**Yoruba Dialects and the Teaching of French Language in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo**

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**Abstract**

This paper investigated on the effects of some Yoruba dialects on acquisition and production of French language in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo. Questionnaire was used for the collection of data with the use of percentage method for data analysis. Interview method was also employed with which the researchers conversed with the students on ground to test as well detecting difficulties in their sound production. It revealed students’ dialects and the structures of sounds that are rivals with the closely similar ones to those of French. It demonstrated French sounds that are wrongly produced by the students. It was recommended that if NCE French students would be competent in their discipline, resourceful to their pupils in future and good representatives of their college, they should be ready to differentiate between those problem-posed sounds in their dialects and French sounds. Lecturers should patiently look for words in Yoruba dialects or other dialects spoken around which could serve the purpose and make the French sounds well pronounced by the learners. In one word, NCCE would achieve her French educational objectives in the College and elsewhere since this paper would be useful to other students, lecturers, researchers and other stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Yoruba dialects, Teaching, French language, Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, and NCCE.

**Introduction**

French language like other languages such as English and Arabic remains an international language and a means of communication globally. Without any contention, French is one of the accepted foreign languages (Mbuko, 2003,
Adeniji, 2007). Mbuko stresses further that it is a diplomatic language. It also plays a distinguishable role in establishing an international relationship among countries of the world Nigeria inclusive.

Nigerian geographical situation calls for such an international cooperation with France through the language. Our francophone neighboring countries remain intimates only if Nigerians could speak French language which is their official language. Therefore, it is obligatory that Nigerians speak the said language. Though English is a national heritage for the country which is used in all areas. Nigeria also has Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba which are referred to as the country’s three main languages..

According to Obanya 1982, Nigeria language situation is thus one in which a multiplicity of language is used by its native speakers for most of their everyday communicating activities. Communication among members of the same ethnic or language has a multiplicity of geographical dialects. Notwithstanding, the government continues to encourage the teaching and learning of French language in Nigerian institutions.

This paper works on dialects in Yoruba language. It investigates how they affect learning and teaching of French language especially in the class of new students through interference of certain sounds. It proposes positive tension to resolve the long-term difficulty that Yoruba dialects have been creating to influence negatively the learning and teaching of French language.

**Statement of the Problem**

Nigerian learners of French language especially in Colleges of education are part of the programs scheduled by the NCCE, aiming to produce quality teachers. The principal objective of learning French is to communicate effectively with the language. And at the end they become competent French teachers to build pupils in basic 1-9 of the primaries 4, 5, 6 to JSS three. The NCCE (2012: 37) speculates that the study of French language programs at the NCE is expected to:

- Former des professeurs de français compétents pour les niveaux JSS (Basic 1-9).
- Make competent French teachers for JSS classes (Basic 1-9) (our translation).

The French language programs would facilitate easy and fluent communication and intercomprehension with their francophone neighbors within and outside. The Yoruba students speakers from Oyo, Ibadan, Ogbomoso and Saki influence French language with their dialects.

This makes the learning difficult since wrong production of sounds does not allow smooth running of the lessons and still spoils the correct pronunciation of French language in the class.
In Mustapha, Oyebamiji (OLOOTU), Oyerinde, Oyedemi et al (2013), it is noted that Yoruba phoneme sounds include consonants and vowels. The consonant sounds with respective orthographies are as follows:

/b d f g gb h j k l m kp r s f t w j/

Also Yoruba vowel sounds are the following with their respective orthographies:

/i e a ɔ o ɨ u ɛ ə o ʊ ʊ/.

Johnson Samuel (1973) also lists the Yoruba alphabet which are a b d e ɛ f g gb h i j k l m n o p q r s t u w y. He subgroups alphabet into vowels and consonants. Standard Yoruba has 18 consonants (b, t, d, k, g, kp, gb, j, m, n, f, s, š, l, r, y, w, h), seven oral vowels (i, e, ɛ, a, ɔ, o, u) five underlying nasal vowels (ɨ, ɨ̃, ɔ, ɔ̃, ũ), three level tones (high, mid, and low) and two contour tones (low-rising, and high-falling) (Akinlabi 2004; Adeniyi 2009). Johnson (1973) says the recognized principal vowels are a i e o u and are pronounced after the Italian method (ah, aye, ee, o, oo) then Yoruba has ɛ and ɔ. To him, a complete representation of the vowels in Yoruba is as follows: - a, e, ɛ, i, o, ɔ, u which in Italian method (pronounced ah aye, eh, ee, oh, aw, oo) which are pronounced in French as a, é, è, i, eau, ô, ou. Nasalization is also used in Yoruba. In the Standard Alphabet, n as nasal sign may be used for example, where it precedes a consonant as nje, ndao, nko and when it closes a word as Awon, Basorun, Ibadan, Iseyin, iyen since n at the end of a word in Yoruba is purely nasal. Likewise, French alphabets are a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z. Vowel phoneme sounds are the following: /a i e θ ɔ o ʊ/ oral vowels /a ɛ ɔ ɛ/ (nasal vowels) with their orthographies as follows: a, i, e, ɔ, au, eau, o, u, ou où, en em am, ain in im aim ein, on om, un um. That is to say ‘comma’ at the end of orthography or group of listed orthography(s) above signifies number of such orthography a word consists to pronounce the listed phonemes. For instance, word that has these orthographies o ɔ, au, eau, aux, ot, os is to be pronounced as /o/ in French, beau /bo/, mot /mo/ faux/fo/. Consonant sounds are: /p b m f v t d n k g s z l ŵ ʃ ɲ y R/ with the following respective orthographies: p, b, m, f, v, t, d, n, q ca k, g, ce st sc ss, z, l, g+e g+i, ch, gn, ing, r. For instance, you see letter ‘p’ it is pronounced as /p/ sound /k/ is pronounced when word has letter(s) q, ca, k, in quoi /kwa/, cas /ka/, kilo /kilo/. Most lecturers of French language in Nigerian colleges of education usually seem to forget that their students have acquired competence in their local dialects particularly their mother tongue before they come to learn foreign languages. This tends to affect learning of French.

Letter and sound such as ‘gb’/gb/ does not exist in French. Letter ‘p’ exists in both Yoruba and French. Its pronunciation is not the same in either. The letter ‘p’ is sound /kp/ in Yoruba in words such as òpópó /òkpókpó/ (street), pápá /kpákpá/ (bush) unlike
in French, letter ‘p’ is sound /p/ in words like papaye /papaj/ (pawpaw), père /pɛR/ (father). The same letter ‘p’ in Yoruba and French does not have the same pronunciation and this creates problem in learning French since Yoruba is first acquired by the students.

Students speaking Oyo, Ibadan dialects of Yoruba language pronounce sound /s/ for /ʃ/ though both sounds exist in Standard Yoruba orthography but due to the dialect of these indigenes, there is misuse of sounds. For instance, in Yoruba general orthography, letter in words like Ŝola is pronounced /ʃ/ but Oyo indigene would say /sola/ (Akinlabi 2004; Adeniyi 2009, Adeniyi and Bamigbade (2017).

Whereas, in French, these two sounds exist with several letters that indicate what to produce. Features that produce sound /s/ are many. Letters such as ‘c’ in ‘ce’ /sɔ/ , ‘s’ in serpent /seRpã/, ‘sc’ in science /sjɔs/, ‘t’ in attention /atãsjɔ/, ‘ss’ in passer /pase/. Sounds /v/ and /z/ do not exist at all in Yoruba. These also pose problem in the learning of French. Some students pronounce ‘f’ for /v/ in words like ville /vij/ village /vilãʒ/. They replace sound ‘v’ for ‘f’ by pronouncing fille /fij/ filadj/ and ‘s’ for /z/ in words maison /meʒɔ/, zéro /zero/ these words are produced /mesɔ/ /sero/.

Sound /ĩ/ in Yoruba has letters ‘in’ in words like opin (end), ofin (law) instead French has sound / e/ in letters ‘in’ ‘ain’ ‘aim’ ‘ein’. These features pose problem in the learning of French. Words such as fin /fe/, vin /ve/, pain /pe/, fain /fe/, teint /te/ are wrongly pronounced especially ‘fin’ and ‘vin’ are equally pronounced as /fĩ/ by these students. Sound /ä/ in Yoruba words such as eran (meat), iyan (pounded yam) has other letters apart from this ‘an’ in French. Many letters are pronounced /ä/ as underlined in the following words français /fRãs/ , gant /gã/, temps /tã/, jambe /ʒãb/, dent /dã/.

Therefore, this paper investigates the effects of new Yoruba students’ dialects on French language education especially in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo.

**Objectives of the Study**

This work investigates new students Yoruba indigenes in the department of French. It identifies different dialects they speak. It examines phonemes in Yoruba language with those in French language. It also compares both languages to detect where in particular Yoruba dialects affect teaching and learning of French language. This will be useful for effective teaching of the subject for the development of Nigeria education.

**Scope of the Study**

The findings took care of the new French students speakers of some Yoruba dialects especially Oyo, Ibadan, Ogbomoso and Saki in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo.
Methodology
The data for analysis in this study consists of certain sounds and their production which were noticed among new NCE French students of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo. Design of data collection was by questionnaire and interview method in this research were administered to 120 NCE I & II students, Yoruba indigenes, in the Department of French and 100 copies were returned.

The researchers detected wrong pronunciation of certain French sounds in some words and expressions among the same set of students through interview method. They were randomly collected by stratified sampling technique since they are not all from the area this study covered and, again, it took care of beginners where the interference was much more noticed. The items investigated were based on influence of some Yoruba dialects on certain French sounds in their use. Such French sounds in some words were grouped to vowel and consonant. The production of those sounds was also examined. The paper paid attention to the pronunciation of different words having those problem-posed sounds to detect their effects on French language.

Questionnaire is divided into two; sections A and B. section A consists of the Bio-Data of the respondents. Section B contains fifteen (15) items given to the respondents that were developed on the basis of the Nigeria Certificate in Education Minimum Standards for Languages (French) along with their objectives. These question items were subjected to content, findings, comments, suggestions and modifications obtained from the respondents. The response of each respondent to question is Yes/No to help respondent provides response to a statement of his/her choice.

Then, the students were interviewed to detect the effect of their dialect on the learning of French as they produce some words in French. This is an intelligent test researchers designed to measure respondents’ general potential to solve problems. The interview was carried out face to face and was analyzed through survey method and calculated by the response rate.

Research Questions
The following research questions were formulated to guide the conduct of the study:
1. Do new French students originate from Yoruba community?
2. Do new students find some French sounds (vowel and consonant) difficult to produce?
3. Do students’ dialects affect the production of French sounds in word use?

Significant of the Study
New language needs to be articulated like the native. Busson (1998:319) says:

*L’apprenant doit s’approprier le système phonique de sa nouvelle langue et certains phonèmes différent ou*
n'existent pas dans la ou les langues qu’il maîtrise déjà. Il doit acquérir de nouvelles habitudes articulatoires (articuler comme les personnes parlant cette nouvelle langue) et doit aussi pouvoir entendre et distinguer les nouveaux sons pour pouvoir les reproduire...

This paper would be useful for French Scholars at all educational levels. In particular Colleges of education students and lecturers, other researchers inclusive. Students would realize new language has certain different phonemes apart from other languages they might have been speaking. They must acquire new sounds as the native speakers use it. They would also need to listen, hear and distinguish the new sounds in other to reproduce them correctly. Students would attend regularly lessons in Exercices de laboratoire 1 (FRE 115) and Phonétique et Phonologie (FRE 217) for better production of sounds.

Lecturer, on his part, would make his new student know that he pronounces wrong and should be led to know where the mistake lies through different methods depending on situation of the student concerned. They should come in as a guide, a leader, since they themselves had passed through the gate once. Each phoneme should be taught but emphasis should be centered on posing-problem phoneme. Both lecturer and student should as well find and pronounce two or three words that have the problem- posing phoneme in question.

The government through the college management should provide spacious language Laboratory hall, well equipped with necessary media that would necessitate better use of French language. In the absence of French language laboratory, the lecturer should make use of the available small classroom ‘French resource center’ to give learners a maximum opportunity to get the new sound. Game method with the use of words having the problem-posed phoneme could be part of learning activities in the class.

These recommendations would help to find out some applicable and effective educational tensions to resolve the problem in question with which lecturers will ameliorate the learning difficulty of the new students. It will enable NCE students use French words, sentences and expressions in a correct way. Such would make Nigerian learners of French compete well with the native speakers at any spot; being it examinations, workshop/seminar, competition or whatever.

**Definition of terms**

The Yoruba language has been classed among the unwritten African languages. The earliest attempt to reduce this language into writing was in the early forties of the last century, when the Church Missionary Society, with the immortal Rev. Henry Venn as Secretary, organized a mission to the Yoruba country under the leadership of one of
their agents, the Rev. Henry Townsend, an English Clergyman then at work at Sierra Leone and the Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther. The first African Clergyman of the C.M.S. also at work in the same place (Johnson, 1973. In The National Policy on Education (NPE) 2004 Yoruba language is among the five languages classified for use in education. It is one of the three major Nigerian languages (MLN i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) in Nigeria.

Yoruba is one of the most widely-studied members of the West Benue-Congo languages. It is spoken predominantly in southwestern Nigeria, as well as in countries such as the Republic of Benin, Togo, and Sierra Leone in Africa, and in Cuba, Brazil and many other non-African countries (Fabunmi 2013). Among its widely varied dialects are Igbomina, Ondo, Ijesha, Oke-Ogun, Ibolo, Ife, Yewa, Egba, Ijebu, Awori, Oyo, and Ibadan. The Oyo dialect was the basis of Yoruba standardisation (Fabunmi 2013), but the present-day Standard Yoruba (SY) has diverged so much from the Oyo dialect that it is now regarded as different. Essentially, SY is believed to exist mainly in writing and as a sort of lingua franca within the Yoruba speaking areas. While speaking in public domains, most Yoruba speakers aim at SY, and especially away from their dialects. As a matter of fact, dialectal interference in public domains is often considered an issue to scoff at.

French education is introduced at the Colleges of Education throughout the nation with the aims of producing graduates who should be able to pronounce correctly French sounds and their dictum. They should as well demonstrate basic skills in reading and writing in French Akande (2014).

Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo is one of Nigerian Colleges of Education. It is located in Oyo town. It was former St. Andrew’s College of Education that was later renamed by the first civilian governor, His Excellency Lam Adesina as Oyo State College of Education in 2003 and again renamed as Emmanuel Alayande College of Education by former governor Adebayo Alao-Akala in 2006, Akande (2016).

Collection of the Data:
The investigator collected 100 out of 120 copies of the questionnaire from the respondents. A total of 100 questionnaires were returned fully filled. Each participant was also interviewed by the researchers.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument
The questionnaire and interview questions were subjected to criticism by the department head of department who read through to detect some mistakes which were rectified. This process ensured the content validity of the instrument. Copies of the corrected questionnaire were administered and collected. The results of the
respondents were analyzed using frequency count and simple percentage to give reports of the findings. The response rate was calculated by the researchers.

Table 1: showing the contribution of 100 level students during 2016/2017 academic session in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>No. of New French Students in the Department of French during 2016/2017 Academic Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>100L Double Major</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>100 L Single Major</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that 4 respondents are 100 Level double major students. 96 respondents are 100 Level single major students all from the department of French in EACOED, Oyo.

Results and Discussion

Information collected was analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. The following tables present the relevant data.

Question 1. Showing the contribution of new students’ origin from Yoruba community and language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Question items</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I am Yoruba indigene.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I Speak Yoruba.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I can read Yoruba texts.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I am new French student in EACOED Oyo.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I live in Yoruba land.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On items 1 to 5, 100% of the respondents replied ‘Yes’ that they are Yoruba indigenes, speakers of Yoruba language. They can read texts written in Yoruba. They are new students of French in their Institution. They also live in Yoruba land.

Question 2. Showing the contribution of new students to the production of some French sounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Question items</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I can pronounce VILLE, VILLAGE correctly.</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>06%</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I can pronounce FIN, FAIM, VIN very well.</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I can produce WAGON correctly.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. I can produce GANT, BANC, JAMBE correctly.  

5. I can produce CHAMEAU, CHANT, CHAQUE very well.

In item 1, 06% of the respondents says they cannot pronounce the words ‘Ville’ and ‘Village’ correctly while 94% show their inability to pronounce them correctly. In item 2, none of the respondents can pronounce ‘Fin’, ‘Faim’ and ‘Vin’ very well while 100% confirm their disability to do so. In item 3, only 10% of the respondents can produce the word ‘Wagon’ whereas 90% cannot. In item 4, 50% of the respondents affirm that they can produce the words ‘Gant’, ‘Banc’ and ‘Jambe’ the rest 50% confirm they cannot. In item 5, 0% of the respondents can produce the words ‘Chameau’, ‘Chant’ and ‘Chaque’ while 100% confess they cannot.

Question 3. Showing the contribution of new students’ dialects’ influence on the learning of French.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Question items</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I have problem with the production of some French sounds</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>My dialect affects my learning of French.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I find some French words difficult to pronounce</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I cannot produce some French words at all.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I instantaneously use some sounds in my dialect for French.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In item 1, 80% of the respondents confirm their deficiency in the production of some French sounds whereas 20% of them do not agree. In item 2, 100% confess that their dialect affect their learning of French none of them can hold of lack of dialect interference on French education. In item 3, 80% of the respondents agree that they find some French words difficult to pronounce whereas 20% can still pronounce some. In item 4, 20% of the respondents agree that they cannot produce some French words at some whereas 80% of them disagree. In item 5, 20% of the respondents affirm that they instantaneously use some sounds in their dialect for those of French on the contrary, 80% of them do not.

The same French words were used during interview to detect these new students. The response rate is used to calculate the number of respondents who agreed to interviewed divided by the total number of students who made up the original sampling effort. That is:
No. of participants who agree to be interviewed
÷ Total No. of students who make up the original sampling effort.

Therefore, the response rate was calculated as follows: 100 ÷ 120 = 0.8333 N.B. The total No. must include people who refused to participate in the research.

Summary
This paper aims at identifying certain problem-posed sounds in some Yoruba dialects as they affect learning of French in EACOED, Oyo. 100 out of 120 new students in the department of French from Yoruba community were tested for the findings. Questionnaires and interview were used to detect the cause and were calculated with use of frequency count, percentage and response rate respectively. The findings demonstrated high influence of some Yoruba dialects on the learning of French among the new students.

Conclusion
The findings showed that all the respondents are Yoruba indigenes with some dialects in their community. It also demonstrated the low degree of production of some French sounds and words due to their dialects. This made the respondents confess of their inability to pronounce correctly some French words. This paper helped French lecturers realize that these new students’ shortcomings and looked for different ways to help them speak good and correct French. It also assisted in the way out to achieve NCCE objectives of putting French on the NCE education programmes. This work stood out as sample and experiment that brought out results for public use. Lecturers would take this into consideration and help their new students in their weaknesses.

Recommendations
The following recommendations are made to reduce the effect of Yoruba dialects on French education in EACOD, Oyo. Student should be made to know his wrong pronunciation and should be told or led to know where the mistake lies. Where it fails, other students in the class should be made to pronounce the particular sound. Lecturer should as well change the word though has the said sound. Lecturer should make use of media; audio-visual aids, audio aids, projector to teach their students. The latter should listen and reproduce the sound with their phones. Lecturers should give online audio assignment on the sound concerned to his students. The students themselves should come back the next period to pronounce the sounds before the class. College management should provide enough projectors, DVDs, monitors and other accessories to the department for effective teaching and learning of French.
Policy makers with Nigerian government should let the policy on French education stand by implementing all they write on paper. Graduating students should be provided job even at the school to avoid forgetfulness of the new language.

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