



## Recorded Text Testing (RTT) on Dialects of the Tiv Language

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is an assessment of the mutual intelligibility of dialects of the Tiv language. This is aimed at examining the level of intelligibility of the dialects as well as investigating the particular instances that constitute lack of full understanding among speakers of the dialects. The paper adopts both qualitative and quantitative research designs. It gathers data through the Recorded Text Testing method, a method which uses a translated text of story written in a particular dialect or language to be tested on speakers of another dialect or language. In view of this, the paper uses a reciprocal test; that is, testing one variety on another and reversing similar test on the first one. The research involved 70 participants, among whom 30 were translators, while 40 were those who took the test of intelligibility. To have a strong basis for the analysis, the paper employs the Dialect Continuum Theory to explain the speakers' understanding of the dialects. The findings of the paper reveal that the intelligibility level among neighbouring dialects is higher compared to the ones at adjacent ends of the line of movement (continuum). The paper also finds out that more intelligibility is found between Kwande and Jechila-Jengbar (with 96.6%), and the least intelligibility is between Kwande and Ihyarev (with 68.8%). It thus recommends that Tiv language scholars be engaged in serious studies in this area in order to develop the dialects for the purpose of standardization, learning and documentation for posterity. The paper has contributed meaningfully to scholarly knowledge by figuring out some lexical items that hamper a hundred percent intelligibility of the dialects among speakers as well as the level to which they understand each other, a fact which only few works may have accounted for in the language.

**Keywords:** Recorded Text Testing (RTT), Dialects, Dialect Continuum, Mutual Intelligibility, Tiv Language

## **Introduction**

Variation is a basic phenomenon in language study particularly in sociolinguistics as it forms the core of discourse in this field of inquiry. Variation is obvious in every language. A single speaker may use language on different occasions varyingly, even a speech community. Different speakers in a speech community or language group may express themselves in different forms to convey the same meaning (Nordquist, 2019). Variation can be social (distinguished by parameters like age, sex, education, occupation and other social statuses not marked by regional boundaries.) or regional mapping based on geographical speech community. However, dialects are not purely regional, social or ethnic; regional, social and ethnic factors intersect in various ways (Shareah, Midhsh & Al-Takhayinh, 2015). Whatever angle from which dialects may be considered all depends on the intelligibility of the dialects among their speakers.

This paper focuses on the assessment of mutual intelligibility among speakers of the various dialects of the Tiv language using the Recorded Text Testing (RTT) as the primary approach. RTT is a method of measuring the intelligibility of related dialects of a language. It is an approach to dialect study which uses a story with questions inserted into the test at appropriate intervals or places (refer to the literature review section). The paper investigates the level of intelligibility of the several dialects of the language. A pivotal study carried out by the researchers identified five dialects of the language, which include: Ihyarev, Jechila-Jengbar, Kwande, Masev, and Nongov-Sankera.

### **Statement of the problem**

What informed the idea of this paper is the fact that in-depth studies on the aspect of mutual intelligibility in Tiv can be rarely found. There is a dearth of plausible scholarly accounts or empirical evidence on this aspect in the language, which calls for more critical attention. The few studies on dialects of the language have not accounted for the level of mutual intelligibility observable in the language. Scholars such as, Tumba (1974) Gbilekaa (1985) and Yina (2007) only attempted a classification of the dialects while Yongo (2011) went ahead to suggesting a standard dialect of the language.

### **Aim and objectives**

This paper aims at testing the intelligibility of dialects of the Tiv language. The specific objectives include to:

- i. Examine the level of intelligibility of the dialects of the language
- ii. investigate the particular instances that constitute lack of full understanding among speakers of the dialects

### **Review of Related Literature**

This section is concerned with the review of concepts and research instruments that are relevant to the discourse of the topic. It involves, also, empirical review and the theoretical framework.

### **Dialect**

Dialects are defined based on the speakers' use of a language and where they are speaking from; hence, a dialect is a "regionally and socially distinctive variety of language, identified by a particular set of words and grammatical structures" (Crystal, 2008:142). García and Sandhu (2015) aver that two related varieties are normally considered varieties of the same language if speakers of each variety have inherent understanding of the other variety at a functional level (that is, can understand based on knowledge of their own variety without needing to learn the other variety). Cavallaro (2024) affirms that a dialect can be a variety of a language shared by a group of speakers distinguished from others by differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and even more intelligible aspects of politeness. The "politeness" aspect is basically

social, which means a variety can be considered dialect on a social ground. Dialects can also be based on geographical boundaries. This study is concerned with the geographical parameter.

The linguistic perspective for defining dialects is hinged on the idea of “mutual intelligibility”. For the linguist, speech forms that are mutually intelligible (that is, they are understood) across speakers of the different forms are said to be dialects of a single language whereas they are different languages if they lack mutual intelligibility. The intelligibility of a speaker or of a speech utterance, according to Gooskens and van Heuven (2021:51), “... is the degree to which a listener is able to recognise the linguistic units in the stream of sounds and to establish the order in which they were spoken.” Mutual intelligibility thus refers to the ability of speakers of different but related languages or dialects to understand each other without prior study or exposure. Similarly, if two varieties are very similar “linguistically and are mutually intelligible (that is, if the speakers of one variety can understand the speakers of the other and vice versa),” Schilling-Estes (2006:314) avers, “... they should probably be classified as separate languages.” Gooskens (2018) states that since the introduction of the “intelligibility criterion” by Trudgill (2000) many linguists have continued to use it as the primary criterion for defining a dialect as different from a language.

Gooskens and other scholars however find this criterion faulty since there are socio-political and cultural overridings. Schilling-Estes (2006) rightly points out that the labeling of varieties as “dialects” or “languages” is somehow complicating as some varieties do not actually conform or adhere to the intelligibility criterion. Notwithstanding, it is interesting to understand that the criterion of mutual intelligibility is one which is hardly contended with in terms of linguistic discourse on language and dialect. At least, in the perspective of linguistic analysis, considering the phonology, grammar and vocabulary of any speech form, as can be deduced from the discussion, the plausible criterion to explain all of this is the mutual intelligibility.

### **Recorded Text Testing (RTT)**

Recorded Text Testing is a method of measuring the intelligibility of related dialects of a language (refer to the literature review section) It is an approach to dialect study which uses a story with questions inserted into the test at appropriate intervals or places. “It is used to test comprehension of the speech variety represented in the story. From comprehension scores, inferences are made about the intelligibility of the text variety for subjects who speak related varieties” (Nahhas, 2006:3). The RTT method is done by play the recorded text of, say, dialect A to the listenership of speakers of dialect B or otherwise, in order to assess their understanding of dialect A. The same thing is done on dialect B to A, and as many dialects as a particular study captures.

Several reasons are advanced as to why researchers engage in intelligibility test. These include but not restricted to understanding how variations in a language across different geographical settings affect communication, providing insights into the social and cultural dynamic of a language community, or revealing the social boundaries or cultural identities within a language community. Above all, researchers investigate or assess how listeners can understand the speech from speakers of different dialects as well as identifying the particular aspect that cause a break in the full understanding of the speech from other speakers.

During a pivotal study carried out by the researcher, five speech forms were identified as dialects of the Tiv language. These include: Ihyarev, Jechila-Jengbar, Kwande, Masev, and Nongov-Sankera. So, the paper seeks to test the intelligibility level of these dialects among speakers of the language. This is done in order to identify the particular instances where speakers of the different dialects can understand each other fully and where they lack full understanding. By exploring such areas, the work would be beneficial to speakers of the language as this would as well deepen their knowledge of the different varieties of the language. To achieve this goal, the paper uses the basic guides of RTT for its framework.

## **Empirical Studies**

Chinagorom (2010) worked on the “linguistic isomorphism and Igbo dialects”. The examined Nsuka and Owere dialects clusters with the objectives of using phonological and lexical items in the studied dialect clusters to identify the degree of linguistic correspondence between them and to investigate the extent of their lexical similarity. It also aimed at using the linguistic correspondence observed between the studied dialects as sufficient clues to their early affiliation, and to examine whether the degree of the linguistic sameness could help in solving the puzzles of the corporate existence of Ndiigbo. The study adopted a quantitative research design as it quantified some grammatical items by assessing their degree of correspondences. Using linguistic isomorphism and the modified lexicostatistic model for the analysis, the findings revealed that out of the 700 nominal items examined, 603 representing 86.14% were isomorphic while out of 500 verbal items, 456 representing 91.2% were isomorphic. This study is relevant to the present study in that it investigated the degree of similarity of the studied dialects same way the present study examines the level intelligibility of the Tiv dialects. The studies differ, however, as the previous one focuses on lexical similarity while the present hinges on mutual intelligibility.

Mitterhofer (2013) researched on the “Lessons from a dialect survey of Bena: analysing wordlists”. The aim of the study was to address the linguistic differences between the varieties of Bana language, the relationship of these varieties, and their intelligibility. It examined the weaknesses and strength of different methods of comparing and analysing data. Mitterhofer conducted interviews with the ward leaders in 30 villages. The study used 302 items of wordlist. The methods for the data collection were sociolinguistic interview, wordlists, phrase lists, intelligibility tests, and orthography test. The findings of the study revealed that both the Blair method and linguistic map (Gabmap) resulted in maps and a matrix measuring the linguistic similarity or distance of the dialects. The interface between the study and the current one is that they both studied the intelligibility of the language varieties in view. The present work differs from Mitterhofer’s in that it investigate the particular instances that constitute lack of full understanding among speakers of the dialects studied while Mitterhofer’s focused on the linguistic differences between the varieties studied.

Fadoro (2014) carried out a research on the Akokoid language family. Akokoid constitutes nine speech forms spoken in Akoko North-West Local Government Area of Ondo State in South-western Nigeria. The goal of the research was to determine the status of the Akokoid speech forms. It examined whether the nine speech forms are dialects of the same language or not. In line with this, the study investigated the level of intelligibility among the over 150,000 speakers who claim they speak different languages. The study used the Ibadan 400 wordlist to obtain data from 34 informants, among whom 32 were non-mobile as well as rural. The Swadesh’s principles of lexicostatistics were used for the analysis of data. The result revealed that Arigidi and Erushu had 88.5% cognate, as such, are regarded as dialects of Arigidi. Afa, Oge, Aje, Udo, Oyin, Igashi, and Uro had 81% cognate, so they are classified as dialect of the same language called Owon. Within the nine speech forms, two distinct but fairly related languages were identified. The two distinct languages were Arigidi and Owon jointly called Akokoid by virtue of their Akoko root. The study concluded that there is no justification for lumping them together as dialects of a single language. This study and the present one are related because both examine the level of intelligibility of the language forms studied.

Alyebo (2015) worked on the “Historicolinguistic study of Convergence and Divergence in the Tivoid Languages Phylum”. The study focused on four selected Tivoid languages: Tiv and Utank in Nigeria, Oliti and Ugare in Cameroun. The objectives of the study were to examine the following: (i) convergence among the selected dialects (ii) mutual intelligibility among the languages (iii) divergence among the selected languages, and (iv) the factors responsible for

convergence and divergence among the selected languages (Alyebo, 2015:7). The approach for the collection of data was based on the framework of lexicostatistics which offered a wordlist of 200 items derived from the Swadesh's basic items of a language. The research also used the Recorded Text Testing (RTT) which was conducted across the selected languages. The result showed that there was low percentage of lexical cognates indicating apparent divergence among the languages. The divergence is said to be both internally and externally motivated. The result also indicated low intelligibility among speakers of the languages. Alyebo's study is significant to this present study it provides the basis for RTT which is the focus of the current study. The difference between these works is that, while Alyebo's centered on different languages, the present study is concerned with dialects of the Tiv language.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper is anchored on the theory of Dialect Continuum. The theory was developed by Leonard Bloomfield (1933). It purports that geographically closer dialects are more mutually intelligible than the dialects on the outer edges of the geographical area, such that geographically adjacent dialects are not mutually intelligible. This is supported by the evidence that on travelling along the line (continuum), there are usually some differences which distinguish one area from another. These differences may be large or small but will be cumulative. The further we get from our starting point, the larger the difference will become. This means, for instance, that dialect B and C will be more intelligible than dialect A and D would. This paper uses the theory to assess the level of intelligibility of the Tiv dialects. (Heeringa, and Nerbonne 2001; Chambers & Trudgill, 2004).

### **Research Methodology**

This work adopted both quantitative and qualitative research designs. As a quantitative research, it examined the level of intelligibility of the identified dialects by using the simple percentage method, and this was presented in simple tables. The entire result was further represented on a matrix table to show which varieties are more intelligible. On the other hand, the paper being also a qualitative type examined which elements in the recorded text were different or similar across the dialects. All of this was achieved through the RTT model, and this is as expressed below.

A well-composed story written in English by the researcher was administered to some respondents for translation into their various dialects. The translated versions were read out by the respondents and recorded by the researcher accordingly. Afterwards, the recorded text was played to the listenership of individual groups across the speech communities visited to test their understanding of the passage. Then, each of the respondents was asked 8 questions in relation to the recorded texts in which the results were further presented in tables and analysed accordingly. The researcher used the main procedures for RTT which is the reciprocal assessment of the dialects – measuring, for instance, dialect A onto B and B onto A. This reciprocal assessment was done to all the identified dialects. The participants were as follows: translators of recorded text: 2 persons x 15 villages = 30 respondents. Respondents for the test were 3 respondents x 15 villages = 45 respondents. This makes up 70 participants. The research covered 14 local government areas in Benue State where Tiv is predominantly spoken. These include: Gboko, Gwe-East, Gwer-west, Guma, Tarka, Ushongo, Vandeikya, Katsina-Ala, Kwande, Ukum, Logo, Konshisha, Buruku, and Makurdi.

### **Data presentation and analysis**

The presentation and analysis is done specifically on the RTT result from the field research. This is done in four batches (1-4) which are grouped into "A" and "B". These are further divided into segments (i), (ii), (iii), etc. depending on the number of the speech groups the RTT is administered on. The following order of assessment is presented below.

- i. Batch 1A: RTT from Ihyarev administered on Jechila-Jengbar, Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera.
- ii. Batch 1B: RTT from Jechila-Jengbar, Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera administered on Ihyarev.
- iii. Batch 2A: RTT from Jechila-Jengbar administered on Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera.
- iv. Batch 2B: RTT from Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera administered on Jechila-Jengba.
- v. Batch 3A: RTT from Kwande administered on Masev, Nongov-Sankera.
- vi. Batch 3B: RTT from Masev, Nongov-Sankera on Kwande.
- vii. Batch 4A: RTT from Masev administered on Nongov-Sankera.
- viii. Batch 4B: RTT from Nongov-Sankera administered on Masev.

**Batch A (i), (ii), (iii) & (iv): RTT from Ihyarev administered on Jechila-Jengbar, Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera**

The RTT, as this section is concerned, is first conducted on Ihyarev in which the others follow the step by step presentation. This is done by testing, for instance, the recorded text of Ihyarev on Jechila-Jengbar, Ihyarev on Kwande, and so on. The presentation is as shown below.

**Table 1: RTT of Ihyarev on Jechila-Jengbar Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Jechila-Jengbar Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	5	62.5
Females	3	5	62.5
Total	9	10(5)	62.5%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The result from the table shows that speakers from the Jechila-Jengbar speech group understand Ihyarev speech at least up to 62.5% average. The table shows that males scored 5 points, that is, 62.5%; females also scored 62.5%. The mean score or percentage is also 62.5%. This implies that the intelligibility level of Ihyarev to Jechila-Jengbar is 62.5%.

**Table 2: RTT of Ihyarev on Kwande Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Kwande Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	5	5	62.5
Females	4	5	62.5
Total	9	10(5)	62.5%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

From the table, it can be stated that speakers of Kwande speech group understand Ihyarev by 62.5% average. This indicates that the intelligibility level of Ihyarev to Kwande is similar to that of Ihyarev to Jechila-Jengbar. From the table, it can be noted that out of the total RTT questions set, males scored 5 (62.5%); 4 females also scored 5 points (62.5%). This makes up the total average score of 5.

**Table 3: RTT of Ihyarev on Masev Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Masev Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	6	75
Females	3	5	62.5
Total	9	11(5.5)	68.8

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table indicates that 6 males scored 6 points which is equal to 75%, and 3 females scored 5 point which is equal to 62.5%. The average score stands at 5.5 points and the average percentage calculates to 68.8%. By implication, it means the Masev respondents understand Ihyarev with an appreciable level of 68.8%, or in other words, the intelligibility level of Ihyarev to Masev is 68.8%.

**Table 4: RTT of Ihyarev on Nongov-Sankera Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Nongov-Sankera Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	5	6	75
Females	4	5	62.5
Total	9	11(5.5)	68.8

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table indicates that 5 male respondents scored 6 points which is equal to 75%, while 4 female respondents also scored 5 points (62.5%). This totals average point of 5.5, and the average percentage is equal to 68.8%. This implies that there is at least 68.8% intelligibility of Ihyarev to Nongov-Sankera.

**Batch 1 B (i), (ii), (iii) & (iv): Reversed RTT from Jechila-Jengbar, Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera on Ihyarev**

This section is a presentation of the reversed RTT of the above mentioned speech groups on Ihyarev. Similar to the previous presentation of the RTT of Ihyarev on the other speech groups, this section also presents each of the speech groups versus Ihyarev. This is as shown below.

**Table 5: RTT of Jechila-Jengbar on Ihyarev Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Ihyarev Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	7	87.5
Females	3	6	75
Total	9	13(6.5)	81.3%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The result in the table shows a significant level of intelligibility of Jechila-Jengbar to Ihyarev speech group. The table indicates that out of the 8 questions set for the RTT, males scored 7 (87.5%) and females scored 6 (75%). The average score records at least 6.5, producing the average percentage of 81.3%. This average percentage figure implies that there is high appreciable intelligibility of Jechila-Jengbar to Ihyarev.

**Table 6: RTT of Kwande on Ihyarev Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Ihyarev Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	6	75
Females	3	6	75
Total	9	12(6)	75%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The result from the table shows that 6 males scored 6 points (75%) and 3 females also scored 6 (75%). This means the average score stands at 6 while the average percentage stands at 75%. This figure implies that there is significant intelligibility level of Kwande to Ihyarev.

**Table 7: RTT of Masev on Ihyarev Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Ihyarev Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
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Males	6	7	87.5
Females	3	6	75
Total	9	13(6.5)	81.3%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table shows that 6 male respondents scored 7 points with the percentage of 87.5%, while 3 respondents scored 6 point which is equal to 75%. This calculates to 6.5 average points scored and 81.3% total average. It implies therefore that from Masev to Ihyarev, there is 81.3% intelligibility.

**Table 8: RTT of Nongov-Sankera on Ihyarev Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Ihyarev Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	7	87.5%
Females	3	7	87.5%
Total	9	14(7)	87.5%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table indicates that there is an average percentage of 87.5%. As is seen in the table, male respondents scored 7 points as well as the female respondents, leading each category to having 87.5%. The total average score therefore stands at 7 and the total average percentage stands at 87.5% which is the intelligibility level. It means that Ihyarev speakers can understand Nongov-Sankera as much as 87.5%.

**Batch 2 A (i), (ii) & (iii): RTT from Jechila-Jengbar administered on Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera**

**Table 9: RTT of Jechila-Jengbar on Kwande Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Kwande Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	5	8	100
Females	4	8	100
Total	9	16(8)	100%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table indicates that 5 male respondents scored all the 8 points (100%) while 4 females also scored 8 points which is equal to 100%. Total average score is 8 and the average percentage is 100%. This implies that intelligibility from Jechila-Jengbar to Kwande is 100%. This implies that Kwande speakers understand Jechila-Jengbar clearly.

**Table 10: RTT of Jechila-Jengbar on Masev**

Respondents' Category	No. of Masev Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	7	87.5
Females	3	6	75
Total	9	13(6.5)	81.3%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table shows that 6 male respondents scored 87.5 points, while 3 respondents scored 6 points with 75%. The average score thus stands at 6.5. The average percentage calculates to 81.3%, indicating the intelligibility level from Jechila-Jengbar to Masev.

**Table 11: RTT of Jechila-Jengbar on Nongov-Sankera**

Respondents' Category	No. of Nongov-Sankera Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	5	8	100
Females	4	7	87.5
Total	9	15(7.5)	93.8%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table shows a high level of intelligibility of 93.8%. From the result in the table, it can be observed that all the male respondents scored all the 8 points (100%), while females scored 7 points (87.5%) giving a total average score of 7.5 and a total average percentage of 93.8%. It can be said thus that from Jechila-Jengbar to Nongov-Sankera, there is 93.8% intelligibility.

**Batch 2 B (i), (ii) & (iii): RTT from Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera administered on Jechila-Jengbar**

**Table 12: RTT of Kwande on Jechila-Jengbar Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Jechila-Jengbar Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	8	100
Females	3	7	87.5
Total	9	15(7.5)	93.8%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table shows that 6 male respondents scored all the 8 points which is 100%, while 3 females scored 7 points (87.5%). The average score is 7.5 and the average percentage stands at 93.8%. This implies that from Kwnade to Jechila-Jengbar, there is 93.8% intelligibility.

**Table 13: RTT of Masev on Jechila-Jengbar Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Jechila-Jengbar Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	6	75
Females	3	6	75
Total	9	12(6)	75%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

From the table it can be deduced that 6 males scored 6 points (75%) and 3 females 6(75%) which totals to 6 points average score. The total average percentage calculates to 75%. This indicates that both the males and the female speakers of Jechila-Jengbar understand Masev on the same level.

**Table 14: RTT of Nongov-Sankera on Jechila-Jengbar**

Respondents' Category	No. of Jechila-Jengbar Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	7	87.5
Females	3	7	87.5
Total	9	14(7)	87.5%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

In the table, it can be observed that 6 males scored 7 points the same way 3 females also scored 7. This yields the average score of 7 and a total average of 87.5%. This also implies that Jechila-

Jengbar speakers can understand Sankera to a considerable level of 87.5%; that is, there is 87.5% level of intelligibility of Sankera to Jechila-Jengbar.

**Batch 3 A (i) & (ii): RTT from Kwande administered on Masev, Nongov-Sankera Respondents**

**Table 15: RTT of Kwande on Masev Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Masev Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	7	87.5
Females	3	6	75
Total	9	13(6.5)	81.3

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table shows that 6 male respondents scored 7 points with 87.5%, while 3 females scored 6 points which is equal to 75%. The total average score thus stands at 7.5 and the total average percentage is 81.5%. It means that there is an intelligibility level of 81.3% from Kwande to Masev.

**Table 16: RTT of Kwande on Nongov-Sankera Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Nongov-Sankera Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	5	7	87.5
Females	4	7	87.5
Total	9	14(7)	87.5%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table shows that 5 male respondents scored 7 points as well as 4 females scored 7 points. This calculates to a total average score of 7 and the total average percentage of 87.5% as each of the categories score 87.5%. It means that from Kwande to Nongov-Sankera, there is an intelligibility level of at least 87.5%.

**Batch 3 B (i) & (ii): RTT from Masev, Nongov-Sankera administered on Kwande**

**Table 17: RTT of Masev on Kwande Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Kwande Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	5	6	75
Females	4	6	75
Total	9	12(6)	75%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table shows a total average of 75%. This means that there is 75% intelligibility from Masev to Kwande. In the table, it is evident that 5 males scored 6 points, and similarly, 4 females scored 6 points. This calculates to a total average score of 6. It means Kwande speakers can understand Masev up to 75%.

**Table 18: RTT of Nongov-Sankera on Kwande Respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Kwande Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	5	7	87.5
Females	4	7	87.5
Total	9	14(7)	87.5%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

It can be observed from the table that a total average of 87.5% is the level of intelligibility of Nongov-Sankera to Kwande. As the table indicates, 5 males scored 7 points the same way 4 female respondents scored 7, which yields a total average score of 7 as well. This means that Kwande speakers understand Nongov-Sankera up to 87.5%.

**Batch 4A: RTT from Masev administered to Nongov-Sankera**

**Table 19: RTT of Masev on Nongov-Sankera respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Nongov-Sankera Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	5	6	75
Females	4	6	75
Total	9	12(6)	75%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table has 5 male respondents who scored 6 point which is 75% and 4 females who also scored 6 points (75%). The total average score is 6, while the total average percentage is 75%. This can be interpreted as Nongov-Sankera respondent having 75% understanding of Masev.

**Batch 4B: RTT from Nongov-Sankera administered on Masev**

**Table 20: RTT of Nongov-Sankera on Masev respondents**

Respondents' Category	No. of Masev Respondents	Respondents' Av. Scores	Average Percentage
Males	6	7	87.5
Females	3	6	75
Total	9	13(6.5)	81.3%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The table also indicates a total average of 81.3% intelligibility. It shows that males scored 7 points which is 87.5% and females scored 6 points which makes 75%. The average score is 6.5. By this, it can be explained that there is considerable degree of intelligibility of Sankera by the Masev speakers. The summary of the RTT result is as shown below:

**Batch 1A: RTT from Ihyarev to Jechila-Jengbar, Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera**

- A(i): Ihyarev – Jechila-Jengbar = 62.5%
- A(ii): Ihyarev – Kwande = 62.5%
- A(iii): Ihyarev – Masev = 68.8%
- A(iv): Ihyarev – Nongov-Sankera = 68.8%

**Batch 2 A: RTT from Jechila-Jengba to Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera**

- A(i): Jechilar-Jengbar – Kwande = 100%
- A(ii): Jechila-Jengbar – Masev = 81.3%
- A(iii): Jechila-Jengba–Nongov-Sankera= 93.8%

**Batch 3 A: RTT from Kwande to Masev, Nongov-Sankera;**

- A(i): Kwande – Masev = 81.3%
- A(ii): Kwande – Sankera = 87.5%

**1B: Reversed RTT from Jechila-Jengba, Kwande, Masev, Nongov, and Sankera to Ihyarev**

- B(i): Jechila-Jengba – Ihyarev = 81.3%
- B(ii): Kwande – Ihyarev = 75%
- B(iii): Masev – Ihyarev = 81.3%
- B(iv): Nongov-Sankera – Ihyarev = 87.5%

**2B: Reversed RTT from Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera to Jechila-Jengbar**

- B(i): Kwande – Jechila-Jengbar = 93.8%
- B(ii): Masev – Jechila-Jengbar = 75%
- B(iii):Nongov-Sankera–Jechila-Jengbar = 87.5%

**3B: Reversed RTT from Masev, Nongov-Sankera to Kwande**

- B(i): Masev – Kwande = 75%
- B(ii): Sankera – Kwande = 87.5%

**Batch 4 A: RTT from Masev to Nongov-Sankera;**

A: Masev – Sankera = 75%

**4 B: Reversed RTT from Nongov-Sankera to Masev**

B: Sankera – Masev = 81.3%

The above analogy can be further summarised by collecting the speech groups in pairs. That is, each of the corresponding numbers in each of the batches, A (i) & B (i)), for instance, is put together and divided by two to get the mean percentage. This is as shown below:

Batch 1

- (i) Ihyarev versus Jechila-Jengbar = 71.9%
- (ii) Ihyarev versus Kwande = 68.8%
- (iii) Ihyarev versus Masev = 75.1%
- (v) Ihyarev versus Nongov-Sankera = 78%

Batch 2

- i. Jechila-Jengbar versus Kwande = 96.9%
- ii. Jechila-Jengba versus Masev = 78.2%
- iv. Jechila-Jengba versus Nongov-Sankera = 90.7%

Batch 3

- i. Kwande versus Masev = 78.2%
- ii. Kwande versus Nongov-Sankera = 87.5%

Batch 4

- i. Masev versus Nongov-Sankera = 78.2%

The above can be represented on a matrix table as seen below:

**Table 21: Intelligibility percentage matrix for Ihyarev, Jechila-Jengbar, Kwande, Masev, Nongov-Sankera**

Ihyarev				
71.9	Jechila-Jengbar			
68.8	96.9	Kwande		
75.1	78.2	78.2	Masev	
78.2	90.7	87.5	78.2	Nongov-Sankera

The above result can be explained using the basic assumption of the theory proposed for the study, which is the Dialect Continuum theory. As explained in the section on theoretical framework, the theory supposes that geographically closer language varieties differ slightly and are more mutually intelligible than the ones far apart which have less mutual intelligibility (Khalid, 2015). According to the theory, “the further we get from our starting point, the larger the differences will become... the greater the chance that the dialects on the outer edges of the geographical area may not be mutually intelligible [as the ones near each other]” (Heeringa and Nerbonne, 2001:4). These thesis statements actually justify the result above. Moving along the geographical spread of these dialects, it can be observed that the ones closer to each other have more intelligibility levels than the ones at far ends.

First and foremost, Jechila-Jengbar and Kwande are more mutually intelligible (with 96.9%) than others. Kwande is spoken immediate eastward of Jechila-Jengbar; on the north and north-east is Nongov-Sankera (with 90.7%). On immediate westward of Jechila-Jengbar is spoken Masev (with 78.2%). Getting further east is spoken Ihyarev (with 71.9%). It can be observed that because of the distance along the continuum from Ihyarev to Kwande, there is less intelligibility between the two as they have 68.8%. kwande and Nongov-Sankera have 87.5% because of close geographical boundary. Ihyarev shares boundary with Masev and closer to Nongov-Sankera; as such, it has 75% and 78.2% with the two respectively. Indeed, when

travelling along the continuum of these dialects, the farther movement the less intelligible they become from the point of departure. However, no much difference is perceived.

### **Discussion of findings**

The findings of the paper reveal that there is high mutual intelligibility among speakers of the dialects of the Tiv language. This agrees with Yina's (2011) assertion that the little differences that exist in the language do not hinder mutual intelligibility. In line with the first objective which was set to examine the level of intelligibility of the dialects of the Tiv language, through the RTT, the paper discovered that the intelligibility level among neighbouring dialects is higher compared to the ones at adjacent ends of the line of movement (continuum). In effect, more intelligibility is found between Kwande and Jechila-Jengbar (with 96.6%), and the less intelligibility is between Kwande and Ihyarev (with 68.8%). Ihyarev and Jechila-Jengbar have 71.9%; Ihyarev and Masev have 75.1%; Ihyarev and Nongov-Sankera have 78.2%; Jechila-Jengbar and Masev have 78.2%; Jechila-Jengbar and Nongov-Sankera have 90.7%; Kwande and Masev have 78.2%; Kwande and Nongov-Sankera have 87.5%; Masev and Nongov-Sankera have 78.2%.

The paper also discovered in line with the second objective which set to investigate the particular instances that constitute lack of full understanding among speakers of the dialects that only few words pose different meanings to hamper a hundred percent intelligibility among the dialects. Some of these words include: nickname – *mbakwar* (in Ihyarev and Nongov-Sankera), *beer-ti* (in Jechila-Jengbar) *iti-i-kwaor* (in Kwande and Masev); vomit (noun) – *sorugh* (in Ihyarev), *isho* (in the other dialects); elbow – *kwende* (in Ihyarev and Masev), *iniu-we* (in Jechila-Jengbar and Nongov-Sankera), *iniu-kwende* (in kwande); ladder – *jande* (in Ihyarev, Jechila-Jengbar and Nongov-Sankera), *agôr* (in Kwande), *agelagba* (in Masev) (refer to the appendix I).

It can be noted that some of these words (not that they are not found across the dialects) have different referents, that is, different semantic interpretations among speakers of these dialects. For instance, *kwende* is referred to as a shoulder in Jechila-Jengbar and Nongov-Sankera, *jande* in Masev refers to a swampy or marshy area only, while others understand its meaning as both ladder and swampy or marshy area. Thus, when a speaker from another dialect expresses themselves, speakers from the other dialects who do not use similar terms, lack full understanding of the word. However, the context of use allows the speakers to understand each other since majority of the words and expressions are similar or have the same semantic interpretation.

### **Conclusion/ Recommendations**

The aim of the paper was to test the intelligibility of the different dialects among native speakers of the Tiv language. In view of this, the paper used the RTT method for intelligibility test and the dialect continuum theory for its analysis. By this, it assessed the dialects in pairs. Each of the pairs was done by testing one against the other and reversing same against the first. The outcome thus showed that the least intelligibility is between Ihyarev and Kwnade (68.8%), which means they are farther from each other than they are from others. Conversely, the highest intelligibility level is between Jechila-Jengbar and Kwande (96.9%). By implication, as is observed above, the farther movement along the continuum of these dialects, the less intelligible they become from the point of departure. The paper therefore recommends that, since there has not been much work on the dialects of the language, the Tiv language scholars should engage in serious studies in this area in order to develop the dialects for the purpose of standardization, learning and documentation of the language for posterity. It is only when these dialects are developed that a standard form can be chosen, for this is a sure way for suggesting a standard variety.

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