

THE IMPACT OF INTERFERENCE ON THE FUNCTIONING OF FRENCH IN IVORY COAST

AUTHORSHIP

Jerome Baghana 

Belgorod State University, Russia, 308015, Belgorod, Studencheskaya Street, 14.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8561-5650>

E-mail: baghana@yandex.ru

Yana A. Glebova 

Belgorod State University, Russia, 308015, Belgorod, Studencheskaya Street, 14.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3604-8191>

E-mail: glebova_ya@bsu.edu.ru

Tatiana G. Voloshina 

Belgorod State University, Russia, 308015, Belgorod, Studencheskaya Street, 14.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6839-9631>

E-mail: tatianavoloshina@rambler.ru

Yuliya S. Blazhevich 

Belgorod State University, Russia, 308015, Belgorod, Studencheskaya Street, 14.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6738-3515>

E-mail: blazhevich@bsu.edu.ru

Jana Birova 

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Slovakia, Trnava, 91701, 2 Nimestie Iozefa Herdu.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3378-7009>

E-mail: jbirova@yahoo.fr

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INTRODUCTION

The spread of French in what is now Ivory Coast began during the colonization period and today French forms an important part of a single entity called la Francophonie. The linguistic situation in Ivory Coast is characterized by the privileged position of French and the more limited use of the Ivorian languages, of which there are more than 70 (AHOUA, 2006; COMHAIRE, 2020). The peculiarities of Francophonie in the country are mainly reflected in the specific contact between the indigenous languages and French, and in the specific features that the French language, which operates in Ivory Coast, is acquiring (KOUAMÉ, 2007; LAFAGE, S. 2003). The research work will attempt to identify the impact of the different types of interference on the French language in Ivory Coast and to determine the causes of this phenomenon. The subject of the study is the peculiarities of the French language spoken in Ivory Coast, which have been influenced by indigenous languages.

METHODS

The article represents a part of a deeper research based not only on traditional methods of sociolinguistic research (an observation, a

comprehensive functional analysis of linguistic units in speech, a descriptive method), but also benefited from the potential of the interdisciplinary approach (MIRSKIJ, 1980; TAGARD, 2004).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main characteristic of the linguistic situation in Ivory Coast is its linguistic heterogeneity. The issue of linguistic diversity first interested the researcher Maurice Delafosse, who mentioned 60 languages and dialects (AYEWA, 2016, p. 123). Linguists' opinions on the exact number of indigenous languages in the country vary due to the existence of, besides linguistic, extralinguistic criteria underlying their definition. For example, in the works of Maurice Delafosse, vernacular languages were distinguished on the basis of their membership of an ethnic group. In the article "Ivory Coast: Language Situation" F. Ahoua identifies 50 languages based on linguistic criteria. All the languages of Ivory Coast belong to the Niger-Congolese language family and can be roughly divided into 4 large groups based on linguistic criteria: Kru, Kwa, Mande and Gur. The Kwa and Kru are concentrated in the south of the country, while the Mande and Gur are concentrated in the north (AHOUA, 2006, p. 72).

Ivorian languages are often marginalized or portrayed negatively in the media (SAMB, 2008, p. 12). Indigenous languages have little or no presence in the print press and audiovisual media. Only a few languages may be justly used for informational messages on radio or national television. But in spite of this, Ivorian languages continue to play an important role in the daily life of the population of the country and this trend is particularly evident in the villages. Nowadays linguistic diversity is also reflected in the peculiarities of the latest Constitution of Ivory Coast representation, in Article 29 "the law establishes the conditions for the promotion and development of national languages" (CONSTITUTION DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DE IVORY COAST, 2000, p. 553).

According to K. J.M. Kouamé, indigenous languages symbolize belonging to a certain ethnic group and are a factor in determining their commonalities. As mentioned above, vernacular languages have no official status and are mainly used for intra-ethnic communication. Only some of the most common languages can fulfil the function of interethnic communication in cities (especially in markets) (KOUAMÉ, 2007, p. 100). Despite the multiplicity of languages for intra-ethnic communication, none of the indigenous languages is the intermediary language or the language of the majority of the population. Thus, French serves as the language of interethnic communication. French is the official language of the country and is taught at all levels in Ivory Coast's educational establishments. The importance of French cannot be denied; it is the language of government, administration, education, science, diplomacy, industry and the media.

However, the majority of the population speaks a variant of French, Ivorian French exactly, which differs from French in France and is flexible depending on interference processes. Let us elaborate on the reason for this considerable exposure to interference and the singling out of a specific variant of French functioning on the territory of Ivory Coast. The main extra-linguistic reason is the level of education of Ivorians. The country's literacy rate is lower than the regional average and far lower than that of the world as a whole. A colonial past, a difficult economic situation and the civil war that began in 2002 are not conducive to a qualitative improvement in Ivory Coast's education system. Primary education is compulsory and free. Secondary education is accessible to Ivorians at a few colleges situated around the large towns of Abidjan and Yamoussoukro. Higher education in Ivory Coast is represented by three universities: the University of Abobo-Adjamé, the University of Cocody, the University of Bouaké (Mundt). This situation has a negative impact on the level of French proficiency of Ivorians and the interference of the indigenous languages with the French language.

Consequently, the majority of the population is unable to master the acrolect variant of French for various extra-linguistic reasons. This variant is as close as possible to French in France and there is no interfering influence of Ivorian French or indigenous languages. On the territory of Ivory Coast, the acrolect variant is used in formal, diplomatic, conference and academic settings. Note that Africans who speak the acrolect variant of French tend to switch to mesolect variation when necessary (DAFF, 1998, p. 96). The mesolect language variant is spoken by part of the population who have received the sufficient level of education: civil servants, students, etc. The mesolect variant of French is the subject to interference mainly at the lexical level. However, its phonetics and grammar are almost identical to French in France. The poorly educated or uneducated inhabitants of Ivory Coast speak the basilect. This variant of French is subject to a large degree of interference at the various levels: the number of differences with French in France is large.

When referring to the mesolect and baselect variants of French in Ivory Coast, we are talking about Ivorian French. In our view, the frequent occurrence of interference, despite the individual nature of this phenomenon, has managed to establish itself in the Ivorian language. Thus V. I. Belikov and L. P. Krysin write that "Interference is a phenomenon peculiar to the individual, but in the mass bilingualism the same type of interference processes characterizes the speech of many people, and having fixed in the idiolect language systems, they begin to affect also the linguistic competence of monolinguals, leading to linguistic changes. As soon as interference receives recognition in a language (becomes the part of the standard of a certain language code), it is no longer perceived in this code as something alien, i.e., it ceases to be such for all but linguists..." (BELIKOV, 2001, p. 35).

Interference is a multidimensional phenomenon. Linguists such as U. Weinreich, L.G. Fomichenko, V. Yu. Rosenzweig, Yu. A. Zhluktenko, W. Croft, S.G. Thomason, T. Kaufman and others have made invaluable contributions to studying this problem and defining the essence of interference. The concept of "interference" is inextricably linked to the problem of bilingualism, as each language forms a certain image of the world in humans' perception, represented by a network of concepts specific to that language. Thus, two pictures of the world and two language systems are combined in human consciousness (ZAVYALOVA, 2001, p. 60).

Due to the fact that the operational structure is different in different languages, the process of speech formation in a non-native language is complicated by grammatical rules, as well as by the use of linguistic means of the native language. That is, there is an overlap of the two systems

in the process of speech which in turn leads to interference (BAGANA, KHAPILINA, 2010, p. 41). The first definition of "interference" was proposed by U. Weinreich: "cases of deviations from norms which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of them knowing more languages than one. That is a consequence of language contact" (WEINREICH, 2000, p. 22).

V.A. Vinogradov interprets interference as "the interaction of language systems in bilingualism, either through language contact or through individual acquisition of a non-native language, and is expressed in deviations from the norm and system of the second language under the influence of the native language" (VINOGRADOV 2007, p. 197). We will look at the manifestation of linguistic interference in French in Ivory Coast depending on the level of the language:

- Phonetic and phonological interference
- Lexical interference
- Grammatical interference.

Phonetic and phonological interference is manifested when there are differences at this level of contacting languages. By phonetic interference we mean "mispronunciation of sounds and sound combinations of a non-native language (as a whole or in a certain position in a word), replacing them with sounds of the native language" (DICTIONARY OF LINGUISTIC TERMS, 2010, p. 118). There is no doubt that phonetic and phonological systems of French and the indigenous languages functioning on the territory of Ivory Coast are significantly different. Thus, the pronunciation of mesolect-dominant and acrolect-dominant speakers is influenced to a greater or lesser extent by the indigenous languages that are their mother tongue. One should stress the following key characteristics among the most common examples of this type of interference typical for Ivorian French:

- The omission or fusion of the initial sounds of a word,
- Replacing the sound [ã] with the more familiar [ɑ] at the beginning of a word,
- Rhythmic changes common to indigenous languages,
- Problems with the implementation of the [ʃ] and [ʒ] sounds,
- Problems with the realization of sounds significantly different from those of the native language (LAFAGE, 2002).

Lexical interference is the most common and noticeable type of interference phenomenon.

Sometimes the interference changes the meaning of the original lexeme. For example, the word **commerce (m)** in French in France has the meaning 'trade, business', while Ivorian French defines this noun as 'a shopping street, an area where numerous shops are located and trade takes place'. This example illustrates a type of change in lexical meaning such as narrowing of the word's meaning.

By changing the meaning of the original word, the expression **aller au commerce** is formed, which in Ivorian French means "to go shopping in the city centre". *Le dimanche, elle va toujours au commerce.* - On Sunday, she always goes shopping downtown.

Consider the noun **étage (m)**, meaning "floor" in French in France, but in Ivorian French we see an extension of the word's meaning. In the basilect and mesolect variants of French, this word is used to denote a single or multi-storey apartment building. *On voit les étages d'Abidjan.* - One can see the apartment buildings of Abidjan (LAFAGE 2002, p. 361).

A large part of the examples of lexical interference is represented by the lexicon from the indigenous languages functioning on the territory of the country. For example, the word **cracro (karakoro/claclo)**, being widely used in Ivorian French, is a loan word from Mandinka language (karakoro) or Baoulé language (klâklo). The noun **cracro** has retained its original meaning and refers to a sort of doughnut, made from a special variety of bananas and flour, fried in palm oil. It is often sold in markets.

One must mention, manifestations of lexical interference, besides nominating food and dishes, are often found to be used in such areas of national cultural specificity as beliefs, flora and fauna. For example, the word **néré (nété)** from Mandinka language is used to nominate "African locust bean or *Parkia biglobosa*". Villagers often keep it in their crops because they use the floury pulp that surrounds the seeds and the seeds themselves as food. *Il est sous un néré.* – It is under the African locust bean tree.

Grammatical interference occurs when "a grammatical category, such as gender, exists in the target language but is absent in the mother tongue, or when different structures are used in both languages to convey some grammatical relationship" (MOLODKIN, 2001, p. 17).

U. Weinreich suggests distinguishing three types of interference in the field of grammatical relations:

- Copying the relations of another language, clearly conveying a different meaning than the speaker had in mind;
- Copying another language's relations, which violates this language's relational model, so that the utterance can either lose its meaning altogether, or its meaning can be gleaned from the context;
- The third type consists in the unnecessary application of a certain type of relation to a language that does not require any mandatory type of relation for that domain (WEINREICH, 2000, p. 71).
- Almost all types of grammatical relations are the subject to interference. In the case of French in Ivory Coast, grammatical interference is more pronounced in word order and agreement. In addition to this, grammatical interference can be distinguished:
 - Omission or misuse of articles (e.g. *tu veux poisson* instead of *tu veux du poisson* (you want fish)).
 - Confusion in the use of direct and indirect complements (e.g. *elle va donner lui à Marie* instead of *elle va le donner à Marie* (e.g. she will give it to Mary)).
 - Omission of prepositions (e.g. *Je pati Yamoussoukro* instead of *je suis parti à Yamoussoukro* (I went to Yamoussoukro)).
 - Incorrect formation of tenses (e.g. *Je pati au marché, hier* instead of *hier je suis allé au marché* (I went to the market yesterday)).

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the indigenous languages functioning in Ivory Coast have a significant interference effect on the morphological, syntactic, lexical and phonetic levels of the French language. In our opinion, it is extremely difficult to identify and analyze all the causes of interference. However, among the main reasons are certainly the existence of numerous indigenous languages, the rather low level of education of the majority of the Ivory Coast population and, consequently, the low level of knowledge of the French language. It should be noted that the degree of interference depends directly on the level of French proficiency (acrolect, mesolect, basilect language variations). The influence of the indigenous languages is most noticeable at the lexical level and is common in both the mesolect and the basilect variants of French. Lexical interference is often evident in changes of the meaning of the original lexeme and the borrowing of words from Ivorian languages, reflecting cultural realities.

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The impact of interference on the functioning of French in Ivory Coast

O impacto da interferência no funcionamento do francês na Costa do Marfim

El impacto de la interferencia en el funcionamiento del francés en Costa de Marfin

Resumo

O objetivo do artigo é identificar os diferentes tipos de ingerência francesa na Costa do Marfim, país da África Ocidental. O artigo de pesquisa se concentra em uma análise profunda dos processos linguísticos que se manifestam no estudo sob a influência das línguas indígenas da Costa do Marfim e um conjunto complexo de fatores. O artigo trata da análise das peculiaridades das interferências linguísticas em diferentes níveis do francês das línguas indígenas da Costa do Marfim. Os autores prestam atenção especial aos efeitos da interferência fonética, lexical e gramatical que ocorre em vários graus nas variantes francesas do mesoleto e do basileto e violam as normas de fala do francês na França. A parte prática do trabalho baseia-se na análise de exemplos de interferências fonéticas, lexicais e gramaticais, apresentando as especificidades do francês marfinense. A interferência lexical é frequentemente evidente nas mudanças do significado do lexema original e nas palavras emprestadas das línguas da Costa do Marfim, refletindo realidades culturais. Com base nisso, a interferência fonética e gramatical é mais pronunciada na língua de falantes dominantes de basileto.

Palavras-chave: Costa do Marfim. Interferência linguística. Interferência lexical. Francês da Costa do Marfim.

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to identify the different types of interference in French in Ivory Coast, a West African country. The research paper focuses on a deep analysis of the linguistic processes that manifest themselves in the study under the influence of Ivorian indigenous languages and a complex set of factors. The article deals with the analysis of linguistic interference peculiarities at different levels of French from the indigenous languages of Ivory Coast. The authors pay special attention to the effects of phonetic, lexical and grammatical interference which occur to varying degrees on mesolect and basilect French variants and violate the speech norms of French in France. The practical work part is based on the analysis of the examples of phonetic, lexical and grammatical interference, presenting the specific features of Ivorian French. According to the research, lexical interference is often evident in changes of the meaning of the original lexeme and the words borrowing from Ivorian languages, reflecting cultural realities. On this basis, phonetic and grammatical interference is most pronounced in the language of basilect-dominant speakers.

Keywords: Ivory Coast. Linguistic interference. Lexical interference. Ivorian french.

Resumen

El propósito del artículo es identificar los diferentes tipos de interferencia del francés en Costa de Marfil, un país de África Occidental. El trabajo de investigación se centra en un análisis profundo de los procesos lingüísticos que se manifiestan en el estudio bajo la influencia de las lenguas indígenas de Costa de Marfil y un conjunto complejo de factores. El artículo trata del análisis de las peculiaridades de la interferencia lingüística en diferentes niveles de francés de las lenguas indígenas de Costa de Marfil. La parte de trabajo práctico se basa en el análisis de los ejemplos de interferencia fonética, léxica y gramatical, presentando las características específicas del francés marfileño. Según la investigación, la interferencia léxica es a menudo evidente en los cambios del significado del lexema original y las palabras tomadas de las lenguas marfileñas, reflejando realidades culturales. Sobre esta base, la interferencia fonética y gramatical es más pronunciada en el idioma de los hablantes dominantes en basilecto.

Palabras-clave: Costa de Marfil. Interferencia lingüística. Interferencia léxica. Francés marfileño.