

## On the Interface of the Phonemes and the Orthography of KāNà

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**Abstract :** This paper focuses on the interface between the phonemes and the orthography of Kānà, an endangered language spoken in Khānà and Tàì Local Government Areas of Rivers State of Nigeria. Kānà is one of the four languages (others being Gòkànà, Bāān Ogóì and Èlémé) of Ogonoid (i.e. Ogoni group of languages) located in the Cross River branch of Benue-Congo phylum. A good number of scholars, including Ikoro (1996) and Vobnu (2001) agree on the phonemes inventory of the language but differ on the choice of the letters of the orthography. Whereas many scholars on the language accept that the language is alphabetic and satisfactory with respect to the use of Latin (English) alphabetic orthography with emphasis on phoneme-grapheme relation, some other scholars tend to uphold that the complex consonants in the phonemic chart should be treated as a consonant cluster in the alphabet. This paper argues that consonant clusters occur at syntactic (and morphological) levels with regard to certain items in order to produce desired pronunciations and spellings. Each consonant in a cluster is identical and can be used with other letters to produce a different word. The data was obtained from scholarly writings on the language, by interviews and our intuition as a native speaker of the language. It is believed that this study will trigger further research into the orthography of Kānà and other tonal languages, such as Igbo and Yoruba having similar features in order to reanalyze the number of letters in the alphabets of those languages.

**Keywords :** KANA, phonemes, orthography, letters

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