

The Linguistic Status of Usen

Ameze Franca OGBEIFUN(Mrs)

University of Benin, Benin City

ameze.ogbeifun@uniben.edu

and

Oye Taiwo

University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

oyepaultaiwo@gmail.com

Abstract

Usen is a small group community located in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State. Although, Usen community is located in Edo State, the speech form differs from the Edoid neighbouring languages but rather mutually intelligible with Yoruba language. This research aims at establishing the linguistic status of Usen, by comparing Usen with Edo, standard Yoruba and some of the South Eastern Dialects of Yoruba, so as to ascertain whether Usen is a dialect of Edo, a dialect of Yoruba or a language of its own. Data were elicited from 36 native speakers, who are mentally fit, resides in Usen community, and are 40 years and above. The informants comprise of 24 males and 12 females, with three respondents from the respectively languages and dialects to compare Usen with. The Ibadan 400 wordlist was used in sourcing data from the informants, the data was recorded and afterwards analyzed using the Lexicostatistics Method of Comparative Theory, developed by Morris Swadesh. The study found out that Usen has higher degree of relatedness of cognates with dialects of Yoruba in Ondo State, and Ijebu dialect in Ogun State with over 70% cognates except Ào with 69.8%, standard Yoruba and Egba has over 60% cognates, while Edo has below 20% cognates. Thus, this research concluded that Usen is better referred to as a dialect of Yoruba and not dialect of Edo, or a Yoruboid language.

Keywords: *Linguistic Status, Usen, Lexicostatistics, Cognate, Degree of Relatedness.*

Introduction

Research on the linguistic status of any speech community is an important aspect in the study of linguistics, as it enables a proper research on the genetic classification of its speech form. Usen is a small group community located in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State. The last population census conducted in 2006 asserts that the population of Usen is about a hundred and twenty thousand (120,000) people. However, based on the observations on field trips to the community, the population figure seems lesser than the present population, due to population growth over the years. It is important to know that Usen is used to refer to the place, the people and their speech form.

The linguistic situation in Usen is multi-lingual, such that Usen and Edo are predominantly used in the community. Members of the speech community switch from one to the other without altering the structure of the other. There are speculations that Usen could be a hybrid language, drawing from both Edo and Yoruba, to form a new speech. However, these speculations are totally wrong, because Usen has its own speech forms and structure totally

different from Edo, but mutually intelligible with Yoruba, and also based on data collected on field trips. Hence, this study, aim at establishing the linguistic status of Useṅ using the genetic and typological methods of classifying languages.

Theoretical framework

This study employs the lexicostatistics method of comparative theory. This theory was propounded by Swadesh in the early 50s. Gudschinsky (1956) defines lexicostatistics as a technique which attempts to provide dates for the early stages of languages for archeological findings. This contrasts with previous linguistic methods which although are able to reconstruct to some extent the history of language, have been unable to provide dates apart from written historical records. Hockett (1953) opines that comparative linguistics allows the charting of phonemic changes by which contemporary languages have developed from a common parent language and reconstruct some of the vocabulary of the parent language, thus permitting an investigator to determine to some extent the historical order of dialect differentiation. Yul-Ifode (2001:59) on the other hand defines lexicostatistics as a method of accessing the degree of relationship among a group of languages by calculating and comparing the percentage of shared cognate words found on a standard list of basic vocabulary. Lexicostatistics is therefore a technique used in comparative linguistics to establish relationships among groups of languages.

Basic Assumptions of Lexicostatistics

- It is assumed that some parts of the vocabulary of a language, subject to empirical evidence, are much less subject to changes than other parts, Swadesh (1951:12). The basic vocabulary includes pronouns, numerals, body parts, geographical features, etc.
- Secondly, the rate of retention of vocabulary items in the basic core of relatively stable vocabulary is constant through time; that is, given a certain number of basic words in a certain language, a certain percentage of these words will remain in the language after a thousand years of vocabulary loss; that same percentage of the residue of words will remain after a second thousand years, and after a period of a thousand years, the same percentage of words remaining at the end of the second period will still remain , and so on (Lee 1953:121-122)
- Thirdly, the rate of loss of basic vocabulary is approximately the same in all languages (Lee 1953:118-119). Lee tested his assumption in thirteen languages, in which there are historical records and the result range from retention of 86.4% to 74.4% per thousand years, an average of 80.5%. This is however not a conclusive evidence that all languages change at this rate, as it was observed that two of the thirteen languages tested are Indo-European languages.
- The fourth assumption is that if the percentage of the true cognates within the core vocabulary is known for any part of languages, the length of time that has elapsed since the two languages began to diverge from a single parent can be computed, provided there are no interfering factors through migration, conquest or other social contacts which slowed or speeded the divergence (Swadesh 1951a:158-160, Gudschinsky 1956:149).

Techniques of Lexicostatistics

Wordlist: The research shall adopt the Ibadan 400 wordlist in eliciting data from the different languages and dialects under study.

Cognate: Having computed the vocabulary of the speech forms under study in the wordlist, the next step shall be to compare them in order to ascertain how many of the words are probable cognates. True cognates are developed from the same word in a common parent language and only true cognates are conclusive evidence of genetic relationship.

Previous Studies

Ikhimwin (2015) in her work on “Exploring the Phonology of Usen” briefly examined the linguistic status of Usen. She claims that Usen is a sister language to Yoruba and not a dialect of either Yoruba or Edo. According to her findings, Usen is historically, traditionally and geographically related to Edo, however they are not mutually intelligible. Ikhimwin (2015) linguistically establishes the fact that Usen is better referred to as a Yoruboid language using the lexicostatistics method. She used the Ibadan 400 wordlist and other lexical items totaling 472, in comparing the lexical items of both Yoruba and Edo with Usen. The result of the research shows 56.14% cognates with Yoruba and 21.14% cognates with Edo, while the other percentage are words peculiar to only Usen. The researcher therefore claimed that since the cognates were not up to 70% of establishing dialect, it cannot be claimed that Usen is a dialect of Yoruba, though they are mutually intelligible.

Aside using the lexicostatistics method in calculating cognates, the work also noted the following facts;

- Usen and Yoruba worship similar gods, such as ogun, sango, uja, etc.
- there is evidence of partial vowel harmony in Usen just like we have it in Yoruba.
- There are same tonal pattern in Usen as in Yoruba, made up of the three basic tone heights: high [´], low [̀] and the mid [˘] tones.

Having established the above claims in her work, Ikhimwin (2015) concludes that Usen is a Yoruboid language and since Edoid and Yoruboid languages belong to the Benue-Congo group of languages (formerly the kwa group of languages), she represented Usen in the Benue-Congo family tree under the Yoruboid group of languages, following Williamson’s (1989) classification of language.

However, this study refutes the claim of Ikhimwin (2015) that Usen is a Yoruboid language on the following grounds:

- Linguistic status cannot be determined by comparing the speech form under investigation from only two different language families, without paying attention to the dialects of such language families, which are closely related and mutually intelligible to the speech form under study. It is expedient to also compare it with other neighbouring dialects of the language family wherein there is mutual intelligibility. Ikhimwin limited her study to only Edo and Standard Yoruba languages without considering any of the dialects of these languages.
- Before a language or dialect can be grouped on the language family tree, there are some grammatical features that are pertinent to the languages or dialects in the family tree that should be checked to ascertain if they are predominant in the speech form under study. Although

Ikhimwin (2015) examined; tones, vowel harmony and cultural features, which are very important, this study intends to consider more grammatical to help in ascertaining the linguistic status of Usen.

In establishing the linguistic status of Usen, we shall compare Usen with Edo, standard Yoruba and the South Eastern Yoruba (SEY) dialects according to the classification of Awóbùluyì (1998) and a re-modification by Ajòngòlò (2005) who included Ào dialects, based on proximity and shared grammatical features.

Establishing the Linguistics Status of Usen

Usen is located in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State, but Edo and Usen speech forms are not mutually intelligible, but rather Usen is mutually intelligible with Yoruba. Historically, Usen and Edo have a common origin from Ile-Ife, and there exists some linguistic features common to both Usen and Yoruba, which include; same tone pattern, the high [´], the low [̀], and the mid [ˊ], they share the same word structure, Subject verb object (SVO), they have similar verbal features; splitting verbs, serial verbal construction, among others. Owing to these facts, this research shall be doing a lexicostatistics analysis of cognates between Usen and the following; Edo, Yoruba and some dialects of the South Eastern Yoruba (SEY).

Classification of Yoruba Dialects

Awóbùluyì (1998), subdivides Yoruba dialects into five major groups, which include;

- North Western Yoruba (NWY), which comprises, Èkó, Àwóri, Ègbádò, Ònkò, Ọyọ, Ọsun, Ìbòlò and Ìgbómìnà.
- North Eastern Yoruba (NEY), Yàgbà, Ijùmù, Òwóró and Owé.
- Central Yoruba (CY), ifè, Ìjèsà, Èkiti and Mòbà
- South Eastern Yoruba (SEY), Ègbá, Ìjẹbù, Ìlàjẹ, Ìkàlẹ, Òndó, Ọwò, Ọbà Ìkàré. Táíwò (2003) re-modified the SEY dialects by adding Ào to the group. Ào comprise of the following: Ìfira, Ìpèsì, Imerì, Ìdógún, Ìdòání, Àfò, and Ikún.
- South Western Yoruba (SWY), Sabẹẹ, Ketu (Anago) and Ifẹ Togo.

These classes of dialects have various features pertinent mainly to the members of each class. Below are the features of the SEY;

- The preponderance of *en* /*ẽ*/: it is common in SEY as it cuts across all the members of this dialect group. This is unlike in other major dialect groups such as NWY and CY where *en* occurs only in some of the dialects within the group. For instance, in NWY, *en* occurs but only in Èkó, Àwóri, and Ònkò (Awóbùluyì 1998:2).
- Apart from Ègbá, all other members of this group have *u* at the beginning of the word, though this is also found in NEY and CY.
- The occurrence of *n* before both oral and nasal vowels unlike what occurs in other dialect groups thus making *n* to be phonemic. Though this feature is found in *Owé*, one of the members of the NEY, it cuts across the members in SEY.
- The use of *rèé*, *òun* or *rin/in* as the focus marker instead of *ni* or *li*. *rin/in* occurs at sentence-final position for speakers in Òndó, Ìkàré and Ìlàjẹ.

- The use of the following: *yèsí, ìsí, sí, sèé, nè, lè* and *iné*, as content question marker that is [+Human] instead of *ta*.
- The use of the following as relative clause marker: *rèé* in Ìjèbú, *ìyí* or *yíí* for others.
- The occurrence of high tone syllable (HTS) after the first person singular pronoun *mi* or with its identified marker *ó* in declarative sentences is a unique feature that distinguishes SEY from other dialect groups.
- *èé*, two vowels of the same form with high and low tones are used as negative marker.
- The use of *fò* and *fí* as complementizers in a nominalized sentences rather than the use of *pé*.
- The occurrence of two noun phrases side by side without any item occurring between them (this is also found in NEY).

Features of Usen

The following among others are the prominent features of Usen dialects;

A) Identification of [gʷ] and [ɣ], as seen in the examples below;

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------|---|--------|---------|
| 1a) | /gʷà/ | = | [gʷà] | ‘dig’ |
| b) | /gʷẹ/ | = | [gʷẹ] | ‘bath’ |
| c) | /gʷò/ | = | [gʷò] | ‘break’ |
| 2a) | /eghó/ | = | [eɣó] | ‘money’ |
| b.) | /gharé/ | = | [ɣaré] | ‘run’ |
| c.) | /ùghò/ | = | [ùɣò] | ‘navel’ |

B) Preponderance of /ɛn/ [ɛ̃]

In Usen the occurrence of *ɛn* is highly accounted for, and it is evident in the examples below;

- | | | |
|-----|----------|----------|
| 3a. | /ɔkànɛn/ | ‘man’ |
| b. | /àjèn/ | ‘witch’ |
| c. | /ùgbèn/ | ‘snail’ |
| d. | /kpèn/ | ‘divide’ |
| e. | /dèn/ | ‘fry’ |

C) The use of “*oun*” as the focus marker.

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|------------|-------|---------|-------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 4a. | ajá | oun | ó | dí | Ọmọláraó | subú. |
| | dog | (foc) | HTS | cause | ỌmọláraHTS | fall ‘The dog cause Omolàrá to fall’ |
| b. | Ọmọláraó | | | | subú. | |
| | ỌmọláraHTS | | | | fall | ‘Omolàrá fell’ |
| 5a. | Ọmọlayọ | | ó | ká | àlímóyì | |
| | Ọmọlayọ | | HTS | pluck | orange | ‘Ọmọlayọ plucked an orange’ |
| b. | Àlímóyì | oun | Ọmọlayọ | ó | ká | |
| | orange | (foc) | Ọmọlayọ | HTS | pluck | ‘It was orange that Ọmọlayọ plucked’ |
| c. | kíká | oun | Ọmọlayọ | ó | ká | àlímóyì |
| | pluck | (foc) | Ọmọlayọ | HTS | pluck | orange |

‘plucking it is that Omolayò plucked the orange.’

D) The use of ‘u’ as vowel initial words in Usen as seen in the examples below.

- 6a) /ùgbèn/ ‘snail’
- b.) /ugún/ ‘vulture’
- c.) /ùrù/ ‘tail’
- d.) /ùkù/ ‘stomach’
- e.) /ùgbà/ ‘time’

E) The use of ‘èyí’ as a relative marker. Consider the examples below.

7a. Adé ó rà iwé
 Adé HTS buy book
 ‘Ade bought a book’

b. Ìwé èyí Adé ó rà nò
 book rel Adé HTS buy lost
 ‘The book that Ade bought is lost’

8a. Tọlá ó yú ùlíébò
 Tọlá HTS go abroad
 ‘Tola went abroad’

b. Tọlá èyí ó yú ùlíébò ò tí bọ
 Tọlá rel HTS go abroad pro asp return
 ‘Tola that travelled abroad has returned’

F) *Fọ* is verb of saying in Usen.

9a. Adé ó fọ kè òún è wa
 Adé HTS say that 3sg asp come
 ‘Ade said that she is coming’

b. Ọfọ è fọ èè ghan.
 word pro say neg good
 ‘The word you said is bad’

G) All the five nasal vowels in Usen, [ã], [ũ], [ɛ̃], [ĩ] and [ɔ̃], are phonemic because they contrast in identical environment with their oral counterpart.

- 10a. /tɔ̃n/ ‘new’
 /tò/ ‘urinate’
- b. /fun/ ‘white’
 /fù/ ‘full’
- c. /tán/ ‘finish’
 /ta/ ‘peppery’
- d. /kpén/ ‘divide’
 /kpé/ ‘late’
- e. /eyín/ ‘teeth’
 /èyí/ ‘that’

H) The occurrence of high tone syllable (HTS) in non-future tense constructions.

- 11a. Ayò ó jín àsọ mí
 Ayọ HTS steal cloth poss 'Ayo stole my cloth.'
- b. Mò ó he ìréhì
 1sg HTS cook rice 'I cooked rice'
- c. Ajá yì ó kpa olódògbóró
 dog dem HTS kill lizard 'The dog killed the lizard'

I) The use of *éè*, a sequence of two vowels of the same form with high and low tones as a negative marker.

- 12a. Shade éè he ìrehì.
 Shade neg cook rice 'Shade did not cook rice'
- b. Dùpẹ́ éè sòlẹ̀.
 Dupe neg thief 'Dupe is not a thief.'
- c. Ayọ́ éè kàwá.
 Ayo neg come 'Ayo is not coming.'

J) The use of two noun phrases side by side without any item occurring between them.

- 13a. Asọ Kọlá
 Cloth Kola "Kola's cloth."
- b. Ulí Ìwé
 house book "School"
- c. Ọmọ Usé
 child work "apprentice"

K) Content question in Usen is marked with *kẹ́ẹ́* "what"+ *ẹnẹ* (who), *ùgbá* (when), *ìbì* (where), *bẹ́nẹ́* (manner) and *òlú* "how much/many"

- 14a. Kẹ́ẹ́ ẹnẹ uwọ́ ó rí.
 WH person 2sg HTS see 'Who did you see?'
- b. Kẹ́ẹ́ pé ohun èyí uwọ́ ó fọ́
 WH call thing that 2sg HTS say 'What did you say?'
- c. Kẹ́ẹ́ ùgbá èyí uwọ́ ó mù wá.
 WH time that 2sg HTS bring come 'When did you come?'
- d. Kẹ́ẹ́ ibi èyí uwọ́ ó lọ ghí.
 WH place that 2sg HTS go prep 'Where did you go to?'
- e. Kẹ́ẹ́ bẹ́nẹ́ èyí uwọ́ ó mú rí ghan
 WH manner that 2sg HTS bring see them 'How did you see them?'
- f. Òlú eghó èyí uwọ́ ó mú ra usu.
 How money that 2sg HTS bring buy yam 'How much did you buy the yam?'

From the above features of Useṅ discussed above, this paper observes that Useṅ exhibit eight out of the ten features of the SEY, which is significantly relevant in adopting it as the Yoruba dialect group to compare Useṅ with.

Lexicostatistic Analysis

The linguistic status of Useṅ shall be established as either a dialect or a language in this section. Data used for this analysis is seen under appendix, due to space allotted to each paper we will include only the first 100 lexical items on the Ibadan 400 wordlist, used for analysis in this paper under appendix.

In establishing the linguistic status of Useṅ, the lexicostatistic method is employed in comparing Edo, standard Yoruba, and South East dialects of Yoruba (Òndó, Ìkàlé, Ìlàje, Ègbá, Ìjèbú, Ifón, Òwò, Àò, Ìkàré and Àkókó). This will enable us determine the degree of relatedness between their cognates and thus establish the linguistic status of Useṅ. In calculating the degree of mutual intelligibility, Ethnologue's method of calculation is employed. The number of cognates between Useṅ and afore mentioned languages and dialects are compared, the figure realized by the number of cognates identified is divided by the total number of lexical items employed in this analysis and the percentage rate is determined. The figures employed are assigned to cognate set as follows:

A: cognates =1

B: near cognates (vocalic and consonantal alteration) =1

C: non cognate =0

Below is the formula for calculating cognates;

$$\frac{\text{Cognates}}{\text{Total}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

A) The percentage of cognates between Useṅ and Edo:

Cognates=34, near cognates=32, non cognates= 335

Cognates + near cognate = total cognate

34 + 32 = 66

Total lexical items = 401

15a.
$$\frac{\text{Cognates}}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 16.5\%$$

b.
$$\frac{\text{Non Cognates}}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 83.5\%$$

B) The percentage of cognates between Useṅ and Standard Yoruba

Cognates = 164, near cognates = 114, non-cognate = 123

Total cognates = 164 + 114 = 278

Total lexical items = 401

Cognates

$$16a. \quad \frac{278}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 69.3\%$$

Non-cognates

$$b. \quad \frac{123}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 30.7\%$$

C) Percentage of cognates between Usen and Ìkálè dialect of SEY

Cognates = 249, near cognates = 73, non cognates = 79

Total cognates = 249 + 73 = 321

Total lexical items = 401

Cognates

$$17a. \quad \frac{322}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 80.3\%$$

Non-cognates

$$b. \quad \frac{79}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 19.7\%$$

D) Percentage of cognates between Usen and Ondo dialect of SEY

Cognates = 199, near cognates = 100, non cognates = 102

Total cognates = 199 + 100 = 299

Total lexical items = 401

Cognates

$$18a. \quad \frac{299}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 74.6\%$$

Non Cognates

$$b. \quad \frac{102}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 25.4\%$$

E) Percentage of cognates between Usen and Ilàje dialect of SEY

Cognates = 193, near cognates = 103, non cognates = 105

Total cognates = 193 + 103 = 296

Total lexical items = 401

Cognates

$$19a. \quad \frac{296}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 73.8\%$$

Non cognates

$$b. \quad \frac{105}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 26.2\%$$

F) Percentage of cognates between Usen and Ìjèbú dialect of SEY.

Cognates = 168, near cognates = 114, non cognate = 119

Total cognate 168 + 114 = 282

Total lexical items 401

Cognates

$$20a. \quad \frac{282}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 70.3\%$$

Non Cognate

$$b. \quad \frac{119}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 29.7\%$$

G) Percentage of cognate between Usen and Egba dialect of SEY

Cognates = 149, near cognates = 113, non cognate = 139

Total cognates 149 + 113 = 262

Total lexical items = 401

Cognates

$$21a. \quad \frac{262}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 65.3\%$$

Non cognates

$$b. \quad \frac{139}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 34.7\%$$

K) Percentage of cognate between Usen and Aò dialect of SEY

Cognates = 158, near cognates = 122, non-cognate = 121

Total cognates = 158 + 122 = 280

Total lexical items = 400

Cognates

$$25a. \quad \frac{280}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 69.8\%$$

Non-cognate

$$b. \quad \frac{121}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 30.2\%$$

H) Percentage of cognates between Usen and Ifon dialect of SEY.

Cognates = 246, near cognates = 74, non-cognate = 81

Total cognates = 246 + 74 = 320

Total lexical items = 401

Cognates

$$22a. \quad \frac{320}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 79.8\%$$

Non cognates

$$b. \quad \frac{81}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 20.2\%$$

I) Percentage of cognate between Usen and Ọ̀wò dialect of SEY

Cognates = 242, near cognates = 72, non cognates = 87

Total cognates = 242 + 72 = 314

Total lexical items = 401

Cognates

$$23a. \quad \frac{314}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 78.3\%$$

Non-cognates

$$b. \quad \frac{87}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 21.7\%$$

J) Percentage of cognates between Usen and Ìkàré Àkókó dialect of SEY

Cognates = 193, near cognates = 104, non-cognate = 104

Total cognates = 193 + 104 = 297

Total lexical items = 401

Cognates

$$24a. \quad \frac{297}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 74.1\%$$

Non-cognate

$$b. \quad \frac{104}{401} \times \frac{100}{1} = 25.9\%$$

Results Showing Cognates Degree of Relatedness among Usen, Edo, Yoruba and SEY dialects.

	Cognates	Non Cognates
Usen and Èdó	16.5%	83.5%
Usen and Standard Yorùbá	69.3%	30.7%
Usen and Ìkálè dialect(SEY)	80.3%	19.7%
Usen and Ọ̀ndo dialect(SEY)	74.6%	25.4%
Usen and Ìlàjẹ dialect (SEY)	73.8%	26.2%
Usen and Ìjẹbu dialect (SEY)	70.3%	29.7%
Usen and Ègbá dialect (SEY)	65.3%	34.7%
Usen and Ào dialect (SEY)	69.8%	30.2%
Usen and Ọ̀wò dialect (SEY)	78.3%	21.7%
Usen and Ìkàré dialect (SEY)	74.1%	25.9%
Usen and Ifon dialect (SEY)	79.8%	20.2%

Discussion

The lexicostatistics analysis reveals that Usen has the following percentage of cognates with the speech forms understudy; Edo 16.5%, standard Yorùbá 69.3%, Ìkálè dialect 80.3% ,

Òndó dialect 74.6%, Ìlájẹ 73.8%, Ìjẹ̀bú 70.3, Ègbá 65.3%, Ào 69.8%, Ọ̀wò 78.3%, Ìkàrẹ 74.1%, Ifón 79.8%. From the figures above it was observed that Yoruba dialects spoken in Ondo State have higher percentage of above 70%, except Ào which has 69.8%. Ìjẹ̀bu dialect spoken in Ogun State also has over 70%, while Ègbá and the standard Yoruba Language have 60% and above. We presume that proximity could be a factor determining this, as Usen is closely located to Ondo State. We can therefore establish the fact that Usen tilts more towards the Yoruba language than Edo.

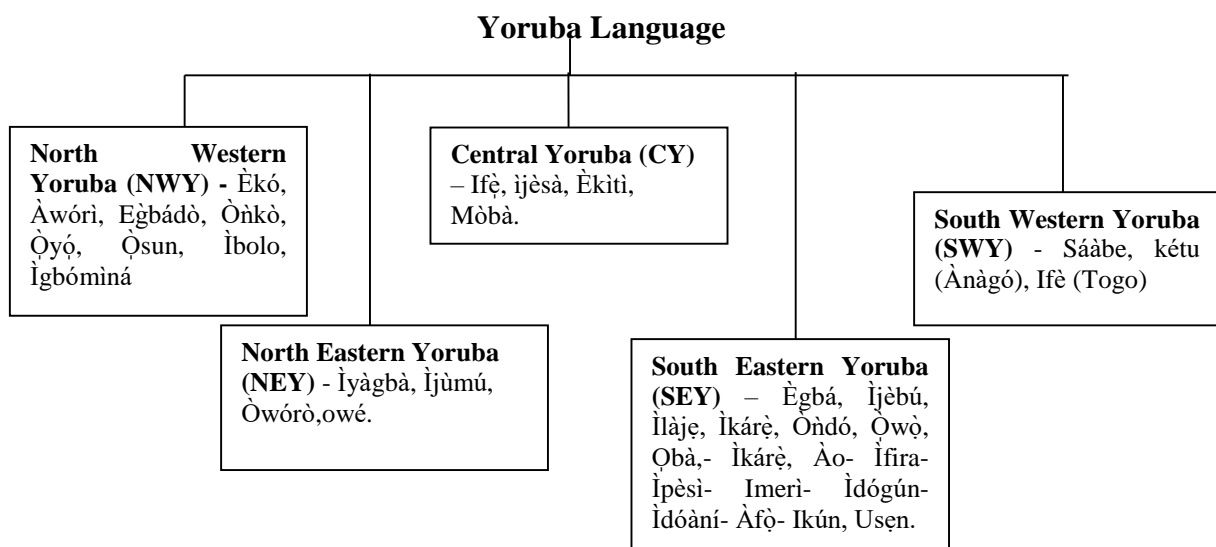
Secondly, though geographically Usen is within Edo State, Usen is not included under the seven Edo speaking communities. The Usen people on the other hand, though they call themselves Edo people but they refer to Usen speech form as a dialect of Yoruba. A fieldtrip to the community, and the Palace of Eláwùré, the traditional head of the Usen community, wherein the issue of Usen was discussed with the Eláwùré and his chiefs, the traditional council also confirmed that Usen is a dialect of Yoruba, even though the community is located within Edo speaking communities.

Thirdly, Usen has similar grammatical features with Yoruba, some of which were discussed above and many others.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, this study therefore, establishes the fact that Usen is a dialect of Yoruba since it has higher percentage of cognates, of over 70%, with dialects in Ondo State and the communities where these dialects are spoken are closer to Usen geographically. Since Usen has over 70% percentages cognates with Ìkálẹ̀, Òndó, Ìlájẹ, Ifón, Ọ̀wò, Ìkàrẹ Ìjẹ̀bú dialects, we shall, therefore add Usen to the classification of Yoruba dialects by Awóbùluyi (1998), modified by Ajòngòlò (2005) as seen below.

Table 2: Dialects of Yoruba Showing the Place of Usen



Re-modification of Ajòngòlò (2005:6)

References

- Ajónǵóló, T.O. 2005. Negation in the Ào Dialect of Yoruba. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Ibadan.
- Àwóbùluyì, O. 1998. Àwòn Èka-èdè Yorùbá (Yorùbá Dialects). Paper presented at the Conference of the Yorùbá Studies Association of Nigeria (YSAN), Ibadan.
- Gudschinsky, S.C. 1956. *The ABC of Lexicostatistics (Glottochronology)*. In Dell Hymes: language and Anthropology. New York: Harpor & Row, pp 612-623. Republish in 4, Dec, 2015. InWord12:2, 175-210, Doi: 10.1080/00437956.1956.11659599.
- Hockett, C.F. 1953. Linguistic Time Perspective and its Anthropological Uses. IJAL, 19:146-152.
- Ikhimwin, G.A. 2015. Exploring the phonology of Usen. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Port-Harcourt.
- Lee, R.B. 1953. *The Basis of Glottochronology*. Lg, 29:113-127.
- Swadesh, M.1951 The Diffusional Cumulation and Archaic Residue as Historical Explanations. Southern Western Journal of Anthropology7:1-21.
- Táiwò, O. 2003. “The Place of Ào among Yorùbá Dialects” Paper presented at YSAN Conference, Akungba–Akoko, November 4 – 8.
- Williamson, K. 1986. *The Niger Congo Overview*, In Bendor, S. and Rhonda, H. (eds). *The Niger Congo Languages*, Lanhan: Maryland University press of America. Pp3-46.
- Yul-Ifode, S. 2001. *An Introduction to Language in History and Society*. National Institute for Nigerian languages, Aba.

S/N	English	Usen	Edo	Yoruba	Ikafe	Ondo	Ilaje	Ijebu	Egba	Ao	Ifon	Owo	Ikafe
1	head	Orí	Uhunmwú	orí	orí	oí	orí/orígho	orúwo	orú/orúwo	orí	orí	orí	orí
2	hair	iran	Etó	irun	iron/iran	ion/irun	irun	irun	irun	iron	irun	iran	irun
3	eye	ojú	Arò	ojú	ojú	ojú	ojú	ojú	ojú	ozú	ojú	ojú	ojú
4	ear	etín	Ehó	etí	etí	etí	etí	etí	etí	etín	etí	etí	etí
5	nose	imó	Ihué	imú	imó	imú	imú	imú	imú	imó	imú	imó	imú
6	mouth	erun	Únú	enu	erun	enu	enu	erun	erun	arun	enu	erun	ahun
7	tooth	eyín	Akón	eyín	eyín	eyín	eyín	eyín	eyín	eyín	eyín	eyín	eyín
8	tongue	unwán	Aránmwèn	ahón	ahón	ahán	ahón	ahón	ahón	uwón	inwón	ahón	ahón
9	jaw	àgbàn	agbànmwèn	Àgbòn	àgbàn	àgbòn	ìgbàn	àgbòn	ìgbòn	àgbòn	àgbòn	àgbàn	àgbòn
10	chin	èrèké	Agbànwúnù	Èrèké	èrèké	èrèké	èrèké	irèké	èrèké	èrèké	èrèké	èrèké	èrèké
11	beard	iran-agbòn	Úrhù	Irungbòn	iron-agbòn	irunagbòn	irunagbòn	irungbòn	irungbòn	ironagbòn	irungbòn	iranagbàn	irungbòn
12	neck	oròn	ùrù/ènyá	Orùn	orùn	orùn	orùn	orùn	orùn	ofòn	orùn	oròn	orùn
13	breast	eyàn	Èwèn	omú/oyàn	eyàn	oyàn	eyàn	oyún	oyàn	eyàn	oyàn	oyàn	omú
14	heart	okàn	Údù	Okan	okàn	okàn	okàn	okàn	okàn	okàn	okàn	okàn	okàn
15	belly	ùkù	Èkó	Ikùn	ùkù	ùkù	Ikùn	ikùn	ikùn	ukùn	ikùn	ikàn	ikùn
16	stomach(internal)	iná-ùkù	Úwékò	Inú	inó	inú	Inú	inú	inú	iná	inú	iná	inú
17	navel	ughò	Úkhòn	Ìdodo	ùdodo	ùdodo	Ìdodo	ùdodo	idodo	uwò	idodo	idodo	dodo
18	back	eyín	Íyèkè	Èyín	èyín	èyín	Èyín	èyín	èyín	ayèn	èyín	èyín	èyín
19	arm	aká	Ízábò	Apá	iká	ejiká	orí-apá	apá	apá	aká	apá	apá	apá
21	finger nail	èkíkán	ihèn	ika(owó)	èkíkán/á	omó-owó	èékán	èékáná	Èékáná	úúkòn/èékáná	okika	ikaogwó	èékáná
22	buttocks	ékítí ùdín	ònisán	Ìdí	ìdí/uwòdí	ídí	ídí	Ìdí	Ìdí	Okun	ùbò	Ùbò	Ìdí
23	penis	okó	èkhiá	okó	Okó	epòn	okó	èkpòn	okó	Okó	okó	Okó	okó
24	thigh	ùpátán	ikhín	itan	Utan	igbátan	itan	utan	itan	ukpótan	itan	Utan	itan
25	leg	oghè	òwè	esè	Eghè	osè	esè	Esè	Esè	ofè/ohè	osè	Osè	osè
26	vagina	ùhé/òbò	ùhé	òbò	Òbò	òbò	òbò	òbò	Òbò	Odùn	abé	Obò	obò
27	knee	orúkún	ìgwè	orúnkún	Orókún	orókún	orókún	orúkún	Ojúgún	ugbògbò	orókún	orókún	orókún
28	body	ara	ègbé	Ara	Ara	ara	ara	Ara	Ara	Ara	ara	Ara	ara
29	skin	awò	ìkpákpá	awo	Agho	awò	awoara	iniara	Ara	aò/awò	awò	Awò	awò
30	bone	ogungun	ùgbòlòkò	egungun	Egungun	egungun	egungun	Egunun	Egungun	ugungun	egungun	egungun	egungun
31	blood	èjè	èságièn	Èjè	Èjè	èjè	èjè	Èjè	Èjè	èdzè	èjè	èjè	èjè
32	saliva	àsèn/itò	odònghò/àsèn	Itò	Itòn	utò	itòn	Itò	Itò	Itòn	itò	utò	itò
33	urine	itò	àhió	Ìtò	Ìtò	ùtò	itò	Ìtò	Ìtò	Ìtò	itò	ùtò	itò
34	feaces	iwin/igbé	isàn	ìgbé/ìmi	Iwin	iwin	ìgbé	Ìgbé	Iwin	Iyín	iwin	iwin	iyín
35	food	ijije	èvbàré	ounje	Ijije	ounjije	ounje	Ounjje	Ounjje	irunje	ounje	unje	ijiri
36	water	omi	àmé	omi	Omi	omi	omi	Omi	Omi	Omi	omi	omi	omi

37	soup	ọ̀bẹ̀	Úwònm wèn	ọ̀bẹ̀	Ọ̀bẹ̀	ọ̀bẹ̀	ọ̀bẹ̀	Ọ̀bẹ̀	Ọ̀bẹ̀	Ọ̀bẹ̀	ọ̀bẹ̀	ọ̀bẹ̀	ọ̀bẹ̀
38	meat	ẹ̀ran	èmiówò	ẹ̀ran	Ẹ̀ran	ẹ̀ran	ẹ̀ran	Ẹ̀ran	Nómò	udán	ẹ̀ran	ẹ̀ran	ẹ̀ran
39	fat	ahanra/ora	evbí	Ọ̀ra	Ohanran	ọ̀ra	ọ̀ra	Ọ̀ra	Ọ̀ra	ọ̀ra	ọ̀ra	ọ̀ra	Ọ̀ra
40	Fish	eja	éhèn	Eja	Eja	eja	eja	Eja	eja	eza	eja	eja	Eja
41	Oil	ororo/ekpo	èvbí	epo	Ekpo	ekpo	ekpo	epo	epo	epo	epo	epo	epo
42	Salt	iyò	ùm wèn	iyò	Iyò	iyò	iyò	iyò	iyò	iyò	iyò	iyò	iyò
44	palm wine	ogùrò	ogùrò	emu	Ogùrò	oté	ogùrò	emu	ogùrò	emo	emo	emo	emu
45	Yam	usu	ìnyá	Isu	Usu	usu	isu	isu	isu	íd zè	èèjé	usu	èèjé
46	cassava	ígàrí/ígàlí	ígàrí	ègè/pá kí	Púpùrú	ègè	púpùrú	gbagúdá	pákí	Pákí	ungún lá	ègè	ègè
47	guinea corn	okábàbà	ókébò	okábàbà	Okábàbà	okábàbà	okábàbà	agbà dó bábà	okáábàbà	igègè	ogibàbà	okábàbà	eèkà
49	maize	okà	ókà	àgbàdò /okà	Ìgbàdò	àgbàdò	àgbàdò	àgbàdò	okà	okà	okà	okà	agbàdò
50	beans	érè/èwà	Érè	èwà	Ẹ̀wà	èwà	èwà	èwà	èwà	ègwà	ègwà	èwà	Ẹ̀wà
51	pepper	ita	èhièn	Ata	ita/itabo	ata	ata	ata	ata	Ita	ita	ita	ata
52	Okro	ila	íkhiávbò	Ila	Ila	ila	ila	ila	ila	Ila	ila	ila	ila
53	plantain	ogede	òghèdè	ogede	Ogèdè	ogèdè	ogèdè	ogèdè	ogèdè	ogèdè	ogèdè	ogèdè	parant a
54	banana	ogèdè gwere	ivbí òghèdè	ogede omimi	ogèdè gwere	ogèdè gwere	ogèdè wewè	ogèdè mimi	parant a	ogèdè gwere	ogèdè gwere	ogèdè gwere	ogèdè wewè
55	orange	alimoyi/osan	alimoí	osan	osan/ali moyin	osan/or onbo	osan	osan	osan	osan	osan	osan	osan
56	groundnut	isaewe/epa	isáwè/isá wèwè	epa	epa	epa	epa	epa	epa	epa	isa egwa	epa	epa
57	kola nut	obi	èvbéè	Obi	obi	obi	obi	obi	obi	obi	obi	obi	obi
58	tobacco	itaba	ítàbà	taba	itaba	itaba	taba	taba	taba	taba	taba	taba	taba
59	cotton	owu	Òrú	owu	owu	owu	owu	owu	owu	ugwu	òwú	òwú	òwú
60	oil palm	epo/obe/iegkpo	ófigbò	ope	ope	eyi	eyen	eyi	eyi	eyin	igi ope	ugi ope	Eyi
61	Seed	eho	ikpé mwin	irugbin	urugbin	eso	eso	irugbin	eho	eho	eso	eso	eso
62	grass	igo/koriko	ìhùn	koriko	epo	koriko	koriko	koriko	koriko	koriko	koriko	koriko	koriko
63	Tree	igi	Èrán	Igi	igi	igin	igi	igi	igi	igin	igi	ugi	igin
64	Leaf	ewe	Èbé	ewe	ewe	ewe	ewe	ewe	ewe	ewe	ewe	ewe	ewe
65	bark (tree)	ekipo-igin	iyékèrhán	epo igi	epipogi	epo igi	epikpo igi	epo igi	epo igi	ipa ifo	ekipo igi	ekipo ugi	ekipo igin
66	Root	irin	ìní èrhán	gbongbo	irin	gbongbo	gbongbo	egbo	gborigbo	gbongbo	iringi	gbongbo	gbongbo
67	thorn	egun	ìní èrhán	egun	egun	egun	egun	egun	egun	ugun	egun	egun	egun
68	stick	igin/ugbogbo	ùkpókpo	Igi	igi	igi	igi	igi	igi	igin	ugbogbo	ugi	igin
69	firewood	iginemuk okona	Èrán	igi idana	igi idana	igi idana	igi idana	igi idana	igi idana	igin on fun se no	ugbogbo	ugi	igin una
70	charcoal	edidun	ìbí	eedu	edidun	egè una	ina	eedu	eedu	eedu	eduda	edudu	eedu

7 1	Fire	una	Èrèn	Ina	una	una	ina	ina	ina	una	una	una	una
7 2	smoke	efifi	ìghòghò	eefin	efifi	eruku una	eefin	eefi	eefi	eefin	eegho	efinfin	eefin
7 3	ashes	erhurhu	èmùèn	eeru	eruru	eruku	eruru	eeru	eeru	eerun	eru	eruru	eeru
7 4	water pot	usa	Àkhé	ikoko omi/a mu	usa	ukoko	awo omi	ikoko omi	amu	usa	usa	ikoko	ikoko
7 5	cooking pot	awo	ùwàwà	ikoko obe	awo	ukoko obe	awo	ikoko idana	ìsasun	usa	awo	ikoko	isasu
7 6	calabash	uwowo	úkò	igba	ugba	ugba	igba	igba	igba	igba	uwow o	ugba	ugba
7 7	grinding stone	okuta(em ulota)	Ólọ	Olo	okunta	ọlọta	ọlọ	ọlọ	ọlọ	ọta	ọta	ọla	okuta
7 8	Mortar	odo	ódó	odo	ogunyan	odo	ogunr unje	odo	odo	odo	odo	odo	odo
7 9	knife	Obe	èrọ	obe	Ọbe	Ọbe	ọbe	ọbe	ọbe	urhin	ọbe	ọbe	usen
8 0	hoe	Oko	àhóléguè	oko	Okọ	Okọ	ọkọ	ọkọ	ọkọ	ọkọ	ọkọ	ọkọ	ọkọ
8 1	axe	Edan	úghámw an	aake	abala	Edu	aake	aake	aake	aake	ẹdan	akike	aake
8 2	machete	Ada	ọpià	ada	ada/uda bo	Upeku	ada	ada	ada	agada	àdá	àdá	àdá
8 3	spear	Oko	ágbádá	ako	Okọ	Uda	gaga	ọkọ	akọ	ogon	ọkọ	ọkọ	ọkọ
8 4	bow		èfèvbèn	ofa	Ofa	Ota		ọfa	ọfa	ọfa	kenak ena	kenake na	kanak ana
8 5	arrow	Ofa	òpó	ofa	Ofa	Ota	ọfa	ọfa	ọfa	ọfa	ọfà	ọfà	ọfà
8 6	iron (metal)	Urhen	èmátòn	irin	Urèn	Urin	irin	ogun	irin	irin	urèn	urèn	irin
8 7	mat	eni/urre	èwá	eni	Eni	Eni	eni	eni	eni	atinrin	eni	eni	eni
8 8	basket	Aperre	òkhuáé	apere	apere	Apere	agban	apere	agbon	agbon	agbo/a pere	agbon/ apere	apere
8 9	bag	Apo	èkpò	apo	Apo	Apo	apo	apo	apo	apo	apo	apo	apo
9 0	rope	Okun	ìrì	okun	okun	Okun	okun	okun	okun	okun	okun	okun	okun
9 1	needle	Abere	ólòdè/èg bédè	abere/ okini	abere	Abere	abere	abere	abere	okini	ọbere	asuje	okini
9 2	thread	owu/orru	òrú	owu	Owu	Owu	owu	owu	owu	uwu	owu	owu	owu
9 3	cloth	Aso	ùkpòn	aso	asọ	Asọ	asọ	ewu	asọ	asọ	asọ	asọ	asọ
9 4	gown	ewu/asok e	éwùnégu òghò	kaba	ewu	Dabolẹ	ewu	kaba	dabol e	agwu	ewu	ewu	ewu
9 5	cap	Etu	èrú	fila	fila	Fila	fila	fila	fila	atu	etu	etu	fila
9 6	shoe	Ibata	ìbátà	bata	i/bata	Bata	bata	bata	bata	bata	bata	bata	bata
9 7	money	egho/eho	ìghó	owo	ewo	Owo	owo	owo	kunku nshi	eyọ	egho	egho	owo
9 8	door	Ekhu	èkhù	ilekun	ilẹkun	Ulẹkun	ilekun	ilẹku n	ilẹkun	ilẹkun	lẹkun	èkhu	ilẹkun
9 9	wall	ogiri/ogui le	ègbówà	ogiri	ogiri	Ogiri	ogiri	ogun	ogiri	ogiri	ogiri	ogiri	ogiri
1 0 0	room	uhurha/iy ara	úghúghà	yara	orupo	Iyara	iyara	iyara	iyara	ina uli	iyeli	ugbole	iyara