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Nature of English and Tiv Metatheses

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Abstract: Metathesis, the transposition of letters and syllables, is a minor phonological process that is found in both English and Tiv languages. This phonological process has not received much attention it deserves because most scholars considered it as a figure of misspelling which is not worthy of researching. This paper investigates the nature of English and Tiv metatheses. The objectives of this paper are to classify English and Tiv metatheses, discuss the formation of metatheses in English and Tiv and state the functions of metatheses in English and Tiv languages. This paper used comparative linguistic theory which compares the nature of English and Tiv metatheses. The researcher used participant observation tool for elicitation of data for this study. Secondary materials such as journal articles, textbooks, dictionaries and encyclopaedias and Internet sources were used. This study links phonology, historical linguistics, onomastics and language pathology (speech disorder). The study has established that metathesis has phonological, orthographic, metrical and onomastic relevance. This paper provides an in-depth material for teaching and learning of English and Tiv languages. It has been recommended that lecturers in the National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Departments of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages should write books and critical works on Nigerian or African languages.

Keywords: Metathesis, Metaplasm, Malapropism, Spoonerism and Sound change.

Introduction

Phonology, the study of the sound system of individual languages, has certain processes that govern it. All human languages utilise these processes to bring about utterances that are grammatically acceptable. English, an intonational and stress-timed Indo-European language, and Tiv, a tonal and syllable-timed language spoken in the orth-central geo-political zone of Nigeria, have both major and minor phonological processes. The major processes are assimilation, elision, epenthesis, substitution and nasalisation. Metathesis, dissimilation, labialisation, palatalisation, spoonerism, malapropism are some of the minor processes that are used in English and Tiv languages.

As a minor phonological process and its paucity of literatures, especially, in the Tiv language, most phonologists of Tiv extraction may hardly believe its existence in the Tiv grammar. As a linguist-grammarians, the author has not stumbled on a carelessly written essay on the Tiv metathesis. Metathesis has been considered to be a minor figure of deviation or misspelling in historical linguistics and diachronic phonology, in particular.

Considering its narrow scope, ill-treatment, its relegation to the historical linguistics background, its non-inclusion in most phonological books, lack of any scholarly literatures, especially on the Tiv language, this paper is therefore an attempt to reposition the nature of metatheses in English and Tiv languages. This repositioning will help in correcting erroneous impressions that researchers have on metatheses.

Statement of Research Problem

Metathesis which is one of the minor phonological processes has not received much prominence as it should. This obscurity stems from the fact that most scholars or researchers perceived it as a figure of metaplasm.



If such scholars considered it as orthographic deviation, then why are elisions and epenthesis widely studied? Metathesis is often omitted even in phonological textbook! What type of relegation is this? Will metathesis be continually relegated to the phonological background?

Most literatures on metathesis are not so elaborate. Authors of such literatures do not often portray metathesis in the rightful direction. To add credence to this, Millar (2015, pp. 62) disparagingly affirmed that metathesis is 'unusual type of whole-segment' process of language change. Garrett (2015, pp. 235) also identified metathesis as a 'minor' sound change type. Those that carried out research on metatheses cited similar examples from Old English. The above authors represented the narrowed perception of what metathesis is all about.

After considering avalanche of definitions and examples from the literatures consulted, the author is of the opinion that English and Tiv metatheses have not been adequately explored. Undoubtedly, this study attempts to fill the already existing research gap. This paper aims at classifying English and Tiv metatheses, discussing the formation of metatheses in English and Tiv and stating the functions of metatheses in English and Tiv languages.

Conceptual Framework and Empirical Review

McArthur (1992, pp. 656), Bussmann (1996, pp. 746) and Campbell (1998, pp. 37) state that a word 'metathesis' is 16th century derivation from a Greek word *metáthesis* which means 'transposition, change or placing across'. Bussmann simply defines metathesis as switching of consonants within etymologically related words. He therefore cites *nuclear* versus *nucular*, *Christian* versus *Kirsten*. He maintains that 'regular' forms of metathesis can be attributed primarily to syllable structure, for instance, adaptation to universally preferred sound sequences in syllables. Bussmann's definition of metathesis is lopsided hence is definition only cited consonants and that vowels are also susceptible metathesis. Campbell's (1998, pp. 37) and Bisang, Hock and Winter's (2009, pp. 140) definition of metathesis as 'the transposition of sounds' is more encompassing. Their definition includes both vowels and consonants.

Dupriez (1992, pp. 280) sees metathesis as altering a word by transposing or rearranging letters or phonetic elements. Trask (1996, pp. 222) defines metathesis as an exchange in the positions of two segments in a word, either as a historical change or as a synchronic rule. Broadly, any change in the linear ordering of segments in a word. Hough and Corbett (2007, pp. 237) and Carr (2008, pp. 100) simply state that metathesis is the switching of sounds in a word. Crystal (2008, pp. 303) and Anyanwu (2008, pp. 67) view metathesis as an alteration in the normal sequence of elements in a sentence: sounds, syllables, words, or other units. An example of such an alternation involves the exchange in position of elements thereby yielding a new form.

The above definitions centred on change, placing across, transposing, rearranging, alteration of letters, vowels and consonants, sounds and syllables. Words undergone several changes before we arrived at the current standard orthography that we have today. As language evolved, spellings of words were purified. This purification resulted in metatheses. Some spellings changed as a result of dialects and others transposed letters because of speech errors or ignorance. Metathesis affects letters or sounds, syllables and even entire syllables.

After a thorough review of metathesis, the author redefines metathesis by pointing out several shades of meaning. Metathesis is a minor *phonological process* in which segments or suprasegmentals features are swapped. It can also be defined as a *figure of deviation* named in literature as *metaplasm* but well-known in lay man's sense as a *figure of misspelling*. As type of misspelling, metathesis is classified under permutational metaplasm. It is also perceived as a minor *sound change process* in historical linguistics. Better still, metathesis is called a *speech or performance error* where a whole word is changed to another one. This last definition subsumes spoonerisms and malapropisms under metathesis.

Bisang, Hock and Winter (2009, pp. 125) classify metathesis and dissimilation as irregular sound change and they claim that dissimilation and metathesis are similar to speech errors. Bisang, Hock and Winter (2009, pp. 140) cite modern non-standard English pronunciation of *ask* as [æks] or [aks] as an example of metathesis. They attest that the above word was spelled both as *ascian* and as *acsian*. They maintain that Old English *brestan* was metathesized as *berstan* 'burst' in Middle English. Bisang, Hock and Winter (2009, pp. 140) posit that metathesis affects the entire speech. The above authors named it spoonerism, after an English cleric who was famous for his often-amusing transpositions, such as *Let me sew you to your sheets* instead of the intended *Let me show you to*



your seats. Spoonerisms suggest that dissimilation and metathesis have a great affinity to speech errors, in the sense of "faulty" phonetic production.

Campbell (1998, pp. 37) observes that most instances of metathesis are sporadic changes, but metathesis can also be a regular change. Campbell (1998, pp. 37) and Campbell and Mixco (2007, pp. 122) therefore state that sporadic examples of metathesis occur in the history of English: Old English *brid* and Modern English *bird*; Old English *hros* Modern English *horse*.

Millar (2015, pp. 62) opines that metathesis is a type of whole-segment process of language change. He cites a good example of Old English *wæps*, which has become *wasp* in modern English, with metathesis of the last two consonants. Plett (2009, pp. 101) groups *metathesis* under permutational metaplasm. Intra-word metathesis is the English *brust* (instead of *burst*). Similarly, Garrett (2015, pp. 235) also mentions metathesis as one of the three most important 'minor' sound change types.

According to Lass (1998, pp. 188), metathesis is classified under reordering process and avers that most metatheses are sporadic. Lass cites a number of metatheses in the history of English to include the interchanges of /p/ and /s/ as shown in the spelling variants: /ps/ → /sp/ in *wæpse* ~ *wæspe* 'wasp'. /sp/ → /ps/ swapping in *æpse* ~ *æspe* 'aspens', *cosp* ~ *cops* 'copse' and *wlisp* ~ *wlips* 'lispings'. The metathesized forms of *wasp* and *copse* are now standard. Lass (1998, pp. 188) further states that another metathesis involves nasal sequences, particularly /m/ and /n/ as in: *emnity* for 'enmity' is quite frequent and *anenome* for 'anemone' seems to be developing near-standard status.

Quinn (1982, pp. 3) maintains that Shakespeare's *The Tempest* character Caliban is a metathesized word for cannibal. Quinn calls this phonological metathesis as a *synoptic metathesis*. Plett (2009, pp. 101) observes that the syntactic variant of metathesis is formed by the so-called *spoonerism* (named after its originator, the Oxford don William Archibald Spooner [1844–1930]), which consists in the interchange of initial phonemes, such as *half-warmed fish* (instead of *halfformed wish*) or *beery wenches* (instead of *weary benches*). Dupriez (1992, pp. 280) subsumed spoonerisms within a syntagm or sentence.

From the above review, it can be discerned that metathesis is a sporadic or irregular sound change in diachronic linguistics. Metathesis has not received much attention because it is a minor phonological process and a speech error or misspelling. There are many literatures on metathesis that have not been adequately explored in the above review. This paper greatly attempts to critically explicate the nature of English and Tiv metatheses. The author classifies English and Tiv metatheses, discusses the formation of metatheses in English and Tiv and states the functions of metatheses in English and Tiv languages.

Theoretical Framework

Comparative linguistic theory has been used in this paper to investigate the nature of English and Tiv metatheses. Bussmann (ed) (1996, pp. 210) traces that comparative linguistic was developed in the nineteenth century as an independent linguistic discipline with the goal of reconstructing the origins, developmental history, and relationships of and between individual languages on the basis of comparative studies. It can be stated that comparative linguistics was born in Germany during the 'Romantic period', in which both the study of the history of the Europeans as well as of Sanskrit were pursued. Bussmann (ed) (1996, pp. 210) maintains that 'this period is associated primarily with the names of F. V. Schlegel, F. Bopp, R. Rask, J. Grimm, and A. Schleicher, each of whom studied the genetic relationships between the Germanic languages and other Indo-European languages throughout their recorded history.

Crystal (2008, pp. 91) affirms that comparative linguistics these days is generally taken up with the theoretical and practical analysis of the structural correspondences between living languages, regardless of their history, with the aim of establishing general types of language ('typological comparison', or 'typological linguistics') and ultimately the universal characteristics of human language. Richards & Schmidt (2010, pp. 110) define comparative linguistics as a branch of linguistics which studies two or more languages in order to compare their structures and to show whether they are similar or different. It is also used by some applied linguists for establishing differences between the learner's native language and the target language in the areas of syntax, vocabulary, and sound systems. This paper compares the English and Tiv metatheses by classifying English and Tiv



metatheses; discussing the formation of metatheses in English and Tiv and stating the functions of metatheses in English and Tiv languages.

Research Methodology

Primary datum has been collected using observation method. According to Kothari (2014, pp. 17), observation method implies 'the collection of information by way of investigator's own observation, without interviewing the respondents. The author also used documentary sources such as textbooks, journals, projects, dissertations, theses and specialised dictionaries to elicit data, especially, for English metathesized words.

As for the sample design, the author used deliberate sampling which is also known as purposive or non-probability sampling. This sampling method involves purposive or deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe. When population elements are selected for inclusion in the sample based on the ease of access, it can be called convenience sampling. The researcher jotted down those words that involved metatheses classified and stated their functions.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data for this paper have been presented based on the three major sub-headings. These include the classification of English and Tiv metatheses, various ways of forming metatheses in English and Tiv and functions of metatheses in English and Tiv languages.

Classification of English and Tiv Metatheses

There are various parameters for classifying both English and Tiv metatheses. This study classifies metatheses under structure, speech/performance error, onomastics, Old and Contemporary English and classification based on dialect of or variation in a language.

Classification based on the Structures

Structurally, metathesis is classed based on the swapping or transposition of letters/phonemes, syllables and words. *Phonemic metathesis* is found in *brid* and *bird*, *wæps* and *wasp*. *Syllabic metathesis* entails the transposition of an entire segment. Most metatheses in Tiv language belong to this category and they include *orihyom/ ihyomor* (an enemy) and *bokwagh/kwaghbo* (bad thing/something bad). *Word metathesis* is when an entire word replaces another one in a sentence. This is within a purview of spoonerism and metathesis.

Classification based on Speech/Performance Errors

This classification of metathesis is based on speech disorders or errors. People who have various speech defects often have problem of pronouncing words articulatory. This paper provides three major errors under this classification such as spoonerisms, malapropism and typographical mistakes.

Spoonerism is a phrase in which the initial consonants of two words have been swapped over, creating an amusing new expression. Baldick (2001, pp. 241-2) asserts that spoonerism takes its name from the Revd W. A. Spooner (1844-1930), Warden of New College, Oxford. Spooner was well-known for this type of error and a number of utterances are quoted as 'original spoonerisms': *a well-boiled icicle* (a well-oiled bicycle), *a scoop of Boy Trouts* (a troop of Boy Scouts), and *You have hissed all my mystery lectures and tasted a whole worm*. Truly, the transposed sounds often have some phonetic resemblance to one another; they can affect vowels; the final sounds of words and syllables. Metathesis can also affect larger items, such as syllables and words: *mouth in her food* (food in her mouth), *to gap the bridge* (to bridge the gap). Such errors provide evidence of how speech is planned and produced.

Malapropism, according to McArthur (1992, pp. 638), was coined in 19c: from *Mrs Malaprop*, a character in Richard Sheridan's play *The Rivals* (1775), from the French *mal à propos* inappropriate. He defines malapropism as an 'error in which a similar-sounding word is substituted for the intended one, a characteristic of the fictional Mrs Malaprop, who produced such errors as 'pineapple' for *pinnacle* ('He is the very pineapple of politeness!'), 'hydrostatics' for *hysterics* ('Oh! It gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree!'), 'interceded' for *intercepted* ('I



have interceded another letter from the fellow!'). McArthur asserts that slips are sometimes divided into *classical malapropisms*, in which the mistakes are due to ignorance (as in the case of the self-educated Mrs Malaprop), and temporary *slips of the tongue*, in which the intended word is known by the speaker, but has been inadvertently replaced by another.

Metathesis can also be seen in carelessly written or edited works. This type of metathesis is called *typographic metathesis*. In typographic metathesis, letters may be swapped as a result of ignorance or non-proofreading of written literature. Aor (2020^a, pp. 79-80) supports this when states that, a word for branches is wrongly represented the Old Version of the *Icighan Bibilo* (2007) as *abgaa* (Matthew 13:32) instead of *agbaa* (Compare Mark 4:32). Matthew (13:32) reports that, '... *i(masetadi) hembra aveghem a uyia i hingir kon je, inyon i sha i va, i va wa aya sha abgaa a na.*' Translated as '...it (mustard seed) is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof' (Matthew 13:32). Another instance of metathesis is found in the book of Zechariah 9:9 where a female donkey (mare) is written as *mbgianjaki* instead of *mgbianjaki*. This transposition of *b* in the above spelling is what is called metathesis. This transposition of *b* and *g* in the above is what is called metathesis 又

Additionally, this type of metathesis is rife in English language essays written by students. These include *crumble – crumble, humbel – humble, troubel – trouble, morden – modern, revelant – relevant, frist – first, Brust – burst* and *perhistory – prehistory*. According to Strazny (2005, pp. 678), metathesis denotes 'the transposition of two sounds.'

Classification based on Onomastics

This classification is based on names and naming. Onomastics is the study of proper names, including their forms and uses, especially personal names. Onomastics is classified into *toponymy*, the study of place-names; *anthroponymy*, the study of personal names and *literary onomastics* studies literary characters' names (*characteronyms*). This paper is based on toponyms and it is obvious that some Tiv names are formed by swapping the second syllable to the first to form new names. These examples are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1 Onomastic Classification of Metatheses

S/No	Naming I	Meaning	Naming II	Meaning
1	<i>Nguor</i>	is person	<i>Orngu</i>	there is a person
2	<i>Nyianshima</i>	red heart	<i>Shimanyian</i>	heart red
3	<i>Tarbo</i>	country is bad	<i>Botar</i>	bad country
4	<i>Tavershima</i>	hard heart	<i>Shimataver</i>	heart hardened
5	<i>Terdo</i>	Lord is good	<i>Dooter</i>	good Lord
6	<i>Terfa</i>	Lord knows	<i>Fater</i>	know Lord
7	<i>Terna</i>	Lord gives	<i>Nater</i>	give Lord
8	<i>Tersaa</i>	Lord lost	<i>Saater</i>	lost father
9	<i>Tersoo</i>	Lord loves	<i>Sooter</i>	love Lord
10	<i>Tyôsa</i>	kinsmen lost	<i>Saatyô</i>	lost kinsmen

Classification based on Old and Contemporary English

The Old, Middle and Contemporary English showed remarkable differences in terms of metathesis, dissimilation, substitution, elision, epenthesis and so on. This paper shows some letters that have been metathesized in the Contemporary English. The table 2 shows some of these examples:

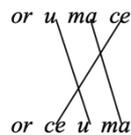


Table 2 Classification based on Old and Contemporary English

S/No	Old English	Modern English	Metathesized Letters
1	<i>brid</i>	bird	<i>r</i>
2	<i>lytel</i>	little	<i>e</i>
3	<i>hros</i>	horse	<i>r</i>
4	<i>thrid</i>	third	<i>r</i>
5	<i>wlisp</i>	<i>wlips</i>	<i>s</i>
6	<i>wæpse</i>	wasp	<i>s</i>

Classification based on Dialect of or Variation in a Language

Aor (2020^b, pp. 35) states that the Ihyarev variety of Tiv language has ... *orceuman* /o:ʃeʊmæ/ instead of *orumace* /o:ʊmæʃe/ (a human-being). The author notes that *orceuman* is an example of variational or dialectal metathesis, transposition of the entire syllable, in the above example. Both *orumace* and *orceuma* mean human-being and they have four syllables. What the above two words differ is in the arrangement of syllables. The first syllable is the same in both words and the remaining three syllables are transposed or swapped. This metathesis is captured in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1** Variational Metathesis in Standard Tiv and Ihyarev Variety

Furthermore, orthographic divergence in the mega dialects of English is a good candidate for metathesis. British English prefers *-re* to *-er* whereas American English favour *-er* to *-re*. The meanings of words that have *-er* or *-re* are the same only spelling system changes. Some examples of British and American spellings that involve *er* and *re* are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Metathesis indicating British and American Dialects

American Dialect	British Dialect	Transcription
caliber	calibre	/kæɪlɪbə/
center	centre	/sentə/
centimeter	centimetre	/sentɪmɪ:tə/
fiber	fibre	/faɪbə/
goiter	goitre	/gɔɪtə/
kilometer	kilometre	/kɪləmɪ:tə/
liter	litre	/lɪ:tə/
luster	lustre	/lʌstə/
manoeuvre	maneuver	/mænu:və/
meter	metre	/mɪ:tə/
miter	mitre	/maɪtə/
ocher	ochre	/əʊkə/
reconnoiter	reconnoitre	/rekənoɪtə/

The above examples indicated that the meanings of the above words are the same irrespective of different spellings. The pronunciations or transcriptions showed that they are homophones. The author calls this type of metathesis as graphological/orthographic metathesis. Some examples are given to add credence to the above Table.



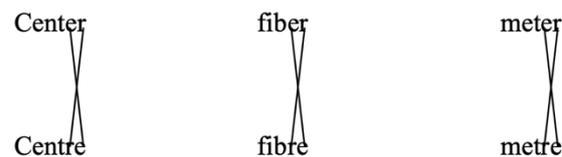


Figure 2 Metathesis in American British Dialects of English

The foregoing has shown different ways of classifying metathesis in English and Tiv languages. Generally, metatheses in both languages can be summarised as phonological and graphological/orthographic metatheses.

Formation of Metatheses in English and Tiv

There are two principal ways of forming metatheses in both English and Tiv languages. The first formation process involves the use of word-classes or parts of speech. In many cases, words are metathesized based on their usage in Tiv language. This is usually based on the syllable swapping. The second formation process deals with the transposition of *e* and *u* before */* in English loan-words, transmutation of *wy* cluster to *yw* in Tiv words and changing *-er* to *-re* to differentiate between American and British words.

Formation based on Parts of Speech

The swapping of word-classes in compound words may result in metathesis. As word-classes are exchanged, the meanings of words may change automatically. Conversion of a word is one of the basic functions of metathesis in Tiv grammar. This paper has functional shifts in noun-adjective, adjective-noun, noun-verb and noun-noun formations in Tiv grammar.

Noun-Adjective Formation

Metathesis can be converted from nouns (nominals) to adjectives (qualifiers or descriptors). The table below shows that *iyolgensese* refers to 'pride' whereas *genseseiyol* means 'proud'; *iyolhian* is 'fever' while *hianiyol* means to 'be feverish'. The table 4 graphically presents this formation below.

Table 4 Noun-Adjective Formation of Tiv Metatheses

Noun		Adjective	
Word	Meaning	Word	Meaning
<i>iyolgensese</i>	pride	<i>genseseiyol</i>	to be proud
<i>iyolhian</i>	fever	<i>hianiyol</i>	to be feverish
<i>orihyom</i>	enemy	<i>ihyomor</i>	your enemy
<i>organden</i>	person old	<i>gandenor</i>	elderly person

Adjective-Noun Formation

Compound words that are made up of adjective-noun configurations are liable to form metatheses in Tiv language. In the table below, *bo* (bad) is an adjective that describes *kwagh* (thing), that is, 'bad thing.' In the second example, *ndôhól* means 'cold' and *shima* refers to 'heart' literally means 'cold heart' (nauseous). *Ishimandôhól* literally refers to 'heart cold' and its main meaning is nausea. Lastly, *nyian* means 'red' and *or* means 'person' when amalgamated the two words mean connotatively as 'red person' but denotatively as 'fair person' (Table 5).

Table 5 Adjective-Noun Formation of Tiv Metatheses

Adjective		Noun	
Word	Meaning	Word	Meaning
<i>bokwagh</i>	bad thing	<i>kwaghbo</i>	something bad
<i>ndôhólshima</i>	nauseous	<i>ishimandôhól</i>	nausea
<i>nyianor</i>	fair person	<i>ornyian</i>	person that fair



Noun-Verb Formation

When a nominal compound is swapped, such a new formation can give rise to a verbal meaning. For instance, *iyolkpen* (tiredness), *iyolmoron* (bragging) and *kwaghôron* (prophecy/utterance) have *iyol* and *kwagh* as nominal head-words while *kpen*, *mor* and *ôron* are adjectival head-words with different connotations (Table 6).

Table 6 Noun-Verb Formation of Tiv Metatheses

Noun		Verb	
Word	Meaning	Word	Meaning
<i>iyolkpen</i>	tiredness	<i>kpeniyol</i>	wearies body
<i>iyolmoron</i>	bragging	<i>moriyol</i>	to boast
<i>kwaghôron</i>	prophecy	<i>ôron kwagh</i>	say something

Noun-Noun Formation

Among metathesization formation processes, noun-noun formation appears to be the most complex process in the Tiv grammar. *Orumace* and *orceuma* have been discussed under classification based on dialect of or variation in a language. *Ortseenshima* and *orshimatseen* refer to a zealot or someone with a resilient or persevering mind. The above two words have the same syllables: first syllable is the same and the difference is that the second syllable of the first word is swapped to the third of the second word. The table 7 below illustrates this.

Table 7 Noun-Noun Formation of Tiv Metatheses

Noun		Noun	
Word	Meaning	Word	Meaning
<i>orumace</i>	human-being	<i>orceuma</i>	human-being
<i>ortseenshima</i>	zealot	<i>orshimatseen</i>	zealot

Transposing *e* and *u* before /in English loan-words

The richness of the language depends largely on the borrowed words. A lot of English words have been borrowed into Tiv language. These loanwords have taken the phonemic structure of the receiving language – thus resulting in metathesis, elision, epenthesis and phonemic substitution. Tiv language does not permit certain consonants coming at the word-final position such as *b, d, f, g, j, k, p, q, t, w, x, y, z* and consonant clusters. That is the reason that vowels are inserted in the loanwords in the table 8.

Table 8 Metatheses in English Loanwords

English Words	Loans in Tiv	Metathesized letters	Meanings
apple	<i>apel</i>	/after <i>e</i>	a hard round fruit that has red ...
carbuncle	<i>karbunkel</i>	/after <i>e</i>	a red jewel, especially a garnet
chronicle	<i>kronikel</i>	/after <i>e</i>	a record of historical events
marble	<i>mabel</i>	/after <i>e</i>	a type of hard rock
myrtle	<i>mertel</i>	/after <i>e</i>	a kind of sweet-scented tree
tabernacle	<i>tabernakel</i>	/after <i>e</i>	box for keeping holy bread/wine
table	<i>tebul</i>	/after <i>u</i>	a four-legged furniture
temple	<i>tempel</i>	/after <i>e</i>	a building where people worship

Transmutation of *wy* cluster to *yw* in Tiv Words

The most often metathesized consonants are *wy* and *yw* clusters. The old Tiv spelling for dog is *iwa*, stone is *iwen*, waist is *iwenge*, immunisation is *iwambe*, sacrifice is *iwua* and hour is *ihwa*. The contemporary spellings of



the above words involve metatheses as seen in the table 9.

Table 9 Transmutation of *wy* cluster to *yw* in Tiv Words

Old Spellings	Modern Spellings	Metathesized Spellings	Glosses		
<i>iwa</i>	<i>iwya</i>	ɪwɔ̃æ	<i>iywa</i>	ɪjwæ	dog
<i>iwɛn</i>	<i>iwyɛn</i>	ɪwɔ̃ɛn	<i>iywɛn</i>	ɪjwɛn	stone
<i>ihwa</i>	<i>ihwya</i>	ɪhwɔ̃æ	<i>iywa</i>	ɪhwæ	hour
<i>ikwe</i>	<i>ikwye</i>	ɪkwɔ̃je	<i>ikywe</i>	ɪkjwe	cracks
<i>iwenge</i>	<i>ihwyenge</i>	ɪhwɔ̃jɛŋg e	<i>iywenge</i>	ɪhwɛŋg e	waist
<i>iwambe</i>	<i>iwyambe</i>	ɪwɔ̃jæŋb e	<i>iywambe</i>	ɪwɔ̃jæŋb e	immunisation
<i>iwo</i>	<i>iwyo</i>	ɪwɔ̃ɔ̃	<i>iywo</i>	ɪwɔ̃ɔ̃	mountains
<i>iwuna</i>	<i>iwyuna</i>	ɪwɔ̃ʊnæ	<i>iywuna</i>	ɪwɔ̃ʊnæ	barns
<i>iwura</i>	<i>iwyura</i>	ɪwɔ̃jɔ̃ræ	<i>iywura</i>	ɪwɔ̃jɔ̃ræ	rains

The native speakers of Tiv language know intuitively that the metathesized spellings reflect the actual pronunciations of the above words. The *wj* cluster is bizarre concatenation in Tiv spelling system.

Changing *-er* to *-re*

English metathesis are formed by swapping or transposing *-er* to *-re* in some words. People who are conversant with the two dialects of English (American and British) intuitively know that swapping does not affect the meanings of such words. The formation of American and British metathesis is shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Formation of Metatheses in American and British English

American Spellings	British Spellings	Transcriptions
scepter	sceptre	/septə/
sepulcher	sepulchre	/sepɪkə/
somber	sombre	/sɒmbə/
specter	spectre	/spektə/
speedometer	speedometre	/spɪ:domɪ:tə/
<i>theater</i>	<i>theatre</i>	/θiətə/

The above table showed that showed that *er* spelling system is used in American English whereas *re* spelling is used for British English.

Functions of Metatheses

Whether they are understudied or relegated to the background, metatheses have prominent roles to play in both English and Tiv languages. These functions are distinguishing dialects of a given language, breaking consonant clusters, used for metrical architecture, distinguishing archaic spellings from modern spellings and shows differences between metathesized names in Tiv.

The first function of metatheses is that of distinguishing dialects of a given language. English and Tiv languages have some words that are differently spelt because of dialectal differences. English language for instance, has *-re* for British spellings and *-er* for American English. The two different orthographic spellings which differ as a result of graphological structures are good candidates for measuring dialectal differences between the two Englishes. In the Standard Tiv language, the spelling for human being is *orumace* and Ihyarev variety has it as *orceuma*.

The second function of metatheses is the breaking down of consonant clusters. The phonotactic structure of Tiv does not warrant consonant clusters at the word-final position. To add credence to this assertion, [Hock](#)



(1991, pp. 115-116) affirms that metathesis may 'eliminate clusters which do not conform to the preferred ordering of segments within syllables in terms of the sonority hierarchy'. For instance, an *r* in Old English *brid* has been metathesized into modern word *bird*. The *u* and *e* in English loanwords have been metathesized into *table* and *temple* in which *r* swapped its position.

The third function of metatheses is for metrical architecture. Medial metatheses are found Shakespeare's (1609) Sonnet 124 – *Yf my deare loue were but the childe of state* – such as 'numbred' (numbered) (Sonnet 124, line 10) and 'showres' (showers) (Sonnet 124, line 12) and Sonnet 146 – *Poore soule the center of my sinfull earth* – produces terminal metathesis such as 'center' (centre) (Sonnet 124, line 1), 'powre' (power) (Sonnet 124, line 2). The transpositions of letters do not affect the pronunciations of the metathesized words. It is only the orthographies of the above words that changed: 'numbred' or 'numbered' /nʌmbəd/, 'showres' or 'showers' /ʃəʊəz/, 'center' or 'centre' /sentə/ and 'powre' or 'power' /paʊəz/. The above metaplasmic deviations are necessary because of lineation, phonological parallelism, rhyme and for the entire rhythm of his poems.

The fourth function of metatheses is that they distinguish archaic spellings from modern spellings. The foregoing review has clearly indicated that Old English spellings greatly differed from their modern counterparts. These spelling places the writer in the period they belong to. Any contemporary text that is laced with archaisms is simply adding the richness and the ancientness of such a text.

The fifth function of metatheses is that they show the differences between metathesized names in Tiv. We have onomastic metatheses in the Tiv grammar and the swapping does not give rise to different meanings but a modification. For instance, *Terfa* (Lord knows) and *Father* (know Lord) and *Terna* (Lord gives) and *Nater* (give Lord).

Contributions to Knowledge

- i. This eclectic study links phonology, historical linguistics, onomastics and language pathology (speech disorder).
- ii. This study has been able to debunk the hackneyed assertion that metathesis is minor sound change process but has phonological, sociolinguistic, orthographic, metrical and onomastic relevance.
- iii. Theoretically, comparative linguistic theory has compared English and Tiv classification of metatheses, the structures of English and Tiv metatheses and stated the functions of metatheses.

Conclusion

Metathesis has a lot to do with several linguistic fields than its restriction to a minor process in the historical linguistics. Metathesis in both English and Tiv languages is vitally important for the various functions it performs. It performs these functions such as distinguishing dialects of a given language, breaking consonant clusters, being used for metrical architecture, distinguishing archaic spellings from modern spellings and showing differences between metathesized names in Tiv. This phonological process has not been researched in the Tiv language because 'ready-made' scholars did not see examples where they would build on. This study will facilitate the learning of both English and Tiv languages.

Recommendations

- i. Pedagogically, this paper provides an in-depth material for teaching and learning of English and Tiv languages.
- ii. Lecturers in the National Institute for Nigerian Languages, departments of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, English Language should write books and critical works on Nigerian or African languages.
- iii. Stakeholders should establish the Department Linguistics and Tiv Language at the National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba and Benue State University, Makurdi.
- iv. Scholars or students should have language loyalty so that they will churn out research in their indigenous languages.



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