

Comprehensive Tiv Orthography

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D.T. Karshima

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Tiv Language Studies and Development Association; and to all who love to study Tiv language.

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Foreword

Tiv language studies have received a boost from writers and linguists alike in the last two decades. The most remarkable thing about this phenomenon is that Tiv sons and daughters, speakers of the language have begun to consider it as an area worthy of their academic attention. No effort is as laudable as an attempt to promulgate one's mother tongue. Thus the efforts of D. T. Karshima must be received in this light and encouraged appropriately.

In this 'Comprehensive Tiv Orthography' D. T. Karshima has done more than simply propose an alphabet of 25 letters in stead of the 24 hitherto recognized and used by Tiv writers. The inclusion of **ô** as an alphabet raises new issues for meditation and confirms the obvious fact that all has not yet been said about Tiv language. In many languages "o" exists as an alphabet; however, as it takes an accent its sound changes accordingly. In Tiv language also "o" has been accepting a circumflex (^) to change from /o/ to /ɔ/. In French language, by accepting a circumflex (^), "o" normally changes its sound from /ɔ/ to /o/; quite the contrary in Tiv. In Yoruba language "o" accepts a line underneath to introduce the sound "sho" or /ʃo/. The inclusion of **ô** as a letter in Tiv alphabet there does not seem right in my own opinion.

As I have noted above, D. T. Karshima has done more than simply propose an alphabet for the Tiv language. He has delved very deeply into how certain controversial words in Tiv should not only be written but also how the same should be pronounced. There are few of the sounds that may not go down well with certain linguists. Nevertheless his is a laudable attempt that the Tiv Language Studies and Development Association (TLSDA) may have to take a hard look at. People change with difficulty to new

proposals. So shall it be difficult to accept and adopt his proposals. There is certainly something to gain from his effort.

I therefore strongly recommend “Comprehensive Tiv Orthography” to all those seeking to investigate into Tiv language with a view to opening up fresh spheres never to ignore this all-important work. I similarly advise D. T. Karshima to keep the light aglow. He is a shining example to many young Tiv elites who may wish to take up Tiv studies as an area of intellectual adventure now or in the near future.

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INTRODUCTION

In every human being there is given the ability to express their feelings and desires through communication in language. Where this is not possible it is considered an abnormal development. Williamson (1984:1) equally says, “Every normal child grows up speaking the language of his community without special training.” By this he implies that language is the chief means by which human beings communicate.

Language is very important to an individual as well as to the community that speaks it. Language has a two way dimension – spoken and written. The spoken aspect helps to establish the written. It is that which is spoken that is also written. The written has its historical important aspects which make it necessary: (1) it makes an indelible impression of what was spoken years ago. (2) It sets out the uniformity of the language. (3) It communicates to people secretly and distantly. (4) It stores longer lasting information. It facilitates storage of the lingual record.

Irrespective of the fact that written language must undertake a formal training, it is so important that people should not relegate it to the background. Without a language – spoken and written, no one will recognize an ethnic group, no matter how well populated the ethnic group may be. Language helps to establish ethnic identity. It helps to improve and upgrade the standard of a people especially when written. Written language enhances civilization globally by contributing to the development of cultures which get better exposed and appreciated. It brings a people together and helps to produce a strong sense of nationalism.

This is not an exception with the Tiv language. Before the advent of writing, Tiv spoke their language. With the coming of the western education, things have greatly improved to the advantage

of fostering a written language. However, the one book that has constantly and significantly preserved written Tiv language is the Tiv Bible called 'BIBILO' [bibulo]. The translation of the English version of the Bible into Tiv has done a lot in promoting the Tiv language. However, the Bible does not undertake the grammatical and technical aspect into serious consideration since that is not its basic aim.

In recent times there has been a reawakening in the literacy study of the Tiv language. And in any great work on the language, one must acknowledge the efforts of pioneer missionaries in Tivland who did their best to see to it that Tiv language features on the map of world's written languages. Mention should be made of Reverends A.S. Judd, W.A. Malherbe, and R.C. Abraham among others. We must also appreciate some of our fathers who took the pains to receive and preserve what was given to us by the mission pioneers. Among them are Aii Iyenge, Ierve Gyangyang, S. G. Ikpa, Ayem Luga, Môôr Kpile, B.D. Iyortyôm, Rev. Fr. N.N. Tarbo, and Dr. J.T. Orkar among others too many to mention. We must here appreciate the Nongo u Kristu u i Ser sha Tar (NKST) who is actually the custodian of the Tiv language literature. The church's strenuous efforts have ensured that Tiv language continues to maintain its status among other languages.

In this work, deliberate efforts would be made to delve in to the interpretation and realignment of the Tiv orthography for a better understanding. Why must I go into the issue of orthography at all? Why must I undertake to realign a new orthography at all for the Tiv? This question and such similar ones that may be asked by many are to be answered in this book. We must remember that language is dynamic and therefore must be brushed over and over.

A second point is that the language was developed by foreigners whom the sounds and originality of its semantics were alien to them. More so, orthography does not entail the reduction of a language into its graphemes and phonemes only but also other rules such as spelling rules, hyphenation, capitalization, word breaks, emphasis, and punctuation come into play.

This means there were certain aspects that were left out by the missionaries, the Aper Aku Ad hoc Committee, the Tiv Language Studies and Development Association (TLSDA). As such this book addresses such omissions.

As a tonal language Tiv remains one of the most difficult languages to learn and therefore needs a careful study. This work therefore aims at tackling some of those difficult areas that make people shy away from its study; such areas as syllabic nasals – **m̩**, **ng** etc; the pre-nasalized labia-velar **ngb**, the pre-nasalized labial '**mb**' and many other areas untouched. Relax and learn a lot from this piece of work.

What is orthography?

Many a time you hear people speak about orthography(ies). Yet it is not that simple to define what orthography means in a simple or lay language. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary simply defines it as, 'The system of spelling in a language.' Kay Williamson (1984:3) defines orthography as, 'The correct spelling of words.' By this she means that it has to follow conventions and or agreed rules for spelling. The word itself is derived from the Greek word '*orthos*' meaning "upright," "correct," "straight" (not crooked); and '*graphie*' meaning, written or a writing. In other words it is "The correct, straight and standard writing that follows a conventional way that is agreed upon." The Encarta Dictionary (2009) defines it thus:

1. with regard to **study of correct spelling**: the study of established correct spelling.
2. with regard to **study of how letters are arranged**: The study of letters of an alphabet and how they occur sequentially in words.
3. with regard to **relationship between sounds and letters**: the way letters and diacritic symbols represent the sounds of a language in spelling

Type of Orthography

It is widely assumed by linguists that the basis of the ideal orthography is phonemic. If this was the case, the main difference between a phonemic transcription and orthography would be the inventory of symbols used (Friederike Lüpke 2010: 329). In studying the Tiv orthography, one will discover that the Tiv language orthography is phonemic. A **phonemic orthography** is an orthography (system for writing a language) in which the graphemes (written symbols) correspond to the phonemes (significant spoken sounds) of the language (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia 2012). It is also *shallow*; that is to say that it is relatively simple and consistent in its correspondences. For example, ‘knife’ in English causes much difficulty to the beginner as he finds it difficult to combine the **k** and the **n**. He is tempted to pronounce ‘**k**’ separately and then followed by ‘**n**’. Instead of calling ‘*naif*’ he may say ‘*k-naif*’.

Philologists, linguists and educators have insisted for several centuries that the ideal orthography has a one-to-one correspondence between grapheme and phoneme. Others, however, have suggested deviations for such functions as distinguishing homophones, displaying popular alternative spellings, and retaining morpheme identity (Friederike Lüpke 2010: 329).

The Tiv has Phonemic orthography that is regular in its spelling. Here the act of spelling out words is rarely needed (careful

pronunciation of a word is generally sufficient to convey its spelling). This does not mean that Tiv language is defective in orthographic representation. However, this problem is addressed by the use of digraphs. One of the main reasons for which spelling and pronunciation deviate is that sound changes taking place in the spoken language are *not always reflected* in the orthography, and hence spellings correspond to historical rather than present-day pronunciation (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia).

Many people (including Azuana) try to argue that, How can we write the spelling to follow the sounds of a word too closely? “The tendency therefore to force spelling to follow sound too closely is linguistically unattainable” (Azuana: 2008). This they argue based on what they know of English language not knowing that English orthography, though alphabetic (with symbols roughly representing phonemes), is highly **non-phonemic**. English is one of the examples of notorious deep orthographies. These do not have a close correspondence to the phonological structure of isolated words, so that irregular phoneme–grapheme relationships are common (Friederike Lüpke 2010: 331).

On the other hand Orthographies such as those of German, and Hungarian are mainly phonemic. Moreover, it should be noted that orthography does not mean only a collection of symbols or letters used in writing a sound. It rather involves the alphabet merely forming the letter or letters that could stand for a particular sound, the rules for maintaining spellings; rules for writing the tones, punctuation and capitalization as well as rules for dividing words correctly. In summary, Williamson (1984:4) says, ‘Orthography consists of the symbols and rules that are used in writing a language.’ We shall therefore take a broader approach to this topic.

Chapter One

THE ALPHABET

The Greek word ‘alpha’ comes from the sound representing the first letter of the Greek letters ‘a’ and ‘beta’ the second letter meaning ‘b’. It is just like saying in English **abc...**

Alphabets are very important and necessary in the formation of any given language in the written form. The Tiv did not develop her own alphabet before the coming of the Western type. The earliest Tiv interaction with Western civilization marked the dawn of development of Tiv alphabet. Rev. W.A. Malherbe thus says, “Long in history their language underwent many changes, especially in connection with its vocabulary.” The Tiv have therefore adopted the Latin script letters that suit the spoken language. And where there is no representative letter as such, it could be replaced by a digraph, trigraph or tesseragraph. The alphabet runs thus:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O Ô P R S T U V W Y Z (25 altogether). a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o ô p r s t u v w y z.

All these make up the 25 letters of the Tiv alphabet. It will be observed that the English Q and X are not found in the Tiv alphabet. In their stead the digraph **kw** and **ky** are employed. Thus queen could be written **kwiin** in Tiv, quest as **kwest**.

(a). The Vowels

Vowels are speech sounds that have no audible friction in pronunciation. This means the mouth opens and the tongue does not touch either the top (palate) of the mouth or the teeth while

speaking. In the English, five letters represent these vowels – a e i o u.

It is certain that every language has its own set of vowels. Williamson has done a lot in identifying and grouping the vowels of many Nigerian languages. Among the groups, Tiv falls under the six-vowel languages. That is to say that Tiv have six vowels that germinate into short sounds and long sounds – **a, e, i, o, ô, u** (for the short sounds). And **aa, ee, ii, oo, ôô, uu** (for the long sounds). There are 18 vowel sounds in Tiv altogether /a/ [a], /a:/ [aa], /æ/ [ã], /æ:/ [ãã], /e/ [e], /e:/ [ee], /ɛ/ [ɛ̃], /ɛ:/ [ɛ̃ɛ̃], /ɪ/ [i], /i:/ [ii], /o/ [o], /o:/ [oo], /œ/ [o] [nyoho], /œ:/ [o:] [*nyoon, foon, doon, doonoo*]*, /ɔ/ [ô], /ɔ:/ [ôô], /u/ [u], /u:/ [uu].

The use of the double letter for long sounds makes it easier to identify the long sounds and distinguish them from the short ones. I want us to understand that in Tiv language, the use of single vowel can cause a semantic change giving a difference in meaning to a similar word which has double vowel. Kay Williamson also affirms this in speaking of the Hausa double vowels when she said, ‘Some languages use the difference between long and short vowels to make a difference between words.’ This is applicable to the Tiv double vowels. For instance,

ka (it is...) is different from **kaa** (to tell, to sound loud).

ta (to hit something with a stone) is different from **taa** (to help somebody to be used to something).

en (yours – expressing possession in plural sense) is different from **een** (yes).

ma (to drink) is different from **maa** (to build) etc.

It will be observed that the English language has no such distinction and it is therefore difficult to figure out the long vowels.

The long vowel is only identified by the colon (:) used as diacritic after the vowel. Eg.

Far is thus written /fa:(r)/, **calm** is written /ka:m/, **call** is written /kɔ:l/. This makes it difficult for people to study and know the language. This nearly affected the Tiv language as handled by the White missionaries when they used the English pattern to apply on Tiv. For example, words like *Gbooko* (a town) were written *Gboko*, *Tarka* for Tarkaa, *wang* (clearly) for *waang*, *nagh* (sacrifice) for *naagh* etc.

Williamson (p2), after analyzing the other ways sees the use of the double vowel as the most convenient way. This way will help us out of the ambiguity created in the usage of such words as used in the Tiv Bible and by Malherbe in his ‘Dictionary of Tiv.’

For example:

Nagh is used in two ways – 1. As possessive (his), as in *Wegh nagh. His hand*; and 2. as noun (sacrifice, offering). As in *Nagh ku nanden* (Burnt offering).

The beginner then is left in a befuddled state as to what such words could mean especially when they occur in one place *nagh nagh*. However, if it was written ‘*naagh*’ and ‘*nagh*,’ they would therefore stand for two different functions. “*Naagh nagh*” (*sacrifice his*) to mean, *His sacrifice*. The double vowel here has lessened the task of trying to figure out which one is short or long. In my dictionary, ‘New Tiv-English Dictionary’ (2013) I have made use of these sound differences to represent new entries. Thus *va* (come) is different from *vaa* (cry), *ber* (lake, pond) is different from *beer* (joke), *ser* (that) is different from *seer* (add), *man* (and) is different from *maan* (continuous of *maa* – to build).

The Diacritic ‘q’ with iota subscript is not as familiar to the Tiv as Williamson portrays it to be in use in recent times. As a matter of fact, the Tiv is most familiar with the circumflex above the ô. Changing to the ‘below’ dotting as explained by Williamson is a matter of gradual change. For the present, it might be in theory, but in practicality it is not tenable.

(b). Nasalized Vowels

Three of the six vowels take a nasal sound in certain words. The vowels are ‘a’ and ‘e’ ‘o’. However, all who have taken the challenge to write in Tiv have never explored this area. This seems to account for the reason why it is difficult to write certain words in Tiv. In pronouncing certain words they take a nasal sound. This write-up points us to this area so we can find it easier to write such words. Williamson attempts two of such words but the vowels are not well represented by the sound they assume. Nngàá (name of a town), ngàá (to scrape) (p.35). The **a** sound is nasalized and not the **a** of English as in the word *dart*. In this case the tilde [~] is used for all nasal sounds. Thus the word could better be written Ñghãã. (for more information about this, see under phonetic symbols in chapter two).

(c) Monophthongs and diphthongs

Monophthongs are pure vowels that do not change in quality. While diphthongs are words that occupy two vowel letters in one sound. The Tiv have 18 pure vowels and 14 diphthongs.

Monophthongs

/a/ as in *kange*.

/aa/ as in *kaa*.

/e/ as in *bende*

/ee/ as in *bee*.

diphthongs

/ia/ as in *miase, amian*.

/ie/ as in *iniembe, ér, ye*.

/io/ as in *iniôndo, yô, imiôngo*.

/ei/ as in *akei*. Kei, kpei

/o/ as in *tor, kon,*

/ou/ as in *mou, lou, iyou, kough,, mough,*

/oo/ as in *booñg.*

/ea/ as in *segħa, vea.*

/ɔ/ as in *kôr, sôr, vôr*

/iu/ as in *iuv, iusa, iusu, iniu*

/ɔɔ/ as in *kôôm, kôôndo*

/io/ as in *iondo, ioson, ior.*

/ɛ/ as in *kěñg nahan*

/iɛ/ as in *iěngem, iěnegħ iěnegħ,*

/ɛɛ/ as in *měěě, húměě*

/ua/ as in *uase, uasegh,*

/u/ as in *kúndu, hundu.*

/uã/ as in *uãngernyom, huã*

/uu/ as in *kuusu, kuugh.*

/ue/ as in *pue, mue, ikyuen*

/ɪ/ as in *kimbir, kimbi.*

/ii/ as in *biishi, biishii.*

(d) Word Sounds

S/NO	Phonetic symbol	Phoneme	examples
1	/a/	a	As in <i>ande, kase, kande</i>
2	/a:/	aa	As in <i>kaa, haa, daa, vaa</i>
3	/b/	b	As in <i>bagu, ban, bo, bi</i>
4	/bw/	bwa	As in <i>abwa, bwagi</i>
5	/bj/	by	As in <i>abya, byangaa</i>
6	/tʃ/	c	As in <i>cagh, cia, cii, cihi</i>
7	/tʃw/	cw	As in <i>cwang, cwelegh, cwasaa</i>
8	/d/	d	As in <i>dedoo, doo, daa, dugh</i>
9	/dw/	dw	As in <i>dwem, dwasaa, dwangaa</i>

10	/dj/	dy	As in <i>idya, dyangedyange, idyer</i>
11	/e/	e	As in <i>er, ker, ver, engese</i>
12	/ee/	ee	As in <i>bee, hee, mee, seer</i>
13	/ei/	ei	As in <i>akei, akei</i>
14	/f/	f	As in <i>fa, fagh fagh, fese</i>
15	/fj/	fy	As in <i>fyagh, fyaghfyagh</i>
16	/g/	g	As in <i>gambe, goom, gor</i>
17	/gb/	gb	As in <i>gbande, gba, gber, gbir</i>
18	/gbj/	gby	As in <i>gbyande gbyande, gbyang, igbyer</i>
19	/ɣ/	gh	As in <i>kwagh, lagħ, 18igher, magħ</i>
20	/gw/	gw	As in <i>gwase, gwande, gwer</i>
21	/gj/	gy	As in <i>igyande, igyar, gyakpa</i>
22	/h/	h	As in <i>har, hange, hor, nahan</i>
23	/hw/	hw	As in <i>ahwa, hwange, hwan, ihwa</i>
24	/hj/	hy	As in <i>ihyan, ihyev, hyande, hyandegħ</i>
26	/ɪ/	i	As in <i>i, iti, tile, iv, ishi</i>
25	/i:/	ii	As in <i>ii, cii, piin, fiir</i>

27	/ia/	ia	As in <i>iase, ian, iaven</i>
28	/iɛ/	iē	As in <i>iēngēm, iēnegh-iēnegh</i>
29	/io/	io	As in <i>iondo, iov, ior</i>
30	/iɔ/	iô	As in <i>iôn, iôron</i>
31	/dʒ/	j	As in <i>ijande, ijem, Ajanta</i>
32	/dʒw/	jw	As in <i>ijwa, ijwe</i>
33	/k/	k	As in <i>kange, kaa, ker, kimbi</i>
34	/kp/	kp	As in <i>kpande, kpa, kpan</i>
35	/kɸj/	kɸy	As in <i>kɸyase, kɸyanger,</i>
36	/kw/	kw	As in <i>kwa, kwase, kwan</i>
37	/kwj/	kwy	As in <i>ikwye, Kwyande,</i>
38	/kj/	ky	As in <i>kyam, ikyese, ikyenge</i>
39	/l/	l	As in <i>lam, lan, laha</i>
40	/lw/	lw	As in <i>lwese, lwem</i>
41	/ly/	ly	As in <i>lyangelyange, lyan,</i>
42	/m/	m	As in <i>ma, maa, mende, mer</i>
43	/mb/	mb	As in <i>mban, mbelem, mba</i>
44	/mbw/	mbw	As in <i>imbwase, mbwalaa</i>

45	/mbj/	mby	As in <i>imbya, mbyaghmbyagh</i>
46	/n/	n	As in <i>nor, nom, na, nase</i>
47	/nd/	nd	As in <i>nder, ndor, ndiar</i>
48	/ŋ/ /ŋg/	ng	As in <i>waang, nger, ngohol</i>
49	/ndw/	ndw	As in <i>ndwar, ndwer,</i>
50	/ndj/	ndy	As in <i>ndyar, indyer,</i>
51	/ŋgb/	ngb	As in <i>in ngbôghom, ngbegha, ngbigh ngbigh</i>
52	/ŋgbj/	ngby	As in <i>ngbyan, ngbyase, annngbyan</i>
53	/ŋgw/	ngw	As in <i>ungwa, hungwa, hungwaja</i>
54	/ŋgj/	ngy	As in <i>ingya, aingye, ihingya</i>
55	/ndʒ/	nj	As in <i>injar,inja, njighe</i>
56	/ŋh/	nng**	As in <i>Nnaa, nghāā, nghēnēm</i>
57	/ŋhw/	ñhw	As in <i>ñghwēnēē</i>
58	/nw/	nw	As in <i>nwange</i>
59	/nj/	ny	As in <i>inyam, anyam, inyon</i>
60	/ndz/	nz	As in <i>nzeregh, nzegh nzegh</i>
61	/o/	o	As in <i>oso, koso, hor</i>

62	/o:/	oo	As in <i>oo, hool</i>
63	/ou/	ou	As in <i>mou, móugh, kóugh,</i>
64	/ɔ/	ô	As in <i>kôso, kôr, vôr, kômbo</i>
65	/ɔ:/	ôô	As in <i>ôô, ôô-ôô, hôô, kôô</i>
66	/ɔu/	ôu	As in <i>kôu, hôugh, môgh</i>
67	/p/	p	As in <i>pa, pase, pav, pev</i>
68	/pw/	pw	As in <i>pwar, pwesee</i>
69	/pj/	py	As in <i>pyam, pyaven, pye</i>
70	/r/	r	As in <i>rumun,</i>
71	/rw/	rw	As in <i>rwam, rwaagh</i>
72	/rj/	ry	As in <i>iryumun</i>
73	/s/	s	As in <i>sur, sugh, sar, soo</i>
74	/ʃ/	sh	As in <i>sha, shie, ishan</i>
75	/ʃw/	shw	As in <i>ishwa, ashwe,</i>
76	/sw/	sw	As in <i>swase, swande, swende</i>
77	/t/	t	As in <i>ta, tam</i>
78	/ts/	ts	As in <i>tsar, tsen, tsôr, tsee</i>
79	/tsw/	tsw	As in <i>tswa, tswen, tswer</i>

80	/tw/	tw	As in <i>twer, twar, twev</i>
81	/tj/	ty	As in <i>ityav, tyange-tyange, ityev, ityenger</i>
82	/v/	u	As in <i>kusu, gugu, gungur, usu,</i>
83	/u:/	uu	As in <i>kuusu, puu, suur,</i>
84	/ua/	ua	As in <i>uase, uasegh,</i>
85	/uæ/	uã	As in <i>uãngernyom, huãn</i>
86	/ue/	ue	As in <i>uese, uer, sue, pue</i>
87	/v/	v	As in
88	/vj/	vy	As in
89	/w/	w	As in
90	/wj/	Wy,	As in <i>iwyuese, iwyuanegh</i>
91	/jw/	yw	As in <i>iywasen, iywen, iywenge</i>
92	/j/	y	
93	/dz/	z	
94	/dzw	zw	

/a/ as in *kati*, equivalent to English *pat*.

/a:/ as in *kaa*, equivalent to English *car*.

/ɪ/ as in *pīne*; equivalent to English *pin*.

/i:/ as in *cii*, equivalent to English *cheese*.

/e/ as in sénde, equivalent to English episode.
 /e:/ as in bee equivalent to English seta.
 /ɛ / ě, for all short nasal sounds as in ngĕlē ngĕlē.
 /ɛ:/ ‘ĕĕ’ for long nasal sounds as in mĕĕ, humĕĕ, ñgwĕnĕĕ.
 /æ/ as in mǎ.
 /æ:/ for all nasal short sounds as in ñghǎǎ.
 /o/ o, as in agom, equivalent to English offend.
 /ou/ ou, as in mou, mough, equivalent to English blow.
 /o:/ oo, as in akooso, equivalent to English coal.
 /ɔ/ ô, as in kôso, equivalent to English corpse.
 /ɔ:/ as in kôô, equivalent to English course.
 /ŋ/ ñ, as in ñngerem.
 /ŋ/ ñg, ng, as in viiñg, equivalent to English sing.
 /tʃ/ c, (ch) as in cagh.
 /ɣ/ gh, as in kwagh.
 /dʒ/ j, as in ijande.
 /dz/ z, as in zamber, zende
 /ts/ ts, as in tsar
 /tsw/ as in tswaañg, tswasaa.
 /ʃ/ sh, as in sha.
 /j/ y, as in yange.
 /ʃw/ shw as in shwa.
 /tʃw/ cw as in cwañg.

(e). “C’ value

The letter ‘c’ is a voiceless palato-alveolar affricative. Initially, the Tiv used ‘ch’ which in English the tesh [tʃ] symbol is used in some cases. However, in the present dispensation there is a stored value in ‘C’ which stands for ‘ch’ sounds. So in all the ‘c_s’ one sees or comes across, there is only one uniform [tʃ] sound.

Example: cii /tʃi:/ (all), cí /tʃi:/ (to massage with hot water), cihi /tʃih/ (to boldly face somebody/ something), ican /tʃæn/ (poverty).

Other tribes like the Hausa, Idoma, Gudi, Nupe and Kanuri use the ‘c’ unusual value (Williamson p. 27). Unlike the English which ‘c’ or ‘ch’ may also represent ‘k’ sound, the Tiv ‘c’ is constantly used with *tesh* [tʃ]. However for the names of people, it is not wise to hold to only the ‘c’ since the ‘ch’ has become associated with their identity.

In the Italian, ⟨cc⟩ before a front vowel represents a geminated /tʃ/, as in *lacci* /ˈlat.tʃi/. In Piedmontese and Lombard, ⟨cc⟩ represents the /tʃ/ sound at the end of a word.

Chapter Two

Phonetic Symbols

The Tiv do not use symbols to represent letters. Or we may rather say the issue of symbols was not emphasized in the writing of Tiv.

Williamson (1984) says, “We will take it for granted that the Latin alphabet, particularly as applied to English, is to form the basis for the representation of Nigerian languages” (Tiv inclusive). In place of these symbols, digraphs, trigraphs, and tesseragraphs are employed. And if any sound corresponds to that of English, the same letter is applied. Where this is not applicable, the Tiv mostly make use of digraphs and trigraphs. Williamson sees five ways of representing such lacking:

1. The use of symbols taken from the phonetic alphabet.
2. The use of diacritic letters, i.e. letters with extra marks pre-positioned above, below, beside or in front of a letter.
3. The use of digraphs or trigraphs, i.e. two or three letters representing one sound.
4. The use of single Latin letter with an unusual value.
5. The use of spelling rules to express narrow or dotted vowels.

Of all these suggestions above by Williamson, the first two are partially applied in Tiv, whereas the next two that follow are fully applied. However, the last one is not applicable. We shall deal with these points individually as treated in various chapters.

As said earlier it is quite difficult to equate the English sound with those of Tiv or any other African language. For instance, the English has no nasalized symbolic representation in most cases

especially the vowels. We can here modify for a better understanding of the language. The ones mostly borrowed for the purpose of this book are those from the French language.

1. The ‘a’ in Tiv stands for all /a/ sounds similar to the English words like *back, fat, pat*, etc.
2. The [ã] this is another sound of the letter with the tilde. It stands for all nasal sounds in some words like [ñgãã] (to scratch, to fumble gently), [kãnwã] (Hausa word for potash). This sound corresponds to the French ‘*mon*,’ ‘*penchant*’ /pãfã/ ‘un’ and ‘*coq au vin*’ /køk əv vœ/. Thus the phonetic symbol is [æ] which is the only nearest sound that corresponds.
3. The ‘e’ stands for sounds resembling those of English like *check, cage, let, lens* etc. Such Tiv words as *bee* /be:/ (to finish), *kér* /ker/ (to seek).
4. The ‘ë’ like in 2 above also stands for some unique nasal /e/ sounds. This too has no phonetic symbol representation in English. The only near symbol is the [ɛ] which applies to the English words like *fern, firm*, etc. Such Tiv words include: *mëëë* (sheepishly), *humëë* (to look dull and uncoordinated) *hën* (to think, at, to).
5. The [i] takes the /i/ sound and not the English diphthong /ai/ and the sound is constant and does not change. So also is the ‘o’ sound. It should be noted that ‘oo’ does not in any situation change the sound. Unlike the English where [oo] sometimes becomes /u/ or /ʌ/ like in the words *mood, food, blood, flood* etc. Therefore these words should be pronounced as /o:/ *toor* (to give out a fizzing sound), *voor* (to drill), *hool* (to get used to a condition or situation), etc.
6. The diacritic ‘ô’ is also applied to all glottal sounds with open o [ɔ] as its phonetic symbol.

Based on this, it should be noted that certain Tiv words act as camouflages for English words and should not be mistaken for English pronunciation. Example, *bee* in Tiv should not be pronounced /bi:/ but /be:/, *beer* not /biə(r)/ but /be:(r)/, *been* not /bi:n/ but /be:n/ etc. One guiding principle is that **ee** always takes the /e/ long sound like in the English word: *edge, eddy, edify*; except for certain nasals which are not many and which are hence to be indicated by the diacritical tilde ~.

These phonetic symbols represent the different sounds in Tiv. Some of these sounds have no match in the English. In that case, a near one is adopted from French. We shall now highlight these phonetic symbols accordingly.

Phonetic symbols

- [a] **a** for all ‘a’ sounds eg. ta, fam, kam etc.
- [a:] ‘aa’ for all long ‘a’ sounds. Example, paa /pa:/, haa /a:/, vaa /a:/, etc. **(aa)** is used in the orthographies of Dutch, Finnish and other languages with phonemic long vowels for /a:/ (Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia).
- [æ] ‘ã’ for all nasal vowel sounds. Example, kãnwã (potash). It corresponds to the French words like, *mon, penchant, un*, etc.
- [æ:] for all long nasal ‘ãã’ sounds. Example, mãã /mæ:/, ñghãã /ŋæ:/.
- [e] For all ‘e’ sounds like in the English words: entrant, education, egg, etc.
- [e:] for all long ‘e’ sounds, *bee* /be:/, *seer* /se:r/, *keer* /ke:r/, etc.
- [ɛ] ‘ê’ for all nasal sounds - ñghêñãã [ŋɛñã:], ñghwêñêm /ŋhwêñêm/. Many West African languages use this nasal vowel /ɛ̃/. *ɛ* for an "open e".

- [ɛ:] ‘êê’ for all long nasals like mêê, humêê, ñgwêêê.
- [ɪ] For all short ‘i’ sounds. Example, pine kine, tile, etc.
- [i:] for all long ‘i’ sounds. Example, piin /pi:n/, fiir /fi:r/, kighir /ki:r/.
- [ɪ̃] ‘m̃’ for all ‘m’ syllabic nasals. It is called syllabic because the letter alone forms a syllable on its own. Example, *m̃ngerem, m̃kaanem, m̃vese*.
- [ŋ] **ñg** for all velar nasal words like, *ñghãã*, /ŋã:/, *waañg* /wa:ŋ/ etc.
‘ng’ for words like, *nger* /ŋge(r)/, *ngor* /ŋgo:(r)/.
- [o] for all ‘o’ sounds like tor (king), koŋ (rope), mor (to swell up).
- [o:] for all long ‘o’ sounds as in words like soo, doo, too, etc. (remember the ‘oo’ in English takes the /u/ or /ʊ/ sound but in the Tiv it takes the ‘o’).
- [ɔ] ‘ô’ for all glottal o sounds like the English words cause, causal, caution, etc.
- [ɔ:] ‘ôô’ for all long o glottal sounds.

The Syllabic Nasals

Let us consider the three symbols that are very essential to the writing of Tiv language. They are: **m̃**, **ñg** and **ny**.

The ‘m’ letter in Tiv acts in two ways: (1) As a letter representing bilabial plosive (ma), and (2) As a bilabial syllabic nasal m̃ with totally closed lips and hummed from the throat through the nose.

To the ordinary Tiv, it is easy to distinguish between the two while reading. However, grammatically it creates a problem. The syllabic m̃ seems to be playing the roles of a vowel in its function. R.C. Abraham (1940: p.3) equally considered it to be a vowel. However, going by the rules of vowel formation one is thrown off balance.

In order to distinguish the syllabic from the plosive m, the syllabic is written with a diacritic macron above the letter [ṁ] and [ṁ] as its phonetic symbol. Thus *mmem* will hence be written *ṁmem* (a rest), *ṁmough* (a rising up), *ṁmande* (appearance to a place) and could be written with a hyphen (*ṁ-mande*), etc. I am aware of the fact that the hyphen is used on the right beside the letter to separate the syllabic from the plosive; it should be borne in mind that not all the words ought to carry this hyphenation. For instance it is not necessary to hyphenate *ṁkem* (as *ṁ-kem* - pepper). Neither is it wise to do so with words like *ṁkaanem* (words, statement), *ṁkom* (worthiness), *ṁkôôm* (discipline), *ṁkônom* (chairs), etc. We could however easily write *ṁkaanem*, *ṁkom*, *ṁkôôm*, *ṁkônom*, etc. The use of the hyphen is necessary where the syllabic precedes a vowel. Example, *ṁmande* to distinguish from *mande* (to nail or hammer something), *ṁmember* is better written *ṁmember* (a rejoicing), *ṁmaa* (a goading) is different from *māã* (to build). In this case, my suggestion is that the syllabic ‘ṁ’ be identified by a diacritic dot (ṁ) above and represented by the [ṁ] as phonetic symbol. Thus such similar words should hence be written using the ṁ - *ṁmem*, *ṁwanger*, *ṁmaa* etc. are all good examples.

Apart from the above function, this syllabic is so important that we may in the near future consider it to be an independent letter of its own. For it plays many roles: 1. As a prefix, 2. as a pronoun. In fact, it plays a leading role in the formation of gerunds in Tiv. Consider these words:

<u>Verb</u>	<u>gerunds (verbal nouns)</u>
Mough	ṁmough
Vese	ṁvese
Ande	ṁmande
Yange	ṁnyange

With the diacritic, it will be easier for the beginner to identify and distinguish between the syllabic and the plosive ‘m’ without necessarily hyphenating.

The ‘ng’ syllabic nasal

In former times, there were suggestions that the phonetic symbol [ŋ] should represent the syllabic velar nasal ‘ng’ as a letter. This was however not given a popular acceptance. However with the increasing demand for the application of this sound, it is high time we revisited this topic. This is a phonetic symbol and it is ‘precarious in status in Nigeria’ as observed by Williamson (1984:31). This is because many languages including Igbo, Efik among others have rejected its usage as a special letter. This sound is really problematic. However, if we accept new innovations like the **ñ** used by the Efik, we will put the matter to rest finally.

Similarly, the **ŋ** was suggested for the Izon but like the Tiv, they resorted to using the **ng**. This could thus be written ‘**ñ**’ and [ŋ] as its phonetic symbol to stand for the **ng** and **ñg** prenasalized sounds. ‘**Ng**’ for words like, *nger* /ŋge:(r)/, *ṁngerem* /ṁŋgerem/; and *waang* /wa:ŋ/, *keng* /ken/ *waang waang* /wa:ŋ wa:ŋ/ etc.

By using the **ñg**, it will help to soften the nasal breath for the Tiv man is tempted to call ‘n’ and ‘g’ in a strong nasal and not the velar nasal ‘**ñg**’. For easy identification, I would suggest that the ‘**ñ**’ and ‘g’ be combined to represent this velar nasal **ñg** with [ŋ] as phonetic symbol. Thus ‘naa’ should be written *ñghāã* and pronounced /ŋã:/. I would like us to remember that the ‘NN’ used by the 1980 Committee’s report and quoted by Williamson (1984:35) for *Nàá* is a misrepresentation of the sound. For the first ‘N’ is a separate syllable of its own away from the second ‘n’ and therefore not valid in applying to the word ‘*Nnàá*’. Williamson ((1984:32) confirms that this is the most troublesome consonant

sound to write. She advances nine different ways of writing it. Add the nine ways.

The palatal ny.

The 'ny' is a voiced palatal nasal. The palatal nasal is one of the most difficult digraphs because it totally has no English equivalent sound. The reason could be that the English has no 'y' sound or phonetic symbol. In the place of 'ny' they either diphthong it 'nai' or 'nia' or 'ni'. For example, they may pronounce 'iniam' for the word 'inyam' (meat), 'iwianger' for the word iwyanger (light), etc. Similarly, such words in English as Wycliff, 'WYSIWYG' (a computer language for: 'What you see is what you get') are typical examples of lack of 'y' in English which affect the writing of Tiv language.

Chapter Three

CONSONANT CLUSTER SOUNDS

Most African languages use consonant clusters to produce a single sound. These have aided in settling the problem of 'which single Latin letter should stand for such sound?'

Williamson (1984) equally said, "There are a number of consonants in Nigerian languages for which there are no ordinary symbols in the Latin alphabet." Tiv language too is one of the numerous Nigerian languages that employ the use of consonant cluster to produce a single sound. Let's look at the Tiv consonant clusters under 'digraphs,' 'trigraphs,' and 'tesseragraphs.'

1. Digraphs

These are the combinations of two consonant letters to produce one sound. Most Tiv consonant clusters are digraphic in nature, and they constitute the largest group of consonant clusters in Tiv vocabulary. They include: *bw, by, cw, dw, dy, fy, gb, gh, gw, gy, hm, hw, hy, jw, kp, kw, ky, lw, ly, mb, mm, nd, ng, nj, nw, ny, nz, pw, py, rr, rw, sh, sw, ts, tw, ty, vv, vy, yw, zw.*

One thing that should be noticed about the pronunciation of these clusters is that all the letters involved have equal sound strength. That is to say that they are equally sounded at the same time; hence one sound. For instance, "gb" is not pronounced "g b" but "gb". So also is "kp" pronounced "kp" which are both doubly articulated, "ny" pronounced "ny". I emphasize this point based on the fact that foreigners, particularly the Europeans may call 'kp' as "k p" /ke pa/, 'ny' as /nia/ or /nai/. But to the Tiv man, 'k' and 'p'

are just one simultaneous sound; so also are all other digraphs and trigraphs.

2. Trigraphs

They are equally combinations of three consonant clusters to produce one sound. They are similar to the digraphs except that in their case, they have three consonants in one place to produce one sound; hence trigraphs. They include: *gby, gyw, khm, kpy, kyw, mbw, mby, ndw, ndy, ngb, ngh* (as in *ñghāā, ñghēlē ñghēlē*), *mgb* (as in *mgbahar, mgbar*), *shw, tsw*. Like in the digraphs, same rules guiding the pronunciation apply to the trigraphs.

3. Tesseragraphs

These are combinations of four consonant clusters to produce one sound. The tesseragraphs are not many. They include *ngw* (as in the words *ñgwěñěě, ñgwěñěm*), *ngby* (as in the words *ngbyan, ingyase* etc.).

It should be observed that the ‘**h**’ in the above word neutralizes the preceding ‘**g**’ thus making it to be a soft glottal-nasal. Languages that do not have these combinations find it very difficult to pronounce these words.

Some of the consonants have phonetically, symbols that could guide the way to pronounce them. These include:

[ʃ]	[ʃ]	[ʃw]	[ɲ]	[ŋ]	[ts]	[dʒ]	[y]	tsw	ŋ
c	sh	shw	ny	ng/ñg	ts	z	G	tsw	ñ
ʃw	dʒ								
cw	j								

It should be observed that the syllabic “**m**” plays the role of a vowel in most of the consonant combinations and therefore not included in the clusters else the combinations would have been bulkier than what we have at present. We should not then use these combinations as a basis for having more orthographic consonant but as a basis for sounds formation. What I mean here is that these are not orthographies themselves but sounds that form just a part of what is accepted as orthography in Tiv.

Chapter Four

THE PROBLEM OF SPELLINGS

Every language has its peculiar shortcomings. To the Hausas, 'p' is lacking. In its stead they replace it with 'f'. for example, the Hausa man would call 'fiful' for the word 'people' "**fii dii fii**" for the abbreviation '**PDP**'; *farti* for '**party**' etc. The typical Yoruba lacks '**ch**'. In its stead they would say "**sh**". For instance they call '*shop*' for the word '**chop**,' '*shit*' for the word '**cheat**' etc. In the Bible accounts, the Ephraimites expressed a similar shortcoming as they were unable to pronounce '**shibboleth**', in stead they pronounced '**sibboleth**'. This is just a few out of the thousands of tribes with their peculiar shortcomings.

1. R and L.

Tiv is not an exception in this matter. However in their case '**L**' is dominant over '**R**'. Their tongue is so heavy that '**r**' is receded. R.W. Malherbe (1931) says "R and L are interchangeable". Words with initial '**R**' in Tiv are very few. '**R**' is mostly found in the medial or final of the word. One would partially agree with Malherbe, but I believe it is because the '**L**' and '**R**' are not yet controlled in writing. Malherbe would not say that the word ENGLISH could also be spelled ENGRISH. If they were well established in writing and practiced, the problem would soon be a thing of the past.

Words mostly interchanged include:

<u>Interchanged</u>	<u>Correct</u>
Gbiligh/gbirigh	<i>gbiligh</i> (weal, line)

mbara/mbala	<i>mbala</i> (those)
Agbil/agbir	<i>agbil</i> (weals, lines)
ngura/ngula	<i>ngula</i> (that)
Rwam/lwam	<i>rwam</i> (food)
mbura/mbula	<i>mbula</i> (that)
Je ra/je la	<i>je la</i> (peharps)
icul/icur	<i>icul</i> (forehead)
Ra/la	<i>la</i> (def. art. the)
icur/icul	<i>icur</i> (knot)

It is high time we abide by the conventional spellings so as to do away with these discrepancies. It is the way one speaks that he is inclined to write. I therefore believe that these discrepancies come from the way we pronounce these words as a result of the heaviness of the Tiv man's tongue. This makes him to release "**L**" unconsciously while speaking. This has affected him so much to the extent that even in foreign words the "**L**" plays dominance. For instance, a typical Tiv man may say, 'The motor is *lunning* along the **load**.' In stead of saying, 'The motor is **running** along the **road**.' "Liport" for "Report", "leza" for "Razor", etc.

I believe that constant practice and correct application of words bearing "r_s" could help correct these anomalies.

WY or YW?

It has been observed that 'y' has been omitted in most of the Tiv words that should carry 'y' because the Whiteman who first wrote the Tiv language found it impossible to pronounce the 'y'; he therefore ignored even putting it into writing. For example words like '*iyua*' they wrote '*iwua*', '*iywenge*' they wrote '*iwenge*'

'iyuese' they wrote 'iwuese,' etc. Of course they were not far from the correct spelling. For the root word for 'iwuese' is 'wuese', 'iwasen' is 'wase', etc.

In trying to effect authentic sound representation to the present day Tiv language, "y" is added to all such words. But the problem then is, should "w" come before the added "y" or should "y" prefix "w"? For instance, these words are written thus, 'iwyang'er' for "iwanger", "iwyan" for "iwan", "iwyasen" for "iwasen" etc.

Let us take a rough transcription of the sounds and see where the illustration best fits. It is necessary to first understand that internationally (worldwide) "y" goes with "I" and "w" goes with "u". That is to say that they are likely replaced by each other. For example 'young' is pronounced /jounɡ/ the silent 'i' and its symbol is written [j]

Tiv too have this recognition. For example, the word "ior" is pronounced "iyor" in some segments of Tiv; "ina" for "yina", "iyase" for "iase", "iyése" for "iése" etc.

For consistency and uniformity therefore, I would suggest that "iy" prefixes 'w' in such words. For example, "iywanger" for "iwanger", "iywasen" for "iwyasen". This evolves a more convenient way to cope with the w/y cases. In the word "iwanger" 'iy' therefore prefixes the verb 'wanger,' 'wasen,' etc. Why this is to be so is that we can pronounce "iu^(w)ese", or "yuese," "iu^(w)anger" or "yuanger" conveniently. If we however put "wy" it will be difficult for such rough sounding – "iui^(y)anger," "iui^(y)ese" "iui^(y)asen," etc. More over, even from the sound we would see that 'y' preceded 'w'. It is therefore more convenient for the Tiv and the non Tiv speaker. For instance, the English man is tempted to pronounce /wi/ when he sees 'wy' like in the word Wycliff,

/wiziwig/ in the word WYSIWYG. And if he is to drop one letter, like in the English word **knife**, he would drop 'w' then the pronunciation becomes clumsy – iwyang'er becomes "i(w)yanger," "iwyasen" becomes "i(w)yasen" etc.

Another point is that when breaking such words into syllables, we will discover that we are causing grammatical discomfort to such words. Example **iy** + wanger = iywanger, **iy** + wasen = iywasen etc. These may be syllabified thus: i-ywa-nger, i-ywa-sen, i-ywe-nge etc. thus the former may lead to disjointedness and illogical presentation thus resulting in unsystematic way of writing. In this regard, I suggest that if we must use 'y' it is better to add it to the initial 'i' to serve as prefix to such words.

We should be mindful of the fact that Tiv language originates from Latin script. And in the Latin script there is no where one will find the WY digraph, though Welsh combine **wy** to form a diphthong /ui/, they also combine **yw** to form another diphthong /iu/; but there is YW which is also found in Arranda (Arrernte) a tribe in the Australia, and is used for /j^w/ in Arrernte. And to argue that most of Tiv additions come to the right is rather giving a prescriptive than a descriptive mode of word formation. One may only accept it on the grounds that even in English we have WH for words like **who, what, where** etc. yet they transcribe /hw/. Moreso, English language is not phonemic and therefore should not be followed in this sense (see my book "A Linguistic Approach to Tiv Language" for more on this topic. The best way to write such words in Tiv is only when **y** precedes **w**; and this is found in words

like: *iywan* (deformity), *iywange* (javelin), *iywanger* (light, enlightenment), *iywasen* (aid, help, assistance), *iywer* (a ululation), *iywér* (dinner), etc.

The fuss about ou/ough, wou/wogh, ityough/ityogh

Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (March 2009) quotes this statement, “The most notorious group of letters in the English language, **ough**, is commonly pronounced at least ten different ways. Six of which are illustrated in the construct, “*Though the tough cough and hiccough plough him through*, which is quoted by Robert A. Heinlein in *The Door into Summer* to illustrate the difficulties facing automated speech transcription and reading. Ough is in fact a word in its own right: it is an exclamation of disgust similar to *ugh*. Here are the various pronunciations of the ough words:

/oʊ/ as in "though" (cf. *toe*).

/u:/ as in "through" (cf. *true*).

/ʌf/ as in "rough" (cf. *ruffian*).

/ɒf/ as in "cough" (cf. *coffin*).

/ɔ:/ as in "thought" (cf. *taut*).

/aʊ/ as in "bough" (cf. *to cow*).

Take a look at the full list of pronunciations

Pronunciation	Example	Comment
/ʌf/	tough, enough, hough	Compare "huff"
/ɒf/	cough, trough	Trough is pronounced /trʊθ/ by some speakers of American English
/aʊ/	bough,	Pronounced like the word 'Ow'

	plough	
/oʊ/	though, dough	
/ɔ:/	thought,	Regularly used before /t/, except in bought, ought <i>drought</i> /draʊt/
/u:/	through, brougham	
/ə/	thorough, borough	Both pronounced /oʊ/ in American English
/ʌp/	hiccough	Variant spelling of "hiccup", though the latter form is recommended in both British and US
/ɒk/	hough	More commonly spelled "hock" from the 20th Century onwards
/ɒx/	lough	A lake; Irish analogue of <u>Scots</u> "loch"

We can see that the problem of “ough” is not peculiar to the Tiv, but also with the adorned English language. Most times, the proponents of *ogh* argue that we only hear the ‘o’ sound which reflects in the question tag – *ka ityogho?* I think this is not a good argument. The behaviour of such sound is also found in English words like: *although, though, sought, soul etc.* The Harrap French-English Dictionary (2001) has given the pronunciation of certain words with ough thus: *thorough* /θ ^rə/, *through* /θru:/, *thought* /θɔ:t/, *fought* /fɔ:t/, *bought* /bɔ:t/, *ought* /u:t/, *ugh* /vx/ as examples of the idiosyncratic nature of English spelling, the combination *ou* can be pronounced in at least four different ways: /ə/ in famous, /aʊ/ in loud, /u:/ in should, /u:/ in you.

Abraham saw this that was why he said he needed not to disturb the existing spelling. In such words in Tiv, **O** is the *nucleus* while **U** is the *off-glide* and the *GH* is the glottal lengthening. If we say GH stands in place of U then we are making GH a semi vowel, which is actually not. It is the U that softens the rough breathing of the **GH**. If you take words that do not have a U before the **GH**, you will discover that the breathing is rough and drags in the glottal region. Take a look at these words: kagh, kôgh, magh, lagh, kegh, kagher, hagher, etc. but words with OU soften the glottal sound. Thus **mough**, **ityough**, hou, hough, lough, sough, *ijôndough*, *ishôndough*, *songough*, *ishôndough*, *ikyônough*, *yolough*, etc. others use the U as the nucleus that is why they stress the U: *ijôndugh*, *ishôndugh*, *mugh*, *songugh*, *ishôndugh*, *ikyônugh*, *yolugh* etc.

We can also see that some of the sounds take the high tone while others take the low. Those with low tone sometimes go without GH

<i>hou</i> (yam beetle)	<i>hough</i> (mucus, catarrh),
<i>lou</i> (soft, addled)	<i>lough</i> (to manage)
<i>mou</i> (trade, cotton)	<i>mough</i> (stand)

There are words in English that sometimes one may not hear the sound yet they are not removed: For example the **p** in *psychology*, **k** in *knowledge*, **gh** in *fight* etc. I continue to say that **U** should not be removed from *ough* words in Tiv. The sound **u** is heard and the **gh** only lengthens the sound because *ugh* is an *off-glide* and cannot stress the sound as others think. Therefore the occurrence of ‘o’ sound does not necessarily mean there should be no ‘u’ inserted.

In such diphthongs, the nucleus is the vowel that is most stressed and it forms the centre of the sound. And in the case of the Tiv, the ‘o’ is the nucleus while the ‘u’ is the off-glide which seems to flow into or off of the nucleus vowel.

The proponents have also failed to notice that Malherbe also used the ‘ou’ in which Abraham later thought it was an ‘o’. Armstrong (1980) and Orkar (2005) later thought likewise. Robert Armstrong in his “A History of the Tiv Orthography” which is presented in the Ad Hoc Committee’s report (1980:6) is quoted as saying:

*The word in which Malherbe wrote ‘ou’ in fact has only ‘o’. There are no diphthongs in Tiv (p.6). The Ad Hoc Committee vehemently rebuked Robert Armstrong and saw him as lacking linguistic skills. The committee however disagreed with the notion that the words in which he (Malherbe) wrote ‘ou’ in fact has only ‘ou’. There are no diphthongs in Tiv. This view is erroneous and the committee wishes to make it categorically clear that there are diphthongs in Tiv and the following are clear examples of Tiv diphthongs: **ou** as in *mough*, *mou*, *mzough*; **ua** as in *wua* etc. The committee however opened a room for a test of the diphthongs linguistically.*

And if we have not yet tested this linguistically, I find no basis for the removal of the ‘u’ just on the grounds of class difference. Phonology has nothing to do with class in this sense.

Heinz Jokers (1992: 165) in commenting on this matter said, “Even Robert Armstrong could not convince the Adhoc Committee on Tiv language (1980) to change, and they insisted on writing the diphthong since it could be heard.”

The insertion or removal of **gh** does not in any way affect the words that bear them. As such **ityough** could be conveniently written as **ityou**, **mough** could be conveniently written as **mou**, etc. I still maintain that, if something must be removed at all, it should be **gh** and not **u**.

The stand of the Aper Aku committee on this matter was that **ou** should remain and it remained. I think the decision of the committee was a good one and should be maintained. Moreso, we have not yet tested the sounds to prove ourselves right for the need to discard the **u**.

Chapter Five

TONE MARKING

Languages that are tonal need certain marks that will aid the speaker on how, when and where to vary his tone in order to produce a meaningful and articulate speech. In some languages, tone marks not only direct sounds but also identify tenses. R.C. Abraham (1940) equally said, “The tones of Tiv are one of the most important features and are used in words having identical forms to distinguish one meaning from another: in addition... they are of paramount importance grammatically.”

In his book, R.C. Abraham attempted to mark the tones, but since then no one has taken up the challenge. The tone marks in Tiv till today are not well represented. What Abraham did seemed to be of value only to the missionaries of his days. No Tiv person has actually taken the work further. The only two marks that have continued to be used in the Tiv bible (Bibilo) are the acute (´) for high tone and the subscripted macron (-) for subjunctive mood.

e.g. (acute) *Sé za adua*. (Let us attend church service).

(Subj.) *Yila un a va se yem*. (Call him to come so we will go).

Because of the prevailing situation in which the Tiv speaker finds himself while writing, there is need to emphasize the issue of tone marks. Take a look at this word ‘**tor**’ which has four different sounds to differentiate the meanings from each other. *Tor tôô tor tor ken tor-youo* (the king has taken the pestle and forced it into the thatch roof) is really bizarre. But when marked, it will lead the reader to the right direction in pronouncing.

‘*tor*’ – king (mid tone).

'tór' – pestle (high tone).

'tór' – to push something into another with force (mid-high tone).

'tór' – thatched grass (low-high tone).

Ordinarily written, there is no difference between each of the words, only the tones that keep changing. It is observed that the first 'tor' is not marked because it is a plain (mid tone). The second is high-high. The third is mid-high and the fourth is high-low.

Based on the fact that certain sounds need to be marked, there is crying need for more innovations in the area of tone marking. In my book, "Yeke i Zwativ 1" I have introduced new marks to aid us forge ahead in our quest for a standard Tiv writing. We will again explain them more.

1. The acute (´)

This symbol as in many Nigerian languages is used for high tones. However, to the Tiv, the mark conveys more than just tone marking. Even to majority of Tiv speakers, this mark has nothing else to function for than to mark the tone to high level. The acute however has more functions that will be here explained.

i. It acts as future tense indicator. Compare these two sentences:

(a) *Se za adua.* (We've attended church service).

(b) *Sé za adua.* (We will go to church).

(a) *Se gba yan rwam la a inyam shio tsô.* (We have eaten the food without meat).

(b) *Sé gba yan rwam la a inyam shio tsô.* (We have no choice but to eat the food without meat).

Take a look at these groups of sentences. Consider the wordings of groups (a) and those of groups (b). They are exactly the same but they have different meanings as a result of the acute in 'b' of each group. The 'b' groups are talking about what will happen in the

near future. In 'a' however, the action has already taken place. Thus future tense is indicated.

ii. It acts as plural indicator for words that do not change their form in plural.

Singular

iyô (snake)

iyar (buffalo)

ikyegh (fowl, chicken)

plural

íyó (snakes)

íyár (buffalos)

íkyégh (fowls, chickens)

iii. It acts as past tense indicator.

Like in (i) above, this symbol helps to identify past tense in Tiv. Look at these sentences below:

(a) *A zende kpishi* (He has walked a lot). Perfect action.

(b) *A zénde kpishi* (He walked a lot) past tense.

(c) *A va kpa a kohol un ga.* (He had come but met his absence).

(d) *A vé kpa kohol un ga.* (He came but met his absence).

iv. It acts to separate two identical words so that their meanings will be distinct.

(a) *leva leva* (limply dangling).

(b) *lévá lévá* (be at the forefront in a haste to act).

(a) *zange zange* (very light in dimension).

(b) *zánge zánge* (done in a quicker manner).

v. It identifies two parts of speech which function differently in same word. e.g.

zénde (noun) – a walk, a traveling.

Zende (verb) – to walk.

kúra (noun) – a guarding, a watching.

kura (verb) – to keep watch or guard.

ikyáv (noun) – load, property.

ikyav (noun) – a sign, a symbol.

sór (verb) – to medicate, to repair or amend.

Sôr (verb) – to visit especially a sick or less privileged person.

2. The Grave (˘)

This symbol is actually new. It has just been introduced by me. It is borrowed from the Greeks. However its application here may differ from its function in the Greek usage. The grave here is intended to serve for low tones. eg. *Kpengà* (a sitting stool) is different from *kpénga* (marketing). *Ahambé* (calves of human legs) is different from *ahambè* (wasps), etc.

3. The Tilde (~)

The tilde is internationally applied to all nasal sounds. This too is new to the Tiv writers. As much as R.C. Abraham has tried in marking the tones, he has not emphasized this symbol though he has made use of it. We will observe that for lack of this symbol, the Tiv find it difficult to write certain words. Such words as: ‘*nghaa*’, ‘*maa*’, ‘*nghelenghele*’ which would have been written as ‘*ñghãã*’ (to scratch), ‘*ñghêlê ñghêlê*’ (give a twittering sound).

The major problem here is that there is no representative letter or symbol that stands for this sound. Attempts were made by others to adopt the ‘*ŋ*’ phonetic symbol but for some obvious reasons the symbol was dropped. Since then such words have suffered a lot of hardships as to how they should be written and pronounced. A better way to write it should be by writing a diacritic

‘*ñ*’ with [ŋ] as the phonetic symbol. Thus *ngaa* should be written ‘*ñgãã*’, ‘*ngenaa*’ should be written ‘*ñgênãã*’, ‘*ngwenee*’ should be written ‘*ñgwênêê*’ etc.

4. The Caron (ˇ)

The caron is used for those wavy sounds that rise and fall (high-low). eg. *A saa mngěr*. (he has drowned in water). *A nyôr ken iyou la myěr* (He went into the house secretly). *Akavěr a mato la tsua*. (The car’s wheels have removed off).

5. The Hyphen or macron (-)

This symbol is not new to the Tiv. It performs many functions in the Tiv which we will consider in this write-up.

i. It is used for subjunctive moods. That is for actions that are intended to take place but which have not yet taken place. Take a look at these two examples:

A zã vã a mi. (Let him go and bring it).

A za va a mi. (He went and brought it).

The first sentence shows that he has not yet gone. The second sentence has clearly shown that he has gone and bought it already.

ii. It is used as dot above to separate syllables in a word. eg. *Kwagh-hendan*, *m-ember*, *m-mem*, *m-ande*, etc. here I have it added to the syllabic nasal ‘*m̃*’ **above** so as to distinguish it from the plosive ‘*ma*’ sound. Therefore all syllabic ‘*m*’ should be written as ‘*m̃*’. Thus *m̃-mem̃*, *m̃-ande*, *m̃-ember* are typical examples of such syllabic nasals. See syllabic nasals in chapter two above.

Conclusion

It is pertinent for us to follow the accepted conventions so as to write good Tiv language with uniform spellings for standardization of the language. Following our own ways of writing will only create more confusion to our young learners of Tiv language. We should maintain the standard of 'o' endings and not 'u' or 'e' or what we think is right that we should write but what the standard has indicated.

We should be lovers of our language and promote it so as to pass it from generation to generation yet unborn.

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