ERRORS AMONG YORÙBÁ LEARNERS OF FRENCH: YORÙBÁ VOWEL SOUNDS INTERFERENCE

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Abstract
In Nigeria, indigenous language known also as a Mother Tongue poses a lot of linguistic challenges to the learners of French language, most especially when it comes to the area of oral production. To Yorùbá learners of French language, one of such challenges is the proper use of French vowel sounds due to the negative impact of some Yorùbá vowels sounds. This paper thus, presents a Contrastive Analysis of French and Yorùbá vowel system with the aim of establishing points of convergence and divergence so as to provide useful information on the error committed by Nigeria Yorùbá learners of French Language in the use of French vowel sound in passing across their thought in French. The research sample therefore, consist of sixty (60) undergraduate's students, (forty-five females and fifteen males). They are all three hundred level students in Higher Institutions in the South West of Nigeria. Recording of their utterances was done through a Tape Recorder and Note Taking. The result of the investigation shows that majority of the respondents find it difficult to pronounce very well French vowel sounds /Ø/ and /œ/ due to the negative impact of Yorùbá vowel sound /ẹ/ and /e/. Based on the findings of the paper, it was recommended that Nigeria Yorùbá French learners should be well exposed to French vowel sound and whenever we discover any abnormality in the production of any French vowel sound among our learners, we should try to find out the causes through a Contrastive Analysis.
Keywords: Language, sound, Vowel sound, Linguistic interference, Contrastive analysis.

Introduction
The Yorùbá language belongs to Nigeria, a multilingual nation in Africa (Usman, 2014). Many authors have made various claims as to actual number of languages spoken in Nigeria. The figure ranges from 248 (Greenberge, 1971, Bamgbose, 2001) to (Adeniyi and Vinyor, 2011). The languages are spoken by about 500 indigenous languages a population of about two hundred and fifty million people. By implication, the Yorùbá environment is a multi-lingual environment where apart from Yorùbá language spoken as a Mother Tongue, there are other existing language including the English language, which not only play the role of a national language but also a medium of instruction from early primary education to University level (Ajani, 2015). It is also a language of governance and judiciary (Olubunmi and Olowofoyekun 2021:1). Added to these two languages (Yorùbá and English) is French language taught in schools, most especially in Secondary School and in Higher Institutions.

Since the introduction for French Language in Nigeria school curriculum which dates back to the year 1856 (Adelekan 1983) the language has been facing series of problems. One of these is the problem of linguistic interference which according to Akindele and Adegbite (1999), cited by Olubunmi and Olowofoyeku (2021:5), is ''an instance of deviation from the norm of a language in the speech of a bilingual as a result of his familiaries with more than one languages''.

This study sets out to do a comparative analysis of French and Yorùbá vowel systems so as to bring out areas of similarities and differences. It will also discuss the implications of this on the learning of French language in the Yorùbá speaking area of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study is set to find out how Adults Nigerian Yorùbá learners of French as a Foreign language approximate their Yorùbá vowels sounds that do not have equivalents in French vowels most especially the French oral vowel sounds /œ/ and sound /Ø/. The study also proffers solutions which would help learners in their mastering of those two French vowel sounds.

Significance of the Study

The study, apart from predicting the difficulties that could lead to errors in the oral preduction of Yorùbá learners of French language in their attempt to pronounce some French words due to the negative impact of Yorùbá vowel sounds /œ/ and /Ø/ on French vowels system, this study will also form a basic reference material for the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language.

Review of Related Literature
The concept of Error and Error Analysis in the Second Language class

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2015: 519), error is a mistake that causes problems or affect the result of a situation. To Crystal (1997: 139), error is a term used in psycholinguistics to refer to mistake in a spontaneous speaking or writing attributable to a malfunctioning of the neuromuscular command from the brain. While Gbaguidi (2008: 11), sees error in a language class as confusion, illusion and what is oppose to the reality and certainty and this always lead to a grammatically phonological error.

Types of language error

According to Corler (1967), language errors are classified into two types namely: (a) A systematic errors which are errors associated with a second language (target language)
(b) Unsystematic errors which are errors which occur in L1, that is one Native language and they are referred to as mistakes.

Error in a second language class

According to Soetan (2015: 97), in mastery on second language, there is no way errors could be avoided totally on the part of the Learners. Furthermore, Debyser (1993), opines that in a second language class (target language), learners in their attempt to communicate, make some grammatical or pronunciation errors and based on Debyser (1997: 139), in a second language class, errors are assumed to indicate a systematic way the level of competence achieved by a learner and they are contrasted with mistakes which are performance limitation that a learner would be able to correct.
Furthermore, on error in a second language class, Corder (1967: 1980), opines that in a second language class, error is a Natural phenomenon which cannot be avoided.

Error Analysis in a second language class.

Based on Crystal (opcit), error analysis is a technique for identifying, classifying and systematical interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a second language using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics.

Linguistic Interference

Linguistic interference, according Kwofie (1995:1) has been a topic of academic discussion among scholars and based on Weinreich (1996:1) it implies;

>...the re-arrangement of the patterns that result from the introduction of elements into
the more highly structured domains of language, such as the bulk of the phonemic
system, a large part of the morphology and syntax and some areas of the vocabulary.

Akindele and Adegbitȩ (1999) cited Olubunmi and Olowofoyekun (2021:5), observed that linguistic interference is the instance of deviation from the norm of a language in the speech of a bilingual as a result of his familiarity with more than one languages.

Furthermore, according to Haugen (1956:12). ''In practice interference takes many forms, described in the literature as a ''Foreign accent'' ''Language mixtures'', Unidiomatic Expressions'' ''Loanwords'' ''Sematic borrowing'' etc.

Based on Kwofie (1995:3) linguistic interference occurs at the level of oral production, that is wrong pronunciation of foreign language words due to the influence of native language or at the level of written expressions (orthography interference). This happens essentially due to negative impact of already acquired Foreign Language on the new one. An example is the case of English orthography on French orthography among learners of French language in Nigeria.

In addition, from Olubunmi and Olowofoyeku (2021:1), for the second language learner, the actual direction of a linguistic interference will be from the mother tongue to the second language. Hence there is need for more extension of the effects of the learners' mother tongue on their foreign language.

French and Yoruba Systems
French Vowel Systems
The word vowel in English language is known in French language as "La voyelle" and based on Sunmonu (2005: 30), Charilac and Anne (2006: 29-30), and Adeleke (2013), in French language vowel sound are classified into three categories namely;

(A) Oral vowel made up 12 vowel sounds
/a/ as in Table /tabL/ = Table
/ɑ̧/ as in mama /mɑ̧mɑ̧/ = mother
/e/ as in marhé /maRje/ = market
/ɛ/ as in fête /Fɛt/ = Festival
/l/ as in lit /Li/ = Bed
/o/ as in mot /mo/ = word
/ɔ/ as in mort /MɔR/ = dead
/Ø/ as in pen /PØ/ = little
/ə/ as in le /lə/ = the
/u/ as in Route /Rut/ = Road
/y/ as in tu /ty/ = you

(B) The Nasal vowel made up of 4 vowel sounds namely;
/ă/ as in blame /blă/ = White
/Ě/ as in pain /PĚ/ = bread
/ œ̌ /as in emprunt / œ̌pRɔn/ = borrow
/ɔ/ as in pont /pɔ/ = bridge

(C) The semi vowel semi consonne made up of 3 sounds namely;
/j/ as in fille /fij/ = girl
/w/ as in oui /wi/ = yes
/y/ as in huit /yi/ = eight

Theoretical Framework
Different theories of second language Acquisition (SLA) exist to tackle the linguistic problem associating with the acquisition of second language. This study is anchored on four theories namely Newmark and Reibel (1968) ignorance hypothesis that states that when adult learner want to say what he does not know how to say in L2, he uses whatever means he has at his disposal in L1 and then lead to interference theory that opines that if a learner is called upon to produce some L2 form which he has not learnt, he will tend to produce an erroneous form having its origin in his L1, the critical period hypothesis cited by Soetan (2013: 305), opines that there is a critical period when it becomes very hard to acquire a second language and Krashan (1985) Input hypothesis that opines that only comprehensive input will lead to the acquisition of a second language.

Methodology
Collection of Data
        Data were collected from sampled Yoruba learners of French language in three higher institutions (Universities) all located in Yoruba land in Nigeria namely Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode Ogun State and Osun State University, Ikare campus Osun State. The collection of data was done through direct observation of the utterances of the speakers who happened to be undergraduates.

        In this write up, not all data collected are used rather, samples are taken as evidence of linguistic interference in the area of a mixed up between some Yoruba vowel systems and French vowel systems.

Presentation of Data
In the table below we highlight some of the data collected for the study.
Table 1.

S/N	Graphic Production	Oral production realized from respondents	Correct expected oral production
1.	Le feu est devant vous	[ləfeɛdəvăvu]	[ləføɛdəvăvu]
2.	J'aime le sac bleu	[3Ɛləsakblø]	[3ƐMiəsakblø]
3.	Nous avons peu avec nous	[nusăvɔˇpevɛknu]	[nuzɖvɔˇpøɖvɛknu]
4.	J'ai deux stylos	[3Ɛdestilo]	[3Ɛdøstilo]
5.	Il veut me voir	[iLveməvwɖ]	[iLvøməvwɖ]
6.	Je peux vous aider ?	[3əpevuzade]	[3əpøvuzade]
7.	Le vieux est ou ?	[ləvieɛu]	[ləviøɛtu]
8.	Je vais chez eux	[3əvɛʃee]	[3əvɛʃeø]
9.	Regardez mes cheveux	[RəgaRdmɛʃəve]	[RəgaRdmɛʃəvø]
10.	Les ocuf sont ici	[Lɛəfʃɔˇtisi]	[Lɛzøɔˇtisi]
11.	Les bœufs sont où ?	[lɛbəfʃɔˇu]	[Lɛbøʃɔˇtu]
12.	Le monsieur est parti	[ləməsjeɛpɖeti]	[ləməʃjøɛpaRti]
13.	C'est ici le meuble	[Sɛticiləməblə]	[Sɛtisiləmøebl]
14.	Je suis seul	[3əsyisəl]	[3əsyisoəl]
15.	Il a le cœur dur	[llaləkƐRdu]	[llaləkoeRdyR]
16.	J'aime ce fleur	[3ƐmsəflƐR]	[3ƐmsəfloeR]
17.	Voici ma sœur	[vwasi ma ser]	[vwasi ma sœr]
18.	J'ai peur de lui	JɛPɛRdəlyi	JɛPɛRdəlyi
19.	Elle a un coer dur	ɛlaœKER dyR	ɛlaœ KœR dyR
20.	C'est l'heur de partir	SE LER də paRti	SE LœR də paRti
21.	La femme est une aveugle	La fam e yn avegl	La fam ɛt yn avœgl
22.	Nous avons l'honneur de vous inviter	nusavɔLɔnɛRdəvusɛvite	nuzavɔLɔnœRdəvuzɛvite
23.	Je vous presente un grand lutteur de notre classe	JəvupResatœgRalutɛRdənɔtR kLas	JəvupresentœgRalutœRdənɔtR kLas

Data Analysis/ Discussion

From the analysis of data obtained from the respondents which are clearly stated in table 1 above, the type of inappropriateness (errors) discovered in the oral production of the respondents taken into their intention has to do with the absence of two (2) French vowel sounds /Ø/ and French vowel sound /œ/ which are leaking in Yorùbá vowel system. Due to the absence of these two sounds in Yorùbá language which is their native language (NL), whenever these two sounds appear in French words, they tend to replace them with another Yorùbá vowel sound namely; Yorùbá Oral vowel sound /e/ known in French language "la voyelle orale /e/" for French oral vowel /Ø/ and Yorùbá oral vowel sound /ẹ/ known in French as la voyelle orale /ɛ/ for French oral voyelle sound /œ/. In the first expression: le feu est derant vous (The fire is at your front), the French word feu (fire) was realized as /Fe/ instead of the correct production /FØ/. In the second expression: J'aime le sac bleu (I like the blue bag), the French word bleu (blue) was realized as /ble/ instead of the correct production /blØ/. In the third expression: Nous avons peu avec nous (We have a little with us), the French word peu (little) was realized as /Pe/ instead of the correct production /PØ/. In the fourth expression: J'aime les deux stylo (I like the two biros), the French word deux (two) was realized as /de/ instead of the correct production /dØ/. In the fifth expression: il veut me voir (He wants to see me), the french word veut (wants) was realized as /ve/ instead of the correct production /vØ/.

Furthermore, in the sixth expression: Je peux vois aider (can I help you), the French word peux (can) was realized as /pe/ instead of the correct production /pØ/. In the seventh expression: le vleux est où? (Where is the elderly man?), the French word vleux (elderly man) was realized as /vle/ instead of the appropriate production /vlØ/. Similarly, in the eight expression: Je vais chez eux (I am going to them), the French word eux (them) was realized as /e/ instead of the appropriate production /Ø/. In the expression number nine: Regardez mes cheveux (look at my hairs), the French word cheveux (hairs) was realized as /ʃeve/ instead of the appropriate production /ʃəvØ/. In expression number ten: ocufs sont ici (The eggs are here), the French word ocufs (eggs) is realized as /ef/ instead of the correct production /Ø/. In addition, in the expression number eleven: les boeufs sont où? (The cows are where?), the French word boeufs (cows) is realized as /bɛf/ instead of the correct production /bØ/. In the expression number twelve: le monsieur est parti (the man has gone), the French word monsieur (man or mister) was realized as /məsiɛR/ instead of the correct production /məsiØR/. In expression number fourteen: Je suis seul (I am alone), the French word seul was realized as /sɛL/ instead of a correct production /SØL/. In expression number fifteen: Il a le Coeur dur (He has a strong mind), the French word Coeur (mind) was realized as /KɛR/ instead of a correct production /KoeR/. In expression number sixteen: J'aime ce Fleur (I like this flower), the french word fleur (flower) was was realized as /FLɛR/ instead of the correct production /FloeR/.

Furthermore, in expression number seventeen: voici ma soeur (This is my sister), the French word soeur (sister) was realized as /SɛR/ instead of the correct production /soeR/. In expression number eighteen: J'ai peur de lui I am afraid of him), the French expression peur (afraid) was realized as /PɛR/ instead of the correct production /poeR/. In the expression number Nineteen: Elle a un Coeur dur (she has a strong mind), the French word Coeur (mind) was realized as /KER/ instead of the correct production /KœR/. In the expression number twenty: c'est L'heur de partir (It is a time to go), the French word L'heur (hour) was realized as /HɛR/ instead of a correct production /œR/. In expression number twenty one: La femme est une aveugle (she is a blind woman), the French word aveugle (blindness) was realized as /avɛgl/ instead of the correct production /avœgl/. In the expression number twenty two: Nous avons L'honneur de vous inviter (we have the honour to invite you), the French word honeur (honour) was realized as /hɔnɛR/ instead of the correct production /hɔnœR/. In the expression number twenty three: Je vous presentee un grand lutteur de notre class (I am presenting to you a great fighter of our class), the French word lutteur (fighter) was realized as /lytɛR/ instead of /lytœR/ and finally, in the expression number twenty four: le chasseur est au foret (The hunter is in the forest), the French word chasseur (hunter) was realized as /ʃasɛR/ instead of the correct production /ʃasœR/.

Recommendations

According to Girard (2019:3), ''When we start teaching a foreign language, we find ourselves fighting against linguistics habit of the mother tongue… our biggest problem will therefore be how to break

down habit of learning and producing speech…''. Based on Girard (2019:3) we therefore put forward, the following recommendations:

i.   In teaching French language in Nigeria, most especially in the Yoruba speaking environment, we should not limit ourselves solely to the teaching of grammatical appropriateness or teaching methodology for those in French didactic. Rather, for any French course we are teaching, we should always pay attention to the oral French production of our students. Whenever a word is wrongly produced, we should try to call their attention to the appropriate pronunciation of the word.

        Furthermore, on our part as a French Teachers teaching foreign Students, we should cultivate the habit of good pronunciation of French words.

ii.   In French classes, we should always give students the opportunity to speak French language, and any word badly pronounced due to interference of either mother-tongue Yoruba in this case or another Foreign Language such as (English) should be noted. Later as teachers we should guard our students to the appropriate pronunciation of such French words.

iii.   In order to limit the case of linguistic interference since it cannot be stopped among our students in the area of correct oral production of French, the use of Contrastive Analysis which is a systematic comparison of two or more languages with the aim of bringing theirs similarities and differences.

And based on Carl (1983.74), there are four steps involved in a Contrastive Analysis of the sound system of two languages and those four steps are:

i.   We draw up a phonemic inventory of L1 (Native Language) and L2 (Target Language).
ii.   We equate the phonemes interlingually
iii.   We then list the phonemic variants (allophones) for L1 and L2
iv.   We further state the distributional restrictions on the phonemic and allophones of each language. Hence, as a French teacher in Nigeria, yoruba land inclusive, in solving our learners phonological problem, part of our didactic approach should always be a contrastive analysis approach.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted a peculiar linguistic behaviour which is a wrong oral realization of French vowel sounds /Ø/ and /œ/ among Yoruba learners of French language is some selected Universities in the South West of Nigeria due to the negative impact of Yoruba vowel sound /ẹ/ and /e/ and some didactic recommendations are given.

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