʒi	*!		*	
c. ☞ ɛni edʒi				*
d. ɛni dʒi		*!		

From the above tableau, candidates (a & b) are eliminated for incurring a fatal violation on a high-ranked faithfulness constraint that forbids segment insertion, while candidate (d) is knocked out for violating MAX-IO that requires the representation of every input segment at the output. For a minimal violation, candidate (c) emerges the winner.

This section has demonstrated that the competing outputs observed in the corpus are best analyzed as the result of two distinct constraint rankings. The first ranking, where the faithfulness constraint DEP-IO is at the bottom of the ranking, yields productive intervocalic [r] insertion for the lead vocalists, whereas the second ranking, where

faithfulness constraints outrank markedness constraints, preserves vowel hiatus for the backing vocals. These rankings are interpreted as two coexisting poetic grammars within Yorùbá Jùjú music.

9.0 Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Yorùbá Jùjú music accommodates two poetic grammars, manifested through the insertion of [r] or otherwise across morpheme boundaries in five different morphophonological environments. This distinction between the poetic grammar and the pattern observed in Standard Yorùbá can be understood in relation to Mukařovský's notion of foregrounding. [r]-insertion occurs in the lines of the lead vocalists, whereas the backing vocals generally maintain the hiatus found in Standard Yorùbá. Using Optimality Theory, the analysis demonstrates that constraint ranking accounts for the phonetic realizations of the lead vocalists with [r]-insertion, while reranking the same set of constraints accounts for the outputs of the backing vocals. The findings therefore show that the contrasting patterns are systematically governed rather than being random variations in performance. This study provides a foundation for understanding consonant insertion in Yorùbá Jùjú music and highlights the potential for further investigation of grammatical variation across other genres of Yorùbá music.

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