A Socio-Morphophonemic Reading of Selected Nigerian Yoruba Hip-Hop Artists Stage Names

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Abstract:This study carried out the socio-morphophonemic analysis ofthe selected Nigerian Yoruba Hip-hop stage names with particular attention to their anglicised forms aimed at appealing to global audiences.With the view to carry out an indepth analysis, five purposively selected names were analysed using Optimality Theory as framework. Data were collected from Spotify and Apple Music which are publicly available music platforms. The Optimality Theory (OT) was employed to model the social interaction between the phonological constraints and morphological adaptations. Using a qualitative approach, both the original and the stage name of each artist was examined to underscore processes such as truncation, epenthesis, substitution, stress shift, and syllable restructuring. Findings revealed that markedness constraints dominated in producing socially-compatible English forms, often at the expense of Yoruba tonal and morphological integrity. This highlighted the interplay between linguistic structure and cultural identity, offering insights into the sociolinguistic implications of name adaptation in Nigeria's globalized entertainment industry. The study therefore concludes that the anglicisation of NigerianYorubaHip-hop artist stage names involved a range of morphophonemic processes driven by the need to align with English phonotactics and thus recommends that there should be a standardisation of the anglicisation process of Yoruba Hip-hop artist stage names that ensures a correlation between the original indigenous names and their adapted forms in order to maintain the social cultural identity of the individual Yoruba Hip-hop artists.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Nigerian Hip-hop music, stage names function not merely as artistic pseudonyms but as markers of identity, socio-cultural expression, and linguistic innovation. Among Yoruba artists, these names often undergo

systematic morphophonemic modifications aimed at enhancing accessibility and socially appeal to global audiences. This process reflects the broader trend of linguistic adaptation within globalised African popular culture, where indigenous forms are restructured to fit dominant phonological norms (Kamwangamalu, 2013; Olaosun, 2018).

The act of renaming or modifying personal names in performance contexts has been widely acknowledged as a sociolinguistic strategy for identity negotiation and audience alignment (Alim, Ibrahim, &Pennycook, 2009; Egbokhare, 2001). In the Yoruba context, names carry deep semantic, tonal, and morphological significance (Bamgbose, 1965; Akinlabi, 2004), and their transformation under the pressures of global media demands careful linguistic examination. The intersection of language and identity, particularly in youth subcultures like Hip-hop, provides a fertile ground for analysing such phonological and morphological adaptations.

This study therefore investigates the morphophonemic processes and socio-cultural nuances involved in the Anglicisation of selected Yoruba Hip-hop artists stage names. Using Optimality Theory (Prince &Smolensky, 2004) as an analytical framework, the research explores how phonological constraints interact with morphological structures to produce globally palatable yet culturally rooted naming forms. By focusing on five purposively selected stage names, the study throws insights to the understanding of how linguistic identity is negotiated within Nigeria's evolving music industry.

Morphophonemics and Morphophonemic Processes

Morphophonemics is a crucial subfield of linguistics that explores the interface between morphology and phonology. It focuses on how morphological structures influence or are influenced by phonological processes within a language (Osisanwo et al., 2022). This review critically examines the concept of morphophonemics and its associated processes, drawing on scholarly sources to elucidate key definitions, examples, and theoretical applications, with particular emphasis on their relevance to the anglicization of polysyllabic Yoruba names. Morphophonemic processes refer to a set of phonological adjustments that are initiated by morphological operations such as affixation, compounding, or reduplication. These processes are typically governed by phonotactic constraints and rules that determine permissible sound patterns in a given language (O'Grady et al., 2011, as cited in Yeboah, 2020). Another key process is consonant deletion, where certain consonants are omitted to conform to the borrowing language's phonotactic norms. Additionally, feature change and assimilation involve modifying a segment's phonological features, such as voicing or place of articulation. Osisanwo et al. (2022) illustrate this with the anglicization of Yoruba nouns, noting that when the English plural morpheme [s] is added to a Yoruba word ending in a voiced vowel, it often changes to [z], reflecting voicing assimilation. They also suggest the presence of laryngeal assimilation in some anglicized forms, such as "tokunbo" pronounced as [tokumbo].

Bakare and Agwu (2024) provide an important perspective on the structural differences between English and Yoruba morphology, particularly with regard to inflectional morphemes. They argue that Yoruba, which relies heavily on reduplication and independent morphemes, lacks the inflectional suffixes typical of English. This contrast helps explain why Yoruba names, which often end in vowels and exhibit tonal patterns, may resist English inflectional forms and instead undergo morphophonemic adjustments such as voicing assimilation.

Yoruba Phonology and Naming Patterns

A critical understanding of Yoruba phonology and naming conventions is foundational to analysing the morphophonemic shifts that occur during the Anglicisation of Yoruba personal names. Yoruba, a tonal language within the Niger-Congo family, is spoken predominantly in southwestern Nigeria and features a syllable structure that contrasts sharply with English phonotactic norms. Notably, Yoruba avoids complex consonant clusters and generally adheres to open syllable formats such as V, CV, and occasionally VC (Awolaoye, 2023). This structural distinction is pivotal in understanding the phonological tensions that emerge in the process of Anglicisation.

Yoruba naming practices are deeply embedded in the language's morphosyntactic and phonological systems. According to Awolaoye (2023), personal names—particularly in dialects such as Òǹdó—often originate from full sentential expressions and reflect rich morphological derivations. These names encapsulate socio-religious, historical, or familial narratives, rendering them both linguistically and socio-culturally dense. Odúyoye (2001) and Osuala (2010), as cited in Awolaoye (2023), observe that dialectal variation introduces further complexity to Yoruba name structures, manifesting in differences in tone patterns, nasalization, phonemic reordering, and word choices. These variations present challenges to the standardisation of name adaptation processes and necessitate a detailed phonological review.

Ogunwale (2012) distinguishes Yoruba names into morphonemic and polymorphonemic forms—a categorisation that reflects the language's agglutinative nature. Polymorphonemic names are structurally elaborate and often composed of multiple morphemes encoding semantic depth and cultural significance. This morphological complexity poses significant challenges for Anglicisation, especially since English naming conventions typically favour shorter, less morphologically layered forms. Furthermore, Yoruba's tonal system, which functions phonemically, is incompatible with English's stress-based prosody, thereby requiring tonal and prosodic adjustments during name adaptation.

Empirical evidence provided by Fajobi and Akomolafe (2019) highlights phonological strategies used in the Anglicisation process. These includestress-shift, re-syllabification, contraction, elision, andsegmental substitution. Among these, stress-shift emerges as the most dominant, reflecting the need to align Yoruba names with English stress-based phonology. Re-syllabification further

illustrates the restructuring of Yoruba names into English-compatible syllabic forms, often resulting in the erosion of both phonological, semantic and sociolinguistic integrity.In sum, the distinct phonological and morphological properties of Yoruba names significantly influence the patterns and pressures observed in the Anglicisation of Yoruba Hip-hop stage names. Understanding these foundational elements is essential for a comprehensive morphophonemic analysis.

Anglicisation and Name Adaptation

Anglicisation, in the context of Yoruba Hip-hop naming, highlights the interplay between the phonological and morphological systems of Yoruba, a tonal language, and English, a stress-based language. The studies by Ogunbona and Jimoh (2023) and Fajobi and Akomolafe (2019) provide critical insights into the strategies and implications of this adaptation, though their analyses reveal certain gaps in theoretical depth and empirical rigor.

Fajobi and Akomolafe (2019) offer a more focused exploration of the phonological processes involved in anglicizing Yoruba personal names, defining anglicization as the adaptation of English linguistic features: spelling, pronunciation, and morphology into Yoruba names. This shift is significant, as Yoruba's three-tone system (high, mid, low) and its contour tones are replaced by English stress, fundamentally altering the phonological identity of the name (Fajobi & Akomolafe, 2019).

While these studies lay important groundwork, they often focus on formal or general naming practices without specifically addressing how these processes manifest in the commercial and artistic rebranding of Yoruba hip-hop artists. Furthermore, there is a lack of morphophonemic analysis that integrates theoretical modeling such as Optimality Theory (OT)to explain the constraint-based restructuring that occurs in these name adaptations. This study fills that gap by conducting a focused OT-driven morphophonemic analysis of anglicised stage names found on digital streaming platforms of Spotify and Apple Music, emphasizing the sociolinguistic and phonological pressures that shape contemporary name formation in the Nigerian music industry.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in Optimality Theory (OT) (Prince &Smolensky, 1993) to analyze the morphophonemic processes involved in the anglicization of polysyllabic Yoruba names. The data population consists of 30 Yoruba names with three or more syllables, drawn from the profiles of Yoruba-origin artists on Spotify and Apple Music, as well as supplementary sources such as artiste biographies and entertainment blogs. These platforms were purposively selected due to their global accessibility, high usage among Nigerian musicians, and consistent presentation of artist information, making them reliable and representative sources for studying contemporary naming trends in the music industry (Ogunbona&Jimoh, 2023). Spotify and Apple Music provide standardized

metadata that facilitates the identification of anglicized name forms used for public branding and international social appeal.

A population of 30 pairs of names were retrieved and a purposive sampling method was employed to choose one in every six name pairs which amounted to a total of five names (e.g., Kokumo→Koker) that were selected for in-depth analysis. The decision to limit the dataset to five names was driven by the analytical demands of Optimality Theory, which requires detailed generation to model constraint interactions between phonological well-formedness and morphological faithfulness nuanced processes such as truncation, epenthesis, voicing assimilation, and syllable restructuring (Fajobi&Akomolafe, 2019). The concise sample size thus ensures analytical rigor and clarity in mapping how Yoruba names are systematically adapted to meet English phonotactic and sociocultural norms.

Analysis of data

Data were transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to capture tonal and segmental features accurately. Each name pair was analyzed using Optimality Theory by identifying relevant constraints. Markedness constraints (e.g., NoComplexOnset, Tone) and faithfulness constraints (e.g., Max-IO, Dep-IO) were ranked illustrating how input Yoruba forms map onto anglicized outputs. Each table provides a systematic account of these transformations, while descriptive explanations highlight the cultural and phonological shifts involved in adapting Yoruba names for global entertainment contexts.

The table below presents each original Yoruba name alongside its anglicized counterpart:

Table 1: Yoruba Hip-hop Artist Names and their Anglicized Forms

No.	**Original Names**	**Anglicised Forms**
1	Temilade	Tems
2	TokunboOlowofoyeku	Toby Foyeh
3	Oluwaseyi	Seyi Shay
4	Opeyemi	Pepenazi
5	MajekodunmiFasheke	MajekFashek
6	Omorinmade	Made
7	KeshinroOlolade	Lil Kesh
8	Olamilekan	Laycon
9	Ladipo	Ladipoe/Poe
10	Kokumo	Koker
11	Oluwajuwonlo	Jaywon
12	Oladapo (Daniel) Oyebanjo	D’banj
13	Toyin Bello	TY Bello
14	Falana	Falz
15	Olubankole Wellington	Banky W
16	Olawunmi	Lambo
17	Oluwadamilare	Darey

18	Timilehin	Timmy
19	Oluwaseun	Sean
20	Oyindamola	Dammy
21	Ajoke	Jokky/AJ
22	Oladipupo	Lads
23	Ibukun	IBK
24	Babalola	Babz
25	Olasunkanmi	K1 dé Ultimate
26	Olaniyi	Nee
27	Ayobami	AY
28	Bankole	Banks
29	Segun	Shegz
30	Jadesola	Jade

Morphophonemic Processes Involved in the Anglicisation of Yoruba Names

The table depicts that the anglicization of Yoruba Hip-hop stage names involves multiple morphophonemic processes that reflect efforts to simplify pronunciation, adhere to English phonotactics, and create memorable or ssocially appealing names. These processes work simultaneously on the phonological, morphological, and stylistic levels, reshaping Yoruba names into forms suited for broader global or entertainment social contexts.

Truncation

This process involves deleting syllables or segments from the original name to create a shorter, more manageable form, often consisting of just one or two syllables. It serves to reduce complexity and enhance memorability, especially in informal or performance contexts. For example, Temilade becomes Tems, Oluwaseyi becomes Seyi, and Omorinmade becomes Made—each preserving a portion of the original while eliminating excess syllabic weight.

Syllable Selection

Here, a prominent or easily identifiable syllable—typically from the beginning or middle of the name—is retained while the rest is omitted. This process highlights meaningful or recognizable morphemes, maintaining a connection to the original identity while adapting it for English usage. For instance, Olubankole is anglicized as Banky, and Olamilekan becomes Laycon, where “Bank” and “Lekan” are preserved and stylized.

Segment Deletion

This refers to the omission of individual consonants or vowels to simplify pronunciation and shorten the name. It helps eliminate phonological elements that may be difficult for English speakers to articulate. For example, Ajoke becomes AJ through deletion and abbreviation, while Ibukun becomes Ibk, dropping vowels entirely, and Olasunkanmi is drastically reduced to K1.

Segment Substitution

Yoruba sounds are replaced with English approximations, making the names more accessible to English speakers. This process enables phonological integration into English by aligning unfamiliar sounds with familiar ones. For example, Oladapo becomes D'banj, where "Dapo" is reinterpreted and stylized, and Oluwaseun becomes Sean, aligning with an existing English name of similar phonetic shape.

Epenthesis

Additional sounds or elements are inserted into the name to fit English phonotactics or to add stylistic flair. This strategy supports natural-sounding adaptations in English and allows for expressive modification. A typical case is Oluwajuwonlo → Jaywon, where "Jay" is added as a stylistic prefix. Similarly, Keshinro becomes Lil Kesh, using the popular "Lil" prefix common in the music industry.

Morphological Reduction

Only a single morpheme or a recognizable syllable is retained from the original name, often creating a nickname-like form. This process distills the name to its most essential and identifiable part, useful in creating stage names. For instance, Babalola becomes Babs, Falanabecomes Falz, and Jadesola becomes Jade—each retaining a clear semantic or phonetic link to the source.

Creative Adaptation

Names are restructured in innovative or stylistic ways, often combining abbreviation, phonological alteration, and entirely new constructions to create unique and marketable forms. This process emphasizes individuality and artistic identity over linguistic transparency. Examples include Olasunkanmi becoming K1 dé Ultimate, Oladapo Oyebanjo transforming into D'banj, and Opeyemi changing completely to Pepenazi.

Consonant Cluster Simplification

Complex consonant sequences are either created or reduced to better match English sound structures. This helps ensure ease of pronunciation and conformity with English phonotactic rules. For example, Temilade becomes Tems, forming a cluster /ms/, Babalola becomes Babs with /bs/, and Oladipupo becomes Lads with /ds/, all aligning with acceptable English codas.

Vowel Adjustment

Vowel qualities are altered to fit English pronunciation norms, often replacing Yoruba vowel patterns with more familiar ones. This phonological adaptation enhances intelligibility and aesthetic compatibility in English. For instance, Oluwaseun becomes Sean, a standard English name, and Ayobami becomes AY, where vowels are abstracted into letters.

Reduplication and Reanalysis

Some names are rhythmically modified or semantically reinterpreted to create appealing, often symmetrical forms. This can involve partial repetition or phonological manipulation. For example, Oyindamola becomes Dammy, with a duplicated syllable for rhythm, Ajoke becomes Jokky, using a stylized spelling, and Oluwadamilare becomes Darey, a smoother, reanalyzed form.

Optimality Theory (OT) analyzes how anglicized Yoruba names result from competing constraints that balance preserving the original form with adapting to English phonology. Markedness constraints favor simpler, English-like structures, while faithfulness constraints aim to keep the original Yoruba segments and morphology intact. The ranking of these constraints explains morphophonemic changes such as truncation, deletion, and substitution. Furthermore, due to the flexibility of Optimality Theory, there are various constraints that can be employed. However, based on the common processes observed in the listed names, the constraints considered in this study include:

Markedness Constraints:

- NoComplexSyll
- NoCodaClusters
- NoCoda (if needed)
- Dep (No epenthesis)

Faithfulness Constraints:

- Max-IO (No deletion)
- Dep-IO (No insertion)
- Ident(V) (Preserve vowel features)
- Ident(C) (Preserve consonant features)

Optional Prosodic/Morphological Constraints:

- Align-Morph (Preserve morphological boundaries)
- Onset (Syllables must have onsets)

Analysis

Name 1: Temilade → Tems

Input: /te.mi.la.de/

Output: [tɛms]

The name Temilade, originally pronounced /te.mi.la.de/, is anglicized as [tɛms]. This process involves truncation, where the original four-syllable name is reduced to a monosyllabic form. During this transformation, many segments of the original name are deleted, resulting in a much shorter output. Additionally,

consonant cluster simplification occurs, as the final form ends with the consonant cluster [ms], which is permissible in English phonotactics.

Relevant Constraints:

Markedness:

- NoComplexSyll (avoid complex syllables)
- NoCodaClusters (avoid consonant clusters in coda) — possibly violated here as [ms] is a cluster but acceptable in English
- Dep (no epenthesis) — no insertion occurs, so no violation

Faithfulness:

- Max-IO (no deletion) — violated due to truncation
- Dep-IO (no insertion) — satisfied
- Ident(V) (preserve vowels) — violated as several vowels are deleted
- Ident(C) (preserve consonants) — partially violated (some consonants deleted)

Prosodic/Morphological:

- Onset (syllables must have onsets) — satisfied in output
- Align-Morph (preserve morphological boundaries) — violated due to heavy truncation

Candidate	NoComplexSyll	Dep	Max-IO	Ident(V)	Ident(C)	Onset	Align-Morph	Outcome
/temilade/	*!							
Temilade	*!							
Tems			*	*	*		*	✓
Temi	*!		*				*	
Temlade	*!		*	*	*		*	

Explanation: The optimal output tems violates Max-IO, Ident(V), Ident(C), and Align-Morph due to deletion and truncation, but satisfies NoComplexSyll (English allows final consonant clusters like [ms]) and Dep (no epenthesis). The ranking favors markedness and no epenthesis over faithfulness to the input.

Name 2: Keshinro Ololade → Lil Kesh

Input: /keʃinro ololade/

Output: [lɪl keʃ]

The transformation of the Yoruba name "Keshinro Ololade" into the anglicized form "Lil Kesh" involves several morphophonemic processes. The most apparent is truncation, where the full name is significantly shortened to just two components: "Lil" and "Kesh." Within this truncation, syllable selection plays a role, as only key syllables from the original name are retained—specifically "Kesh," which derives from the initial syllable of "Keshinro." This results in the deletion of many other

segments and syllables, particularly from "Ololade," which is entirely omitted. Additionally, segment substitution occurs, where "Kesh" retains the initial consonant but drops the remainder of the original syllable structure. Finally, morphological reduction and creative adaptation are evident in the addition of "Lil," a stylistic and culturally embedded English nickname prefix, commonly used in entertainment circles to convey youth or swagger. This anglicization reflects both phonological simplification and social adaptation.

Relevant Constraints:

Markedness:

- NoComplexSyll (simplify syllables to fit English)
- NoCodaClusters (avoid complex clusters) — likely satisfied here
- Dep (no epenthesis) — satisfied; no segment insertion

Faithfulness:

- Max-IO (no deletion) — violated due to heavy truncation
- Dep-IO (no insertion) — satisfied
- Ident(V) (preserve vowel features) — partially violated
- Ident(C) (preserve consonant features) — partially preserved in “Kesh” syllable

Prosodic/Morphological:

- Onset (syllables must have onsets) — satisfied in output
- Align-Morph (preserve morphological boundaries) — partially violated due to truncation and creative addition of “Lil”

Candidate	**NoComplexSyll**	**Dep**	**Max-IO**	**Ident(V)**	**Ident(C)**	**Onset**	**Align-Morph**	**Outcome**
keshinroolade	*!							
lilkesh			*	*			*	✓
Keshin	*!		*				*	
keshololade	*!		*				*	

Explanation: The output lil kesh incurs violations of Max-IO, Ident(V), and Align-Morph due to truncation and creative addition of “Lil.” However, it satisfies markedness constraints by simplifying syllables and avoiding complex clusters, as well as Dep and Onset.

Name 3: Toyin Bello → TY Bello

Input: /tojin belo/

Output: [tiː waɪ beloʊ] (“TY Bello” pronounced as letters + surname)

The name "Toyin Bello" undergoes several morphophonemic processes in its transformation to the anglicized form "TY Bello," pronounced as [tiː waɪ beloʊ]. The first notable process is abbreviation or initialism, where the given name "Toyin" is reduced to its initials "TY," with each letter pronounced individually. This process also involves syllable selection, as only the surname "Bello" is retained in its entirety without modification. Additionally, there is segment deletion, in which most of the phonological content of "Toyin" is removed, leaving only the initial consonant and vowel sounds, which are then abstracted into initial letters. Finally, segment substitution occurs as these letters are not only used symbolically but are pronounced phonetically as [tiː] and [waɪ], replacing the original syllables of the name.

Relevant Constraints:

Markedness:

- NoComplexSyll (favors simple syllable structure in initials)
- NoCodaClusters (avoided in initials)
- Dep (no epenthesis) — satisfied; no insertion

Faithfulness:

- Max-IO (no deletion) — violated due to deletion of most syllables of “Toyin”
- Dep-IO (no insertion) — satisfied
- Ident(V) (preserve vowel features) — partially violated in initials replacing original vowels
- Ident(C) (preserve consonant features) — partially preserved in initials “T” and “Y”

Prosodic/Morphological:

- Onset (each syllable must have an onset) — satisfied
- Align-Morph (preserve morphological boundaries) — violated as “Toyin” is heavily truncated into initials

Candidate	NoComplexSyll	Dep	Max-IO	Ident(V)	Ident(C)	Onset	Align-Morph	Outcome
toyin bello	*!							
ty bello			*	*			*	✓
toy bello	*!		*				*	
to bello	*!		*				*	

Explanation: The winning candidate ty bello violates Max-IO and Ident(V) due to deletion and substitution but satisfies markedness constraints by simplifying syllables and avoiding complex structures. The morphological boundary of “Toyin” is not preserved.

Name 4: Oluwaseun → Sean

Input: /oluwa.se.un/

Output: [ʃɔn] (“Sean”)

The name Oluwaseun, originally pronounced /oluwa.se.un/, is anglicized to the monosyllabic form [ʃɔn], pronounced as “Sean.” This transformation involves several morphophonemic processes. First, truncation occurs, reducing the original polysyllabic name to a simpler monosyllabic form. Next, segment substitution takes place, where the initial consonant cluster and vowels of the original name are replaced by an English approximation, resulting in the form “Sean.” Finally, vowel adjustment is observed, as the vowels are modified to better fit the phonological patterns of English.

Relevant Constraints:

Markedness:

- NoComplexSyll (English prefers simpler syllables)
- NoCodaClusters (no complex codas) — satisfied in output
- Dep (no epenthesis) — satisfied; no insertion

Faithfulness:

- Max-IO (no deletion) — violated due to extensive truncation
- Dep-IO (no insertion) — satisfied
- Ident(V) (preserve vowel features) — violated due to vowel changes
- Ident(C) (preserve consonant features) — partially violated due to substitution of consonants

Prosodic/Morphological:

- Onset (syllables must have onsets) — satisfied
- Align-Morph (preserve morphological boundaries) — violated due to truncation

Candidate	**NoComplexSyll**	**Dep**	**Max-IO**	**Ident(V)**	**Ident(C)**	**Onset**	**Align-Morph**	**Outcome**
Oluwaseun	*!							
Sean			*	*	*		*	✓
Oluseun	*!		*				*	
Oluwaun	*!		*	*			*	

Explanation: The output sean violates faithfulness constraints due to heavy truncation and substitution but satisfies markedness by producing a simple syllable with acceptable phonotactics.

Name 5: Olasunkanmi → K1 dé Ultimate

Input: /o.la.sun.kan.mi/

Output: [keɪ wʌn deɪʌltɪmət] (“K1 dé Ultimate”)

The name Olasunkanmi with the input /o.la.sun.kan.mi/ is anglicized as K1 dé Ultimate, pronounced [keɪ wʌn deɪʌltɪmət]. This transformation involves several processes. First, truncation occurs as the original polysyllabic name is heavily shortened. Most of the original segments are deleted in the output form, demonstrating significant segment deletion. Additionally, there is creative adaptation in the anglicized version, where English and French-like elements such as “K1,” “dé,” and “Ultimate” are introduced for stylistic effect. Finally, segment substitution takes place as original phonetic segments are replaced by English or French approximations and symbolic forms like “K1,” which diverge markedly from the original phonological structure.

Relevant Constraints:

Markedness:

- NoComplexSyll (output syllables conform to English phonotactics)
- NoCodaClusters (avoids complex codas)
- Dep (no epenthesis) — satisfied despite additions since “dé” and “Ultimate” are considered separate words/names, not inserted segments within syllables

Faithfulness:

- Max-IO (no deletion) — heavily violated due to truncation
- Dep-IO (no insertion) — satisfied
- Ident(V) (preserve vowels) — violated due to substitutions
- Ident(C) (preserve consonants) — violated due to substitutions

Prosodic/Morphological:

- Onset (syllables must have onsets) — satisfied
- Align-Morph (preserve morphological boundaries) — violated by heavy truncation and creative additions

Candidate	**NoComplexSyll**	**Dep**	**Max-IO**	**Ident(V)**	**Ident(C)**	**Onset**	**Align-Morph**	**Outcome**
Olasunkanmi	*!							
k1 de ultimate			*	*	*		*	✓
Olasunkan	*!		*				*	
Olasunkanmi	*!		*	*	*		*	

Explanation: The anglicized name K1 dé Ultimate satisfies markedness and prosodic constraints by creating a well-formed, stylized name, but violates faithfulness and morphological alignment due to heavy truncation and creative additions.

Findings

The analysis of the five polysyllabic Yoruba names and their anglicized forms reveals a complex interplay of morphophonemic processes driven by the need to adapt to English phonology, stylistic conventions, and socio-cultural contexts, particularly within Nigerian Hippop culture and global entertainment. Using Optimality Theory (OT), this study demonstrates how competing constraints—markedness and faithfulness—shape the transformation of these names. The findings highlight the systematic nature of these adaptations and their alignment with both linguistic and socio-cultural motivations.

The data illustrates a range of morphophonemic processes, including truncation, syllable selection, segment deletion, segment substitution, epenthesis, morphological reduction, creative adaptation, consonant cluster simplification, vowel adjustment, and reduplication/reanalysis. These processes serve two primary functions: phonological simplification to align with English phonotactics and stylistic transformation to create memorable, marketable social identities. For instance, truncation is prevalent, as seen in Temilade→Tems and Oluwaseun→Sean, reducing polysyllabic names to shorter forms that are easier for English speakers to pronounce and recall. This aligns with markedness constraints like NoComplexSyll, which favor simpler syllable structures.

Syllable selection and segment deletion further streamline names by retaining only prominent or recognizable portions, as in Olubankole→Banky or Ibukun→Ibk. These processes prioritize ease of articulation and memorability, often at the expense of faithfulness constraints like Max-IO and Ident(V), which are frequently violated due to segment loss. Segment substitution, as in Oluwaseun→Sean or Oladapo→D'banj, replaces Yoruba sounds with English approximations, ensuring compatibility with English phonology. This reflects the dominance of Ident(C) and Ident(V) violations in favor of markedness constraints like NoCodaClusters.

Epenthesis and creative adaptation introduce stylistic elements, particularly in entertainment contexts, as seen in Keshinro Ololade→Lil Kesh and Olasunkanmi→K1 dé Ultimate. The addition of prefixes like "Lil" or terms like "Ultimate" reflects socio-cultural influences, such as the adoption of Western music industry naming conventions, and satisfies Dep constraints by avoiding unnecessary phonological insertions while enhancing marketability. Morphological reduction, as in Babalola→Babs or Falana→Falz, distills names to their core morphemes, maintaining a link to the original identity while creating nickname-like forms that resonate in informal or global contexts.

Consonant cluster simplification and vowel adjustment further align names with English phonotactics, as seen in Temilade→Tems (forming /ms/) and Oluwaseun→Sean (adopting English vowels). Reduplication/reanalysis, as in Oyindamola→Dammy or Ajoke→Jokky, adds rhythmic or stylistic appeal, often for artistic purposes. These processes collectively demonstrate a strategic

balance between linguistic adaptation and cultural branding, with the resulting forms reflecting both phonological necessity and creative expression.

CONCLUSION

The anglicisation of polysyllabic Yoruba names among Nigerian Hip-hop artists involves a complex interplay of morphophonemic processes—including truncation, syllable selection, segment deletion, substitution, epenthesis, and prosodic restructuring. These processes are largely motivated by the need to conform to English phonotactic norms and meet global audience expectations. Through the lens of Optimality Theory, this study underscored that markedness constraints often override faithfulness to the original Yoruba forms, resulting in anglicised names that are more phonetically compatible with English but less representative of their indigenous phonological and socio-cultural identities.

The study highlights the broader sociolinguistic implications of name adaptation in a globalized entertainment context. It affirms that while anglicisation can enhance international accessibility and social acceptability, it can also erode the cultural and linguistic essence embedded in Yoruba naming practices. Therefore, preserving the cultural identity of Yoruba artists through more mindful and standardized anglicisation practices is both a linguistic and cultural imperative.

Recommendation

In light of the findings of this study, it is recommended that a standardized framework be developed for the anglicisation of Yoruba Hip-hop stage names. Such a framework should aim to preserve the phonological and morphological integrity of Yoruba names while still accommodating the societal expectations of a global English-speaking audience. This would involve collaboration between linguists, cultural scholars, and stakeholders in the Nigerian music industry to establish naming conventions that reflect both indigenous social identity and international marketability.By ensuring a stronger correlation between the original Yoruba names and their anglicised counterparts, artists can maintain a sense of cultural authenticity while enhancing their global accessibility. This balance is crucial in the current era of globalization where linguistic identity is increasingly subjected to commercial pressures. Standardizing the anglicisation process could also serve as a cultural preservation strategy, preventing the erosion of Yoruba linguistic features in popular media and promoting a more socially conscious adaptation of indigenous names within global entertainment industries.

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