



UNIVERSITE D'ABOMEY-CALAVI (UAC)

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CENTRE UNIVERSITAIRE DE PORTO-NOVO (CUP)

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FACULTE DES LETTRES, ARTS ET SCIENCES HUMAINES (FLASH)

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DEPARTEMENT D'ANGLAIS (D An)

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MEMOIRE DE MAITRISE

SECTION: Anglais

OPTION: LINGUISTIQUE

THEME

**THE INFLUENCE OF NATIVE LANGUAGES
ON THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH**

Case Study of Saxwègbé and Wémègbé.

Présenté par:

Nadia ASSOGBA

Sous la direction de:

Dr Mathew AFANUH

Année Académique 2013-2014

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to:

- **ASSOGBA Cosme**, my late father, may your soul rest in perfect peace!
- **TOGBONON Victorine**, my mother, a caring woman who always stands by her children to overcome the odds of life. This research work is the outcome of all your effort. May God protect you!
- my children **Serach, Malkinade** and **Mercy** and my husband **Marc DOTONOU**
- All my brothers and sisters for their moral and financial support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I express my sincere gratitude to **Dr. Mathew AFANUH**, my supervisor, who has directed the work from the beginning to the end by correcting mistakes, giving advice and encouragement to overcome any kind of hindrance I met when my research work was being written.
- I am very grateful to **Marc DOTONOU** for all his support and assistance.
- My gratitude to **Mireille TOGBENON** and her husband **Aristide AYELESSO** for their support, assistance and encouragement.
- My endless thanks to my dear friends **Isaïe DANSOUKPE**, **Mireille GOUTON**, **François AHOUNOU**, **Jules FAGNIBO** for all their support and encouragement.
- My gratitude to all my relatives, relations and friends whose moral and material supports have been very helpful for the completion of this work.

ACRONYMS

UG: Universal Grammar

L₁: Native Language / First Language

L₂: Foreign Language / Second Language

LAD: Language Acquisition Device

PSD: Perceptual Assimilation Model

SLM: Speech Learning Model

NP: Noun Phrase

VP: Verb Phrase

GT_s: Generalized Transformations

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INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is defined as the systematic or scientific study of language in terms of what it is and how it functions. According to the New Encyclopedia Italy 1982, language is the chief means of human communication. As conventionally defined, language consists of vocal sounds to which meanings have been assigned by cultural conventions. It is often supplemented by various gestures or written language which is based ultimately on spoken language.

Language is the system of human communication by means of a structured arrangement of sound or their written representation to form large units. (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics). Language is also the distinctive quality of human beings and makes the difference between them and animals. Therefore it is so important that no one can prevent himself/herself from using it. In fact, language is the centre of all affairs. It is the vehicle used to pass manners, morals, traditions and methodology. So language is very important for human beings.

Taking into account all the advantages provided by languages there is no reason for anyone not to acquire and master other languages. Acquiring a foreign language is therefore of a great importance. It can help one to understand people of other cultures and colours. It puts one in touch with more people and facilitates the partnership among people. Here I will be interested in the learning of English. In fact, English has proved nowadays to be important as a means of international communication, a global language. It has penetrated deeply into the international domains of political life, business, safety, communication, entertainment, the media and education. Many people speak that language all over the world and the "number of people for whom English

is the mother tongue is widely agreed to be around 380 millions whereas the comparable figure of non native speakers has been roughly estimated about "100 to 1300 million", (Cristal D. 1990). English is taught in more than one hundred (100) countries as a foreign language, and in most of the countries, it is emerging as the chief foreign language to be encountered in schools. Benin is also among the countries where English is taught in schools.

However, it is important to keep in mind that Benin is a French colony. As such, French is the language used as a medium of communication in all domains (government, law, the courts, the media and the educational system). It is language children master early in life after their mother tongue. So the acquisition of English as a foreign language is not an easy task. This research work is mainly interested in the influence of native languages in the acquisition of English: case study of Saxwεgbé and Wémεgbé. Indeed, an emphasis ought to be put on some aspects of Saxwε and Wémε languages which do not enable children to invest themselves in the acquisition of the language. Many people think that the best way to acquire a foreign language is to go to the country where that language is spoken and live there for a moment. This would make it possible to be accustomed to the sociolinguistic realities of this language. But the acquisition of a foreign language can be done another way. While acquiring, it is better not to refer to one's mother tongue. When we want to acquire a language, we have to consider the cultural environment of this language, and know which words to use in which context.

In fact, each language has its particular sounds or phonological system, which differs from the others as stated by Mackey F. William (1965, P): " sound system differs drastically at times in intonation, stress

and rhythm” (P71). It is then up to the learners to listen to new sounds and thus speaks fluently this foreign language. Language is very important in the fact that it is the basic of all development; and the more languages you speak, the more opportunities you have. My objective is to bring out the factors which influence the acquisition of English in Benin especially in Saxwε and Wémε areas.

To achieve this goal, this research work has been divided into three main chapters. Apart from the introduction and conclusion that respectively open and close the study, the first chapter entitled literature review gives an account of a few scholars analyses of works conducted so far by linguist as well as some senior graduate students. As for the second chapter, it will look into the theoretical framework. The last one is devoted to the study areas and study subjects. Here I have dealt with the geographical situation and the linguistic characteristic and the analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

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Literature occupies a place of predilection no matter how a language is used. In fact, literature provides the largest bulk of subjects and materials to linguistic studies.

Language acquisition is one of the most important and fascinating aspects of human development. There are various subconscious aspects of language development such as metalinguistic, conscious, formal teaching of language and acquisition of the written system of language in both L1 and L2. Various language variables are involved in the language processes such as phonology, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, paralinguistic, pragmatics and discourse. In order to provide success in cognitive functioning as well as professional life of an individual, his/her first language acquisition must strongly develop in the early years. There is a Relationship between first and second language acquisition.

During the period of 70's and 80's various studies were conducted with first and second language learners showing that phonemes played a role in speaker's native categories. These studies were conducted by some scholars using three models to explain the functioning of L1 in L2. Such scholars include:

Best (1994) referring to the first model which talks about the relationship between mature phonological system and speech perception states that: The Perceptual Assimilation Model (PSM) was developed to analyze the functioning of speaker's L1 phonological system in the perception of nonnative sounds.

Flege (1995) shows that another model that focuses on the issue of L2 segment acquisition is the Speech Learning Model (SLM). The SLM tries to find out how speech perception affects phonological

acquisition by distinguishing the two kinds of sounds: “new” (not identified by any L1 sound) and “similar” (identified by L2 sounds). It was suggested that phonetic systems in production and perception tend to be adaptive over the life span and reorganize in response to the sounds in the L2 inputs. This process is known as “equivalence classification” that obstructs the establishment of new phonetic categories for similar sounds.

Ritchie (1968) and Michaels (1973) point out that: the other model of speech perception-phonological acquisition interaction is the extended work of? .Thus, it explains that the features used in grammar differ in terms of their level of prominence.

Hancin and **Bhatt**, (1994) Features that are used frequently in the language’s phonology will be more prominent than the less frequently used ones. Thus, features more prominent in L1 system will greatly influence learner’s perception of new L2 sounds.

Clements (1985) and Sagey (1986), According to the theory of feature-geometry, each phoneme is unique in terms of its structure that separates it from other segments in an inventory (Clements, 1985; Sagey, 1986). One question always emerges why foreign sounds are perceived in terms of native sound categories.

Lennenberg (1967), proposed his theory of critical period in which he argued that in order to have a proper language fluency, it should be acquired or learned before the onset of puberty. However, he left out the point that whether this applies only to the first language acquisition or extend up to the second language acquisition also. Lennenberg suggested two parts; firstly, normal language learning occurs within childhood. Secondly, reaching the adult age values by puberty, brain

loses its plasticity and reorganizational capacities necessary for language acquisition.

There are two distinctions to know the effect of critical period hypothesis on first and second language acquisition separately. Firstly, at early stage, humans are quite capable of learning languages. If it is not done, it will reduce with maturation. Nevertheless, if the reverse happens, the capability of learning further languages will remain intact throughout one's life time. Lennenberg gave the phenomenon cerebral dominance and concluded that in childhood the left hemisphere is ordinarily more directly involved in language and speech than the right. After attaining a maturity, the two hemispheres become quite specialized for function and with the completion of lateralization (shifting language entirely to the left and the rest to the right one) the polarization of function between the two hemispheres take place. Comparative inability of younger children to transfer and recall vocabulary in terms of their first language gives them an advantage in learning a second language without interference from their first language. Lenneberg hypothesized that language could be acquired only within a critical period, extending from early infancy until puberty. In its basic form, the critical hypothesis period need has consequences only on the first language acquisition. Nevertheless, it is essential to our understanding of the nature of the hypothesized critical period to determine whether or not it extends as well to second language acquisition. If so, it should be the case that young children are better second language learners than adults and should consequently reach higher levels of final proficiency in the second language. This prediction was tested by comparing the English proficiency attained by 46 native Korean or Chinese speakers who had arrived in the United States between the ages of 3 and 39, and who had

lived in the United States between 3 and 26 years by the time of testing. These subjects were tested on a wide variety of structures of English grammar, using a grammaticality judgment task. Both correlational and t-test analyses demonstrated a clear and strong advantage for earlier arrivals over the later arrivals. Test performance was linearly related to age of arrival up to puberty; after puberty, performance was low but highly variable and unrelated to age of arrival. This age effect was shown not to be an inadvertent result of differences in amount of experience with English, motivation, self-consciousness, or American identification. The effect also appeared on every grammatical structure tested, although the structures varied markedly in the degree to which they were well mastered by later learners. The results support the conclusion that a critical period for language acquisition extends its effects to second language acquisition.

Strange (1995) used the term “perceptual foreign accent” to refer to the “significant difficulty” which adults have “perceiving most (but not all) phonetic contrasts that are not functional in their native language” and she notes that this can interfere with learning an L2 phonology.

Scovel (1967) says that by the time, cerebral lateralization is complete at puberty there is appearance of foreign accent. The chance of acquiring mastery at second language acquisition is higher before the age of about 12 since the lateralization is not completed yet. The term interference derives from a learning theory approach that explains about the process of habit formation constitutes in language learning. Interference included those errors that occur in the learning of a second language. These kinds of errors must be categorized in terms of three errors: Developmental errors: Those errors that do not reflect the learner’s first language (L1), but found among those who acquire the

second language (L2) during childhood as a first language. Ambiguous errors: Those errors that can be categorized as due either to interference or as developmental errors.

Unique errors: Those errors that cannot be categorized as due either to interference or as developmental errors.

Dulay and Burt (1972), show that Interference results from the fact old habits (the first language) must be unlearned before new habits (the second language) can be mastered.

Littlewood (1973)? The important issue is whether in learning a second language a person inevitably uses first language and that error results from the interference of the first language? The fact that an American learns French and German easier than Chinese and that for Japanese the reverse is true simply due to the way in which the material is taught.

Taylor (1975) has pointed out that while learning a language humans over generalize target language rules, reduce grammatical redundancies, and omit those rules that they have not learned.

Flege (1999) argued on this issue and proposed three hypotheses that account for foreign accents; 1) Exercise hypothesis in which one's ability to learn to produce and to perceive speech remains intact across the life span, but only if one continues to learn speech uninterruptedly. 2) Unfolding hypothesis in which as much fully developed the L1 phonetic system will be at the starting of L2 learning the more foreign accented the pronunciation of the L2 occurs. 3) In Interaction hypothesis bilinguals are fully unable to separate the L1 and L2 phonetic systems, necessarily interacting with each other. To the L2 user, however, difficulties of comprehension caused in part by phonetic and phonological factors can

certainly be as problematic in the everyday use of the L2 as the difficulty in making oneself understood due to non-native pronunciation. Phonological awareness plays a major role in learning to read words, sentences or paragraphs in a particular language. It refers to the sound of one's language in the processing of writing and speaking. So, it is the awareness of and access to the phonology of one's language. Successful acquisition of phonological representations needs accurate perception of phonemic. It is proved empirically that phonological awareness helps in the development of fine reading.

Goswami and al. (1997) investigated the use of 'orthographic chunks' corresponding to rhymes in a study comparing nonword reading in English and Greek.

Weber (2000) showed that proficient German English bilinguals were sensitive to both native German and non-native English phonotactic sequence constraints. They were given nonsense words with German and English onsets and had to detect the word luck. English speakers first detected the word luck in moyshluck. This was attributed to the fact that shl- is not a possible onset in English which made it more salient than the other possibilities.

Put and colleagues (2001), gives evidence of a shared neural mechanism for the processing of native and second languages. Investigation of the left inferior to middle frontal lobe revealed parallel neural activity induced hemodynamic responses during verb generation tasks in each language. These findings suggest that not only the same brain regions activated by each language, but moreover they operate on a similar time interval.

Oller and Tullis (1973) compared processing times of native and non-native readers of English in reading English text. They found that non-native readers produced the same number of fixations and regressions as did native readers, but their fixations were much longer. This indicated that bilinguals process more slowly in their second language.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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2-1: Definition of concepts

➤ Language

According to Longman Dictionary of applied linguistics, language may be defined in two ways:

- First, language may be defined as the study of human communication by means of structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation) to form large units, e.g.: morphemes, words sentences. In common usage it can also refer to non human systems of communication such as the “language” of bees, the “language of dolphins”.
- Language in a second way is defined as any particular system of human communication for example, the French language and the Hindi language. Sometimes a language is spoken by most people in a particular country, for example Japanese in Japan, but sometimes a language is spoken by only part of the population of a country, for example Tamil in India, French in Canada.

Languages are usually not spoken in exactly the same way from one part of a country to the other. Differences in the way a language is spoken by different people are described in terms of regional and social variation. In some cases, there is a continuum from one language to another. Dialect A of language X on one side of the border may be very similar to Dialect B of a language Y on the other side of the border if language X and language Y are related. This is the case between Sweden and Norway and between Germany and the Netherlands.

➤ **Native language**

As far as Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics is concerned, a native language is the language which a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the country where he or she is living. The native language is often the first language a child acquires but there are exceptions. Children may, for instance, first acquire some knowledge of another language from a nurse or an older relative and only later on acquire a second one which they consider their native language. Sometimes, this term is used synonymously with first language.

➤ **First Language**

According to Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, the first language is generally a person's mother tongue or the language acquired first. In multilingual communities, however, where a child may gradually shift from the main use of one language to the main use of another (eg because of the influence of a school language), first language may refer to the language the child feels most comfortable using. Often this term is used synonymously with Native Language. First language is also known as L1.

➤ **Foreign language**

According to Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, a foreign language is a language which is not a native language in a country. A foreign language is usually studied either for communication with foreigners who speak the language, or for reading printed materials in the language. In North America applied linguistics usage, "foreign language" and "second language" are often used to mean the same in this sense.

- In British usage, a distinction is often made between foreign language and second language.
- A foreign language is a language which is taught as a school subject but which is not used as a medium of instruction in schools nor as a language of communication within a country eg: (in government, business, or industry). English is described as a foreign language in France, Japan, China, etc.
- A second language is a language which is not a native language in a country but which is widely used as a medium of communication, eg: in education and government and which is usually used alongside another language or languages. English is described as a second language in countries such as Fiji, Singapore, and Nigeria.

In both Britain and North America, the term “second language” describes a native language in a country as learnt by people living there who have another First Language. English in UK would be called the second language for immigrants and people whose first language is Welsh.

➤ **Language shift**

As far as Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics is concerned, it is a change “shift” from the use of one language to the use of another language. This often occurs when people migrate to another country where the main language is different, as in the case of immigrants to the USA and Australia from non English speaking countries. Language shift may be actively encouraged by official government policy, for example by restricting the number of languages used as media of instruction. It may also occur because another language, usually the main language of the region, is needed for employment opportunities and wider

communication. Language shift should not be confused with language change

➤ **Language loss**

According to Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, it may be defined as the gradual forgetting and decay of the ability to use a language, usually through lack of opportunity to use it. Immigrants who move to a country where there have no occasion to use their mother tongue may eventually lose their ability to use it, in whole or in part.

Language loss may also occur suddenly as the result of illness

➤ **Interlanguage**

Second language learners are usually observed developing a new language system that incorporates elements from the native language and elements from English they recently learned. Interlanguage actually helps second language learners test hypotheses about how language works and develop their own set of rules for using language. As students master the English language, their unique set of rules will resemble more the second language.

➤ **Silent Period**

It is observed at the beginning of exposure to the new language. It may last from a couple of days to several months). Fact: ESL beginners who listen but rarely speak in the new language make just as much, and frequently more, progress in second language development as their more talkative classmates, by the end of the first year of exposure to English.

Implications for instruction and assessment: Use sensitivity when developing systems for nonverbal feedback in this early stage. Beginning adolescent and adult students may be more influenced by cultural

socialization norms or their own emotional feelings than by a predictable silent period. An initial focus of intensive listening comprehension in the very beginning of ESL instruction is beneficial for everyone.

➤ **Language shift**

Language shift is a pattern of language use in which the relative prominence or use of the two languages changes across time and generations. Language shift is usually reported across generations and is characterized by a pattern whereby members of the immigrant populations are fluent in their native language with limited skill in the host country's language.

➤ **Language Loss**

Language loss occurs when a child's competence in the first language diminishes, while skills in the second language are not at the same level of native speakers (Kayser, 1998). Language loss occurs primarily in a context in which minimal support is given for the use and maintenance of the L2. Thus, the sociolinguistic environment plays a critical role in the emergence of L1 loss and language shift (Goldstein, 2004).

➤ **Language Loss vs. Language Shift**

Language shift results in changes in native language use with an eventual erosion of abilities in the language. L1 loss however, refers to a more rapid shift from first language prominence to second language prominence (Goldstein, 2004). When it occurs in children, L1 loss can be described as a language shift phenomenon that occurs within – rather than across generations. In this context, L1 loss are patterns of L1 use in which there is a change toward earlier linguistic forms. In other words,

the child evidences reduction in linguistic skill relative to his/her skill at a previous time. (Goldstein, 2004).

➤ **Attrition**

L1 attrition describes patterns of language use in which an individual does not lose ability in the L1 but does not advance in it's use either. L1 attrition co-occurs with L1 loss when demonstrated skill with certain aspects of the language is reduced across time. Simultaneously, certain patterns are also present in which characteristics of the language do not continue to develop as noted in monolingual speakers of the target language (Goldstein, 2004).

➤ **Language Loss and Assessment**

As clinicians working with children who are either bilingual or learning English as a second (or other) language, the phenomena of language shift and L1 loss/attrition is of great relevance. This is especially salient when working with Latino populations in the United States. Studies focusing on the Spanish language skills of children in various Latino groups have reported a pattern of reduction of expressive skills in Spanish over time.

When assessing children who may be in a language shift process and when assessing children who are experiencing L1 loss, the main concern is differentiating between language difference and language disability.

“Because some patterns that are observed in language shift/language loss situations may mimic what has been noted in children with true learning disabilities, correctly diagnosing language impairment in this population is not a trivial matter”(Goldstein, 2004, p. 203).

➤ **Bilingual Code Mixing**

The use of phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic or pragmatic patterns from two languages in the same utterance or stretch of conversation (Genesse, Paradis & Crago, 2004). Bilingual code mixing plays several, important sociopragmatic functions, and it is a component of bilingual people's communicative competence. Genesse et al., 2004 present six bilingual Code Mixing types and examples mainly observed in children:

2-2: Process of language acquisition

The academic discipline of second-language acquisition is a subdiscipline of applied linguistics. It is broad-based and relatively new. As well as the various branches of linguistics, second-language acquisition is also closely related to psychology, cognitive psychology, and education. To separate the academic discipline from the learning process itself, the terms *second-language acquisition research*, *second-language studies*, and *second-language acquisition studies* are also used.

SLA research began as an interdisciplinary field, and because of this it is difficult to identify a precise starting date. However, two papers in particular are seen as instrumental to the development of the modern study of SLA: Pit Corder's 1967 essay *The Significance of Learners' Errors*, and Larry Selinker's 1972 article *Interlanguage*. The field saw a great deal of development in the following decades. By the year 2010, second-language acquisition was studied from a wide variety of disciplinary perspectives, and there was a proliferation of different theories. However, the main two approaches were linguistic theories based upon Noam Chomsky's universal grammar, and psychological theories such as skill acquisition theory and connectionism.

The term *acquisition* was originally used to emphasize the subconscious nature of the learning process, but in recent years *learning* and *acquisition* have become largely synonymous.

Second-language acquisition can incorporate heritage language learning, but it does not usually incorporate bilingualism. Most SLA researchers see bilingualism as being the end result of learning a language, not the process itself, and see the term as referring to native-like fluency. Writers in fields such as education and psychology, however, often use bilingualism loosely to refer to all forms of multilingualism. Second-language acquisition is also not to be contrasted with the acquisition of a foreign language; rather, the learning of second languages and the learning of foreign languages involve the same fundamental processes in different situations.

There has been much debate about exactly how language is learned, and many issues are still unresolved. There are many theories of second-language acquisition, but none are accepted as a complete explanation by all SLA researchers. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the field of second-language acquisition, this is not expected to happen in the foreseeable future.

2-2-1: Definition of second language acquisition

Language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words to communicate. The capacity to successfully use language requires one to acquire a range of tools including syntax, phonetics, and an extensive vocabulary. This language might be vocalized as with speech or manual as in sign. Language acquisition

usually refers to **first language acquisition**, which studies infants' acquisition of their native language. This is distinguished from *second language acquisition*, which deals with the acquisition (in both children and adults) of additional languages.

The capacity to acquire and use language is a key aspect that distinguishes humans from other beings. Although it is difficult to pin down what aspects of language are uniquely human, there are a few design features that can be found in all known forms of human language, but that are missing from forms of animal communication. For example, many animals are able to communicate with each other by signaling to the things around them, but this kind of communication lacks the arbitrariness of human vocabularies (in that there is nothing about the sound of the word "dog" that would hint at its meaning). Other forms of animal communication may utilize arbitrary sounds, but are unable to combine those sounds in different ways to create completely novel messages that are automatically understood by another. Hockett called this design feature of human language "productivity." It is crucial to the understanding of human language acquisition that we are not limited to a finite set of words, but rather must be able to understand and utilize a complex system that allows for an infinite number of possible messages. So, while many forms of animal communication exist, they differ from human languages in that they have a limited range of non-syntactically structured vocabulary tokens that lack cross cultural variation between groups.

A major question in understanding language acquisition is how these capacities are picked up by infants from what appears to be very little input. Input in the linguistic context is defined as "All words, contexts, and other forms of language to which a learner is exposed, relative to acquired proficiency in first or second languages" It is difficult

to believe, considering the hugely complex nature of human languages, and the relatively limited cognitive abilities of an infant, that infants are able to acquire most aspects of language without being explicitly taught. Children, within a few years of birth, understand the grammatical rules of their native language without being explicitly taught, as one learns grammar in school. A range of theories of language acquisition have been proposed in order to explain this apparent problem. These theories include innatism in which a child is born prepared in some manner with these capacities, as opposed to other theories in which language is simply learned as one learns to ride a bike. The conflict between the traits humans are born with and those that are a product of one's environment is often referred to as the "Nature vs. Nurture" debate. As is the case with many other human abilities and characteristics, it appears that there are some qualities of language acquisition that the human brain is automatically wired for (a "nature" component) and some that are shaped by the particular language environment in which a person is raised (a "nurture" component).

2-2-2: The second language acquisition stages

Second language acquisition can be divided up into five stages: preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. The first stage is preproduction, also known as the silent period. Learners at this stage have a receptive vocabulary of up to 500 words, but they do not yet speak their second language. Not all learners go through a silent period. Some learners start speaking straight away, although their output may consist of imitation rather than creative language use. Others may be required to speak from the start as part of a language course. For learners that do go through a silent period, it may last around three to six months.

The second stage of acquisition is early production, during which learners are able to speak in short phrases of one or two words. They can also memorize chunks of language, although they may make mistakes when using them. Learners typically have both an active and receptive vocabulary of around 1000 words. This stage normally lasts for around six months.

The third stage is speech emergence. Learners' vocabularies increase to around 3000 words during this stage, and they can communicate using simple questions and phrases. They may often make grammatical errors. The stage after speech emergence is intermediate fluency. At this stage, learners have a vocabulary of around 6000 words, and can use more complicated sentence structures. They are also able to share their thoughts and opinions. Learners may make frequent errors with more complicated sentence structures. The final stage is advanced fluency, which is typically reached somewhere between five and ten years of learning the language. Learners at this stage can function at a level close to native speakers.

The time taken to reach a high level of proficiency can vary depending on the language learned. In the case of native English speakers, some estimates were provided by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the U.S. Department of State, which compiled approximate learning expectations for a number of languages for their professional staff (native English speakers who generally already know other languages). Of the 63 languages analyzed, the five most difficult languages to reach proficiency in speaking and reading, requiring 88 weeks (2200 class hours), are Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean. The Foreign Service Institute and the National Virtual Translation Center both

note that Japanese is typically more difficult to learn than other languages in this group.

Individuals learning a second language use the same innate processes that are used to acquire their first language from the first days of exposure to the new language in spite of their age. They reach similar developmental stages to those in first language acquisition, making some of the same types of errors in grammatical markers that young children make, picking up chunks of language without knowing precisely what each word means, and relying on sources of input humans who speak that language-to provide modified speech that they can at least partially comprehend (Collier, 1998). The rate at which learners reach each stage varies with each individual student since exposure and opportunity to use the language varies from individual to individual. Similarly, the sequence of acquisition of specific structures of English varies from student to student.

The process is not linear: It is more like a zigzag process (i.e. regular past tense, the morpheme “ed” in its written form, pronounced three different ways). Mastery occurs gradually over time until the student gets the morpheme right in more and more contexts until finally the subtleties of the use of the particular structure (e.g. exceptions, spelling variations, pronunciation contexts) has become a subconscious part of the learner’s language system. Additional example (acquisition of the third person singular present tense, adding “s” to the verbs). This morpheme becomes part of the subconscious acquired system after several years of exposure to Standard English. Formal teaching does not speed up the developmental process. However, a high CALP level in the native language facilitates the learning of a second language. Acquisition occurs through exposure to correct use of the structure over time in many different linguistic contexts that are meaningful to the student.

Roseberry-McKibbin (2002) lists common language characteristics observed in second language learners and provides suggested interventions matched to language acquisition stages.

➤ **Interference**

Interference is the process in which a communicative behavior for the first language influences the second language. Students tend to demonstrate interference when using English in formal settings, i.e., in a testing situation, rather than playing on the playground.

Practitioners are recommended to consider the possibility that second language learners' errors in English may result from language interference or from limited English experience. An illustration of interference would be when children literally translate phrases from their native language into English i.e., the Spanish form for "Have a seat" is "Toma asiento", when translated literally, second language learners may say, "Take a seat". In such situations, the second language learner's language use difference is due to language interference.

2-2-3: The second language acquisition theories

In a broader sense, various theories and approaches have been emerged over the years to study and analyze the process of language acquisition. Four main schools of thought, which provide theoretical paradigms in guiding the course of language acquisition are: Imitation, Nativism or Behaviorism: based on the empiricist or behavioral approach Innateness or Mentalism: based on the rationalistic or mentalist approach Cognition: based on the cognitive-psychological approach Motherese or Input: based on the maternal approach to language acquisition.

Imitation Language has long been thought as a process of imitation, and reinforcement Imitation theory is based on an empirical or

behavioral approach Main Figure: B. F. Skinner. Children start out as clean slates and language learning is process of getting linguistic habits printed on these slates. Language Acquisition is a process of experience. Language is a 'conditioned behavior': the stimulus response process Stimulus Response Feedback Reinforcement.

Thus, Children learn language step by step Imitation, Repetition Memorization controlled drilling Reinforcement. Reinforcement can either be positive or negative.

Popular View: Children learn to speak by imitating the utterances heard around them and analogy. Children strengthen their responses by the repetitions, corrections, and other reactions that adults provide, thus language is practice based. General perception is that there is no difference between the way one learns a language and the way one learns to do anything else. Main focus is on inducing the child to behave with the help of mechanical drills and exercises. Learning is controlled by the conditions under which it take place and that, as long as individual are subjected on the same condition, they will learn in the same condition.

Two Kinds of evidence used to criticize behaviorist theory First Evidence: based on the kind of language children produce first piece of evidence taken from the way children handle irregular grammatical patterns while encountering irregular items, there is a stage when they replace forms based on the regular patterns of language Gradually they switch over to the process of 'analogy' – a reasoning process as they start working out for themselves Second Evidence: Based on what children do not produce. The other evidence is based on the way children seem unable to imitate adult grammatical constructions exactly Best known demonstration of this principle is provided by American Psycholinguist David McNeill (1933) Child: Nobody don't like me Mother:

No, say 'no body likes me' Child: Nobody don't like me (eight repetitions of this dialogue) Mother: No, now listen carefully: say 'no body likes me' Child: Oh! No body don't likes me thus, language acquisition is more a matter of maturation than of imitation.

Nativist or Innateness Theory Limitations of Behaviorist view of language acquisition led in 1960's to the alternative 'generative' account of language Main Argument: Children must be born with an innate capacity for language development Main Figure: Bloomfield & Noam Chomsky children are born with an innate propensity for language acquisition, and that this ability makes the task of learning a first language easier than it would otherwise be. The human brain is ready naturally for language in the sense when children are exposed to speech; certain general principles for discovering or structuring language automatically begin to operate.

Chomsky originally theorized that children were born with a hard-wired language acquisition device (LAD) in their brains. He later expanded this idea into that of Universal Grammar, a set of innate principles and adjustable parameters that are common to all human languages. The child exploits its LAD to make sense of the utterances heard around it, deriving from this 'primary linguistic data' – the grammar of the language LAD is exploited to explain the remarkable speed with which children learn to speak, and the considerable similarity in the way grammatical patterns are acquired across different children and languages. According to Chomsky, the presence of Universal Grammar in the brains of children allow them to deduce the structure of their native languages from quot, mere exposure quot. Primary data is then used to make sentences or structures after a process of trial and error, correspond to those in adult speech.

The child learn a set of generalizations or rules governing the way in which sentences are formed in the following sequence Primary Linguistic Data The Adult Speech General Language Learning Principles Grammatical Knowledge The Rules Child's Speech Input LAD Output.

Two distinct views about how LAD functions LAD provides children with a knowledge of linguistic universals such as the existence of word order and word classes LAD provides children only general procedures for discovering language to be learned.

Innate Theory is criticized for the role of adult speech can not be ruled out in providing a means of enabling children to work out the regularities of language for themselves. It has proved difficult to formulate the detailed properties of LAD in an uncontroversial manner, in the light of the changes in generative linguistic theory that have taken place in later years, and meanwhile, alternative accounts of the acquisition process have evolved that there are principles of grammar that cannot be learned on the basis of positive input alone. The concept of LAD is unsupported by evolutionary anthropology which shows a gradual adaptation of the human body to the use of language, rather than a sudden appearance of a complete set of binary parameters (which are common to digital computers but not to neurological systems such as a human brain) delineating the whole spectrum of possible grammars ever to have existed and ever to exist. The theory has several hypothetical constructs, such as movement, empty categories, complex underlying structures, and strict binary branching that cannot possibly be acquired from any amount of input. Mentalists' emphasis on the rule-learning is over-enthusiastic.

The Universal Grammar Approach according to Noam Chomsky, UG intends to answer three basic questions about human language:

- 1) What constitutes knowledge of language?

2) How knowledge of language is acquired?

3) How is knowledge of language put to use?

Knowledge of language stands in UG for the subconscious mental representation of language which underlies all language use UG L 1, L 2.

What Constitutes Knowledge of Language and how is it acquired? UG claims that all human beings inherit a universal set of principles and parameters which control the shape that a human language can take. Chomsky's proposed principles are unvarying and apply to all human languages similar to one another; in contrast, parameters possess a limited number of open values which characterize differences between languages. The biologically endowed UG equip the children naturally with a clear set of expectations about the shape of the language according to a predetermined timetable and atrophies with age.

Competence and Performance: Chomsky (1965) provides a distinction between competence and performance – between the underlying ability which allows linguistic behavior to take place and the behavior itself. Linguistic competence is concerned with the child's grammar, the linguistic input and construction of the grammatical structures. Performance deals with the nature of child's rule system; the psychological processes the child uses in learning the language, and how the child establishes meaning in the language input.

Principles and Parameters Principles according to UG, the learner's initial state is supposed to consist of a set of universal principles common to all human languages Structure Dependency. This principle states that language is organized in such a way that it crucially depends on the structural relationships between elements in a sentence. Words are regrouped into higher-level structures which are the units which form the basis of language. All languages are made up of sentences which consist of at least a Noun-Phrase and a Verb-Phrase,

which in turn optionally contain other phrases or even whole sentences. The hierarchical nature of human language is a part of human mind therefore children use computationally structure-dependent rules. Your cat is friendly. Is your cat friendly? UG focuses on the structural relationships rather than the linear order of words.

Parameters determine the ways in which languages can vary. Head Parameter specifies the position of the head in relation to its complements within phrases for different languages. Each phrase has a central element that is called "Head"; in the case of NP head is a noun, and in the case of VP, "head" is a verb. English is a Head-First language because head of the phrase always appears before its complements while Japanese is a Head-Last language because the complements precede the head inside phrases. Example: Ewa kabe ni kakatte imasu (picture wall on is hanging) The picture is hanging on the wall.

Criticism of UG Theory: Linguistically, this approach's primary concern is only syntax; semantics, pragmatics and discourse are completely excluded. UG is concerned exclusively with the developmental linguistic route; social and psychological variables are ignored. UG approach is methodological. The theory is preoccupied with modeling of competence. The study of naturalistic performance is not seen as a suitable source to analyze mental representations of language.

Transformational Model of Chomsky Deep structure and surface structure In 1957, Noam Chomsky published *Syntactic Structures*, in which he developed the idea that each sentence in a language has two levels of representation a deep structure and a surface structure. Surface Structure represents the Physical properties of language. The deep structure represented the core semantic relations of a sentence, and was mapped on to the surface structure (which followed the

phonological form of the sentence very closely) via transformations. Chomsky believed that there would be considerable similarities between languages' deep structures, and that these structures would reveal properties. Transformations had been proposed prior to the development of deep structure as a means of increasing the mathematical and descriptive power of Context-free grammars all languages, which were concealed by their surface structures.

Deep structure was devised largely for technical reasons relating to early semantic theory. Minimalism Chomsky and Minimalism aims at the further development of ideas involving economy of derivation and economy of representation in Transformational Theory Economy of derivation is a principle stating that movements (i.e. transformations) only occur in order to match interpretable features with uninterpretable features. Economy of representation is the principle that grammatical structures must exist for a purpose, i.e. the structure of a sentence should be no larger or more complex than required to satisfy constraints on grammaticality.

An additional aspect of minimalist thought is the idea that the derivation of syntactic structures should be uniform ; that is, rules should not be stipulated as applying at arbitrary points in a derivation, but instead apply throughout derivations transformations .The usual usage of the term 'transformation' in linguistics refers to a rule that takes an input typically called the Deep Structure (in the Standard Theory) or D-structure (in the extended standard theory or government and binding theory) and changes it in some restricted way to result in a Surface Structure (or S-structure). In TGG, Deep structures were generated by a set of phrase structure rules. Transformations actually come of two types: (i) the post-Deep structure kind, which is string or structure changing X NP AUX Y X AUX NP Y.

(ii) Generalized Transformations they take small structures which are either atomic or generated by other rules, and combine them like embedding etc. In the Extended Standard Theory and government and binding theory, GTs were abandoned in favor of recursive phrase structure rules (ii) Generalized Transformations (GTs).

Cognitive Theory Main Argument: Language Acquisition must be viewed within the context of a child's intellectual development. Linguistic structures will emerge only if there is an already established cognitive foundation. Before children can use linguistic structures, they need first to have developed the conceptual ability to make relative judgments. Most influential figure: Genevan Psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) who proposed the model of cognitive development focuses on exploring the links between the stages of cognitive development and language skills. The links have been clearly shown for the earliest period of language learning (up to 18 months), relating to the development of what Piaget called 'sensory motor' intelligence, in which children construct a mental picture of a world of objects that have independent existence. During the later part of this period, children develop a sense of object permanence and will begin to search for the objects that they have seen hidden.

Cognitive theory is criticized for: it is highly difficult to show precise correlations between specific cognitive behaviors and linguistic features at the very early stage of language acquisition as the children become linguistically and cognitively more advanced in the course of time.

Input Theory The studies of Motherese in the 1970's focused upon the maternal input Main Argument: Parents do not talk to their children in the same way as they talk to other adults and seem to be capable of adapting their language to give the child maximum opportunity to interact and learn Main Figure: C. A. Ferguson (1977) The utterances of the

parents are considerably and subconsciously simplified especially with respect to grammar and meaning and sentences are shorter. The meanings conveyed by mothers are predominantly concrete and there is a more restricted range of sentences.

Extra information is provided that would be considered unnecessary while talking otherwise. Sentences are expanded and paraphrased. There is also an expressive and affective element in motherese, manifested in the form of special words and sound; in the form of diminutive and reduplicative words.

Criticism on Motherese theory: It is difficult to show correlations between the features of motherese and the subsequent emergence of these features in child speech. More problematic area is to provide evidence about causes of correlations because only occasional correlations have been found between specific linguistic structures, though often with an appreciable gap between the use of a feature by mother and its subsequent use by the child. Maternal Input structures are very closely tailored to the needs of the child. The child may receive linguistic stimulation from the people other than mother and father.

2-3: Factors that influence the acquisition of a second language

Some students learn a new language more quickly and easily than others. This simple fact is known by all who have themselves learned a second language or taught those who are using their second language in school. Clearly, some language learners are successful by virtue of their sheer determination, hard work and persistence. However there are other crucial factors influencing success that are largely beyond the control of the learner. These factors can be broadly categorized as internal and external. It is their complex interplay that determines the speed and facility with which the new language is learned.

2-3-1: The Internal factors

Some students learn a new language more quickly and easily than others. This simple fact is known by all who have themselves learned a second language or taught those who are using their second language in school. Clearly, some language learners are successful by virtue of their sheer determination, hard work and persistence. However there are other crucial factors influencing success that are largely beyond the control of the learner. These factors can be broadly categorized as internal and external. It is their complex interplay that determines the speed and facility with which the new language is learned.

- **Internal factors**

Internal factors are those that the individual language learner brings with him or her to the particular learning situation.

- **Age :**

Second language acquisition is influenced by the age of the learner. Children, who already have solid literacy skills in their own language, seem to be in the best position to acquire a new language efficiently. Motivated, older learners can be very successful too, but usually struggle to achieve native-speaker-equivalent pronunciation and intonation.

- **Personality:**

Introverted or anxious learners usually make slower progress, particularly in the development of oral skills. They are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak, or to seek out such opportunities. More outgoing students will not worry about the inevitability of making mistakes. They will take risks, and thus will give themselves much more practice.

- **Motivation:**

Turns out that the more you are motivated toward learning the faster and better you will learn. This seems obvious but the crucial point is that to be motivated you have actually to believe that you can learn the language, and that you can learn it pretty quickly.

Intrinsic motivation has been found to correlate strongly with educational achievement. Clearly, students who enjoy language learning and take pride in their progress will do better than those who don't. Extrinsic motivation is also a significant factor. ESL students, for example, who need to learn English in order to take a place at an American university or to communicate with a new English boy/girlfriend, are likely to make greater efforts and thus greater progress.

- **Experiences:**

Learners who have acquired general knowledge and experience are in a stronger position to develop a new language than those who haven't. The student, for example, who has already lived in 3 different countries and been exposed to various languages and cultures has a stronger base for learning a further language than the student who hasn't had such experiences.

- **Cognition:**

In general, it seems that students with greater cognitive abilities will make the faster progress. Some linguists believe that there is a specific, innate language learning ability that is stronger in some students than in others.

- **Native language:**

Students who are learning a second language which is from the same language family as their first language have, in general, a much

easier task than those who aren't. So, for example, a Dutch child will learn English more quickly than a Japanese child.

2-3-2: External factors

External factors are those that characterize the particular language learning situation.

- **Curriculum:**

For ESL students in particular it is important that the totality of their educational experience is appropriate for their needs. Language learning is less likely to place if students are fully submersed into the mainstream program without any extra assistance or, conversely, not allowed to be part of the mainstream until they have reached a certain level of language proficiency.

- **Instruction:**

Clearly, some language teachers are better than others at providing appropriate and effective learning experiences for the students in their classrooms. These students will make faster progress. The same applies to mainstream teachers in second language situations. The science teacher, for example, who is aware that she too is responsible for the students' English language development, and makes certain accommodations, will contribute to their linguistic development.

- **Culture and status:**

There is some evidence that students in situations where their own culture has a lower status than that of the culture in which they are learning the language make slower progress.

- **Motivation:**

Students who are given continuing, appropriate encouragement to learn from their teachers and parents will generally fare better than those who aren't. For example, students from families that place little importance on language learning are likely to progress less quickly.

- **Access to native speakers:**

The opportunity to interact with native speakers both within and outside of the classroom is a significant advantage. Native speakers are linguistic models and can provide appropriate feedback. Clearly, second-language learners who have no extensive access to native speakers are likely to make slower progress, particularly in the oral/aural aspects of language acquisition.

- **Regular practice**

It is better to practice the language every day 20-30 minutes than 2 hours 2 times a week. Regular practice is very much linked to other factors such as time management and motivation.

- **Emotional involvement**

Our memory can retain much better information that is associated with strong emotions and more than one sense. For example, associating the sound of a word with images and feelings could be more effective than just reading the word on a dictionary. One important factor is that a person's memory may have preference for one of the senses. Therefore, discovering what your favourite sense for memory retention is can be highly useful to decide how to learn languages.

- **Playfulness and willingness to make mistakes**

When we are bored we do not learn. When we are having fun we are more receptive. This is one of the reasons why boring language school is usually very ineffective. I think one should not worry about sounding a bit ridiculous during the first months speaking a foreign language. Willingness to make mistakes allows you to improve by getting feedback on what you are doing wrong and how to fix it. A playful approach to language learning can be highly rewarding because it allows you to say anything without having to worry too much about it.

- **Humble approach – Starting from the basic**

We learn better when we interiorize very well some small knowledge chunks or principles before adding new ones. Therefore, a beginner that start by an humble approach, and recognize that is better to learn very good very few things at the beginning before learning a lot of advanced rules will actually learn faster. In other words, I think that the secret to learn fast is actually to learn “slowly” (gradually).

- **Grammar is secondary to practice.**

Generally speaking I believe that second language acquisition is more successful when it imitates children language acquisition. Children do not learn grammar first and then how to speak, they learn how to speak by a trial and error process which involves constant engaging with their environment. Children do not learn reading by starting to read literature. They learn to read by starting to read simple single words, and then simple single sentences. Grammar should be taught very sparingly and sparingly used to check the sentences that one has already pronounced instead than the opposite.

CHAPTER THREE: STUDY AREAS AND STUDY SUBJECTS

CHAPTER THREE: STUDY AREAS AND STUDY SUBJECTS

3-1 Study areas

3-1-1 Geographical situation of Saxwε and Wémε

3-1-1-1 Saxwε

Most of the Saxwéyé live in the district of Bopa (Gbokpà), one of the six districts of the province of Mono. The district of Gbokpà occupies the South-East of the province and is located at the South by the district of Grand-Popo, at the East by Lake Ahémé (àhɛn), at the North by the district of Dogbo and at the West by the district of Athiémé. One can also see them in the current/present district of Kpomàsè, especially Tokpàdomè and its neighboring areas at Kpɛnnu, in the district of Atinwɛmɛ.

Saxwεgbé is the language spoken by the “Saxwéyé”; it is the most spoken language in the sectorias of Xwéyɔgbé, Lobwégɔ, in Gbàpodji. In the sectorias of Kpɔsɔtomé and Agbodji, in addition to/ apart from Saxwεgbé, people speak gbesi which is seemingly a linguistic intelligible of Kotafongbé or Kogbe; you can see the Kotafɔn in the districts of districts of Dogbo and Athiémé in the province of Mono.

In the sectorias of dàxè and Sè, Saxwεgbé is spoken as a local language, becomes a dialect: the Daxεgbé or the Sεgbé. Our study cannot be extended to those dialectal differences now. However, it is useful to know that in spite of those differences, speakers of those languages manage to understand one another.

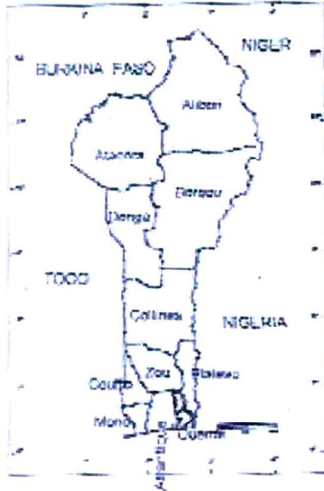
In the sectoriat of gbokpà, people speak ayizogbé and Saxwεgbé. Saxwεgbé is a language spoken by people from AJA TADO. The “saxéyé are the àjàvio who came from Tado after having stayed in Càbɛ (Savè).

However Saxwεgbé is different from the other Aja basing on a number of aspects. The former district of gbokpà is divided into two districts. Now we have the district of gbokpà and Xwéyogbé. This doesn't modify in any case the geographical surface initially described. Now there are eleven (11) districts in the province of Mono (mono).

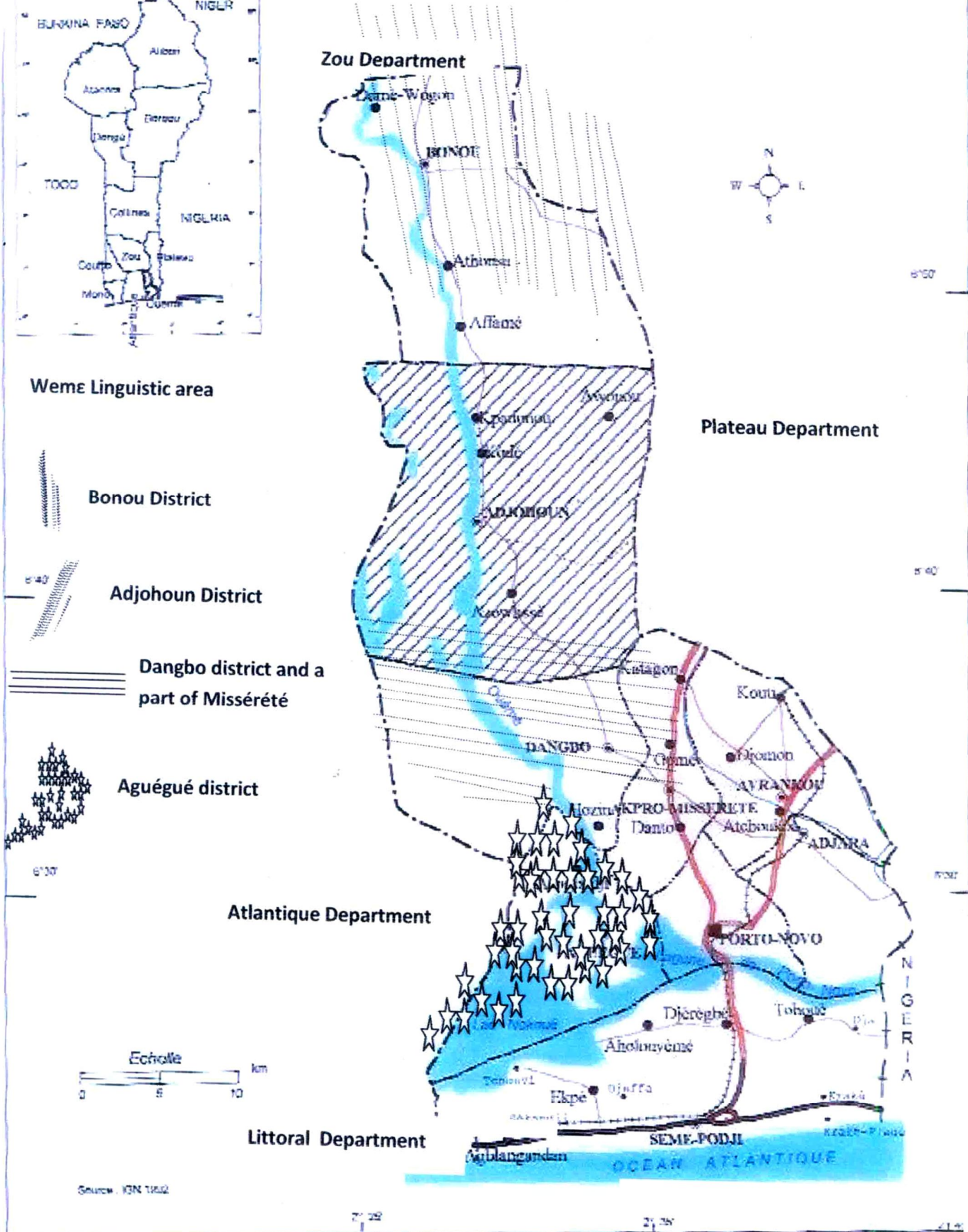
3-1-1-2 Wémε

Wémε comprising Dangbo, Adjohoun, Bonou, Aguégúés and a part of Missérété (see the map).

Picture n°1 : Benin Republic



Picture n°2 : Oueme Department



The map showing the weme linguistic area.

3-2 Study subjects

3-2-1 the findings generated by the interviews

3-2-1-1: In Saxwε

The people who were interviewed have said that the difficulties are related to the differences and the similarities between the languages. In fact, *saxwε* is a phonemic language that is a language which is pronounced the way it is written. Thus, *saxwε* alphabet stands for *saxwε* pronunciation, and this is common to all the Benin national languages. So, *saxwε* language is different from English in terms of phonological features.

3-2-1-2: In Wémε

As *Saxwε* language the difficulties are also related to the differences and the similarities between the languages. So *Wémε* language too is different from English in terms of phonological features.

3-2-2: The analysis of the findings

3-2-2-1: Phonological aspects of English and *Saxwε* language

3-2-2-2: Consonants and diagraph chart

Note that the problem of the existence or not of the /r/ remains total. Nevertheless, we notice its usage after /j/ and /d/ /adromè/, /jro/. The /r/ being abstracted, the *Saxwεgbé* has 12 vowels and 23 consonants, anyway, according to phonetics.

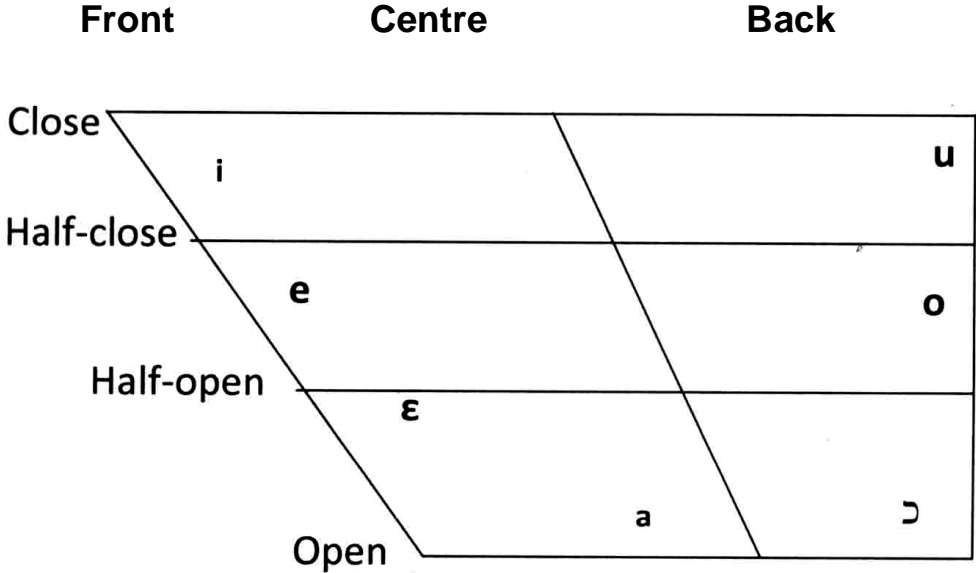
Manner of articulation \ Place of Articulation	Place of Articulation							
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Post Alveolar	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labiovelar
Plosives (Voiceless)	p	t					k	kp
Plosives (Voiced)	b	d					g	gb
Fricatives (Voiceless)		f			s	c	x xw	
Fricatives (Voiced)		v			z	j	h hw	
Nasal	m				n	ny		
Lateral					l			
Liquid					r			
Glide						y		w
Resonant				d				

English

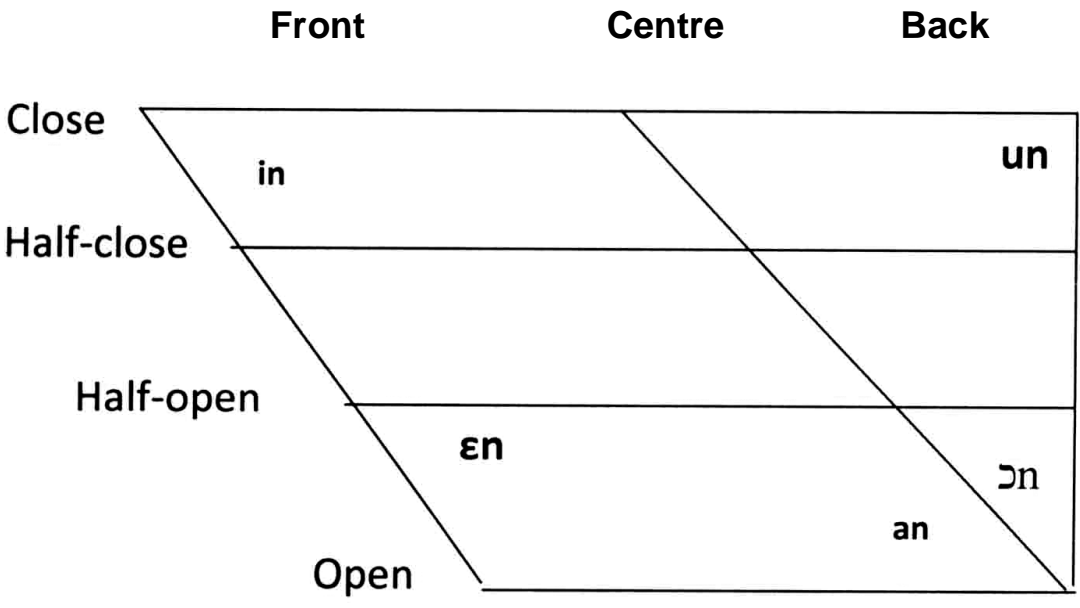
Manner of articulation \ Place of Articulation	Place of Articulation							
	Labial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Post Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives (Voiceless)	p			t			k	ʔ
Plosives (Voiced)	b			d			g	
Fricatives (Voiceless)		f	θ	s	ʃ			h
Fricatives (Voiced)		v	ð	z				
Affricate (voiced)					tʃ			
Affricate (voiceless)					dʃ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral				l				
Approximant or Frictionless constituents				r				
Glide	w					j		

3-2-3: Vowel phonemes

- ❖ Saxwε
 - Oral vowel chart

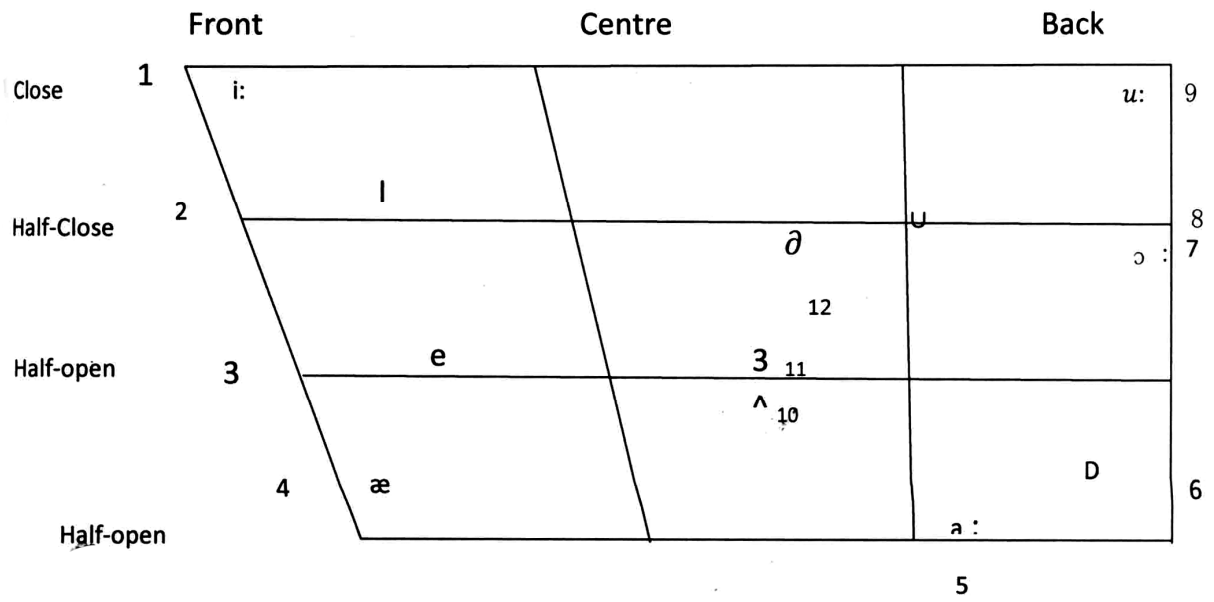


- Nasal vowel chart



- English

- Vowel chart



3-2-3-1: Phonological aspects of English and Wémε Languages

3-2-3-2: The consonant and diagraph chart

Wemε

Place of Articulation Manner of articulation	Place of Articulation							
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Post Alveolar	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labiovelar
Plosives (Voiceless)	p	t					k	kp
Plosives (Voiced)	b	d					g	gb
Fricatives (Voiceless)		f			s	c	x xw	
Fricatives (Voiced)		v			z	j	h hw	
Nasal	m				n	ny		
Lateral					l			
Liquid					r			
Glide						y		w
Resonant				d				

• English (3)

Place of Articulation Manner of articulation	Place of Articulation							
	Labial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Post Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives (Voiceless)	p			t			k	ʔ
Plosives (Voiced)	b			d			g	
Fricatives (Voiceless)		f	θ	s	ʃ			h
Fricatives (Voiced)		v	ð	z				
Affricate (voiced)					tʃ			
Affricate (voiceless)					dʃ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral				l				
Approximant or Frictionless constituents				r				
Glide	w					j		

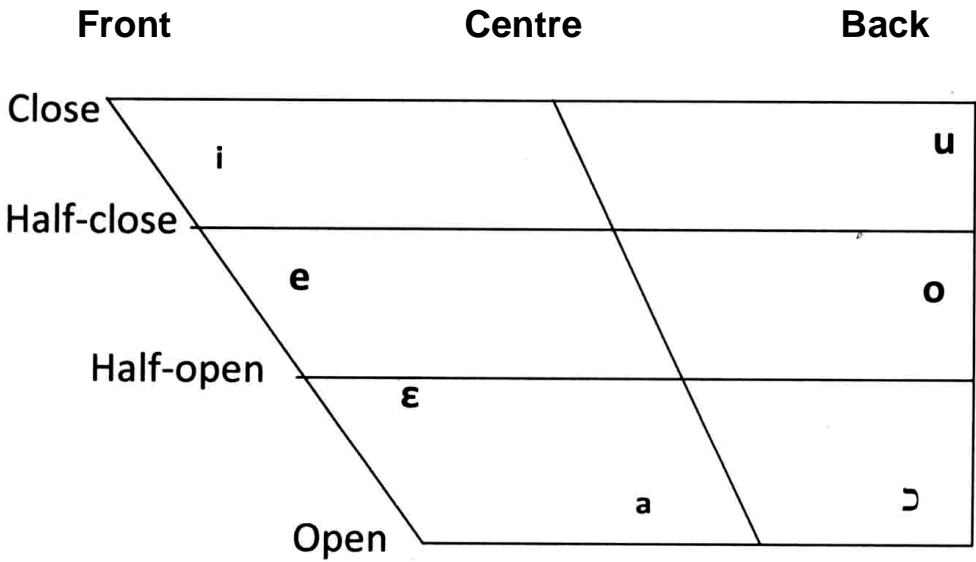
(3) Peter Roach (1985) English Phonetics and Phonology. A Practical course (CUP)

- Note that the phonemes / p / and / r / are not common in *wemε*, but educated persons use them in modern *wemε*.

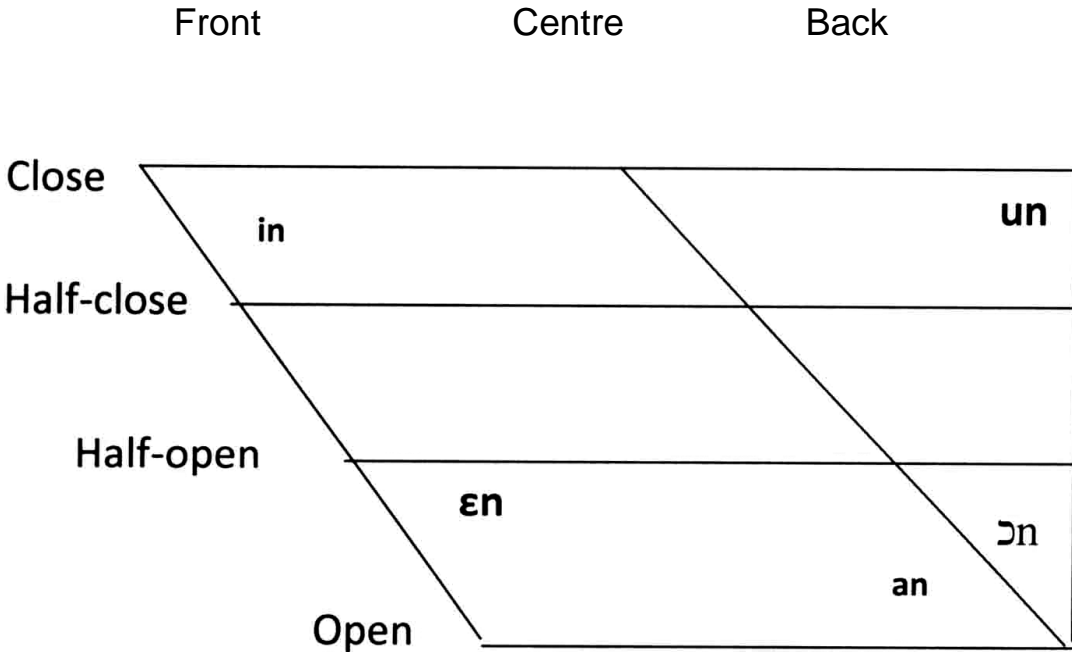
3-2-3-3- : Vowel phonemes

* wemε

- Oral vowel chart



- Nasal vowel chart



English

Vowel chart (1)

3-2-3-3-1: Analysis of the differences and similarities

3-2-3-3-2: Differences between Saxwε and English languages

As far as the phonology of Saxwε is concerned, we distinguish the consonant phonemes made of the consonants and diagraphs. Here are some examples of Saxwε words showing its consonants phonemes:

/b/	in	àbi	which means	wound
/c/	in	àci	which means	spoon
/d/	in	àdon	which means	illness
/f/	in	fogbà	which means	foot
/n/	in	ninomè	which means	behaviour
/s/	in	kànsè	which means	ask
/t/	in	otà	which means	head
/v/	in	vivo	which means	freedom/ liberty
/x/	in	xojoxo	which means	truth
/g/	in	gomi	which means	stomach/ belly
/h/	in	ohwé	which means	sun/ fish
/j/	in	jijuè	which means	joy
/k/	in	àkonnu	which means	chest
/w/	in	wàsi	which means	do
/l/	in	àlè	which means	profits
/m/	in	mimamè	which means	half
/y/	in	yoyo	which means	new
/z/	in	zozo	which means	hot
/kp/	in	èkpè	which means	thanking / gratitude

/gb/	in	ègbè	which means	life
/ny/	in	nyoxono	which means	old man

3-2-3-3-3: Differences between Wémɛ and English languages

Wémɛ, like other Benin languages is tonic. Concerning the phonology of *wémɛ*, we distinguish the consonant phonemes made of consonants and digraphs. Here are some examples of *Wémɛ* words showing its consonants phonemes:

/ b /	in	byà	which means	beer
/ c /	in	célù	which means	perfume
/ d /	in	dokin	which means	potato
/ p /	in	dya	which means	me
/ f /	in	fɛnnyɛ	which means	cassava
/ g /	n	glesì	which means	peasant
/ h /	in	hànvù	which means	pig
/ x /	in	xɛsi	which means	fear
/ l /	in	lìnfín	which means	flour
/ m /	in	mya	which means	fire
/ n /	in	naké	which means	firewood
/ p /	in	pɛɛn	which means	bread

/ r / this consonant phoneme is not easily pronounced. It is assimilated with the phoneme / l /. Examples → like radio → ladyo ; hlido curtain etc.

/ s /	in	sɔ dée jaa	tomorrow
/ t /	in	tɛnmɛ	place
/ v /	in	vi lɔ nɛ	that's the girl
/ w /	in	wéma	paper
/ y /	in	yɛli	skirt
/ z /	in	zinvlu	darkness
/ gb /	in	gbigbɔwiwe	holly spirit
/ ny /	in	nyɛví	needle
/ kp /	in	kpàli	carton
/ hw /	in	hwèví	fish
/ xw /	in	xwè yɔɔɔ	new year

Some of these consonants do not exist in English. We have /d /; /gb/; /ny/; / kp /; / hw / and / xw / instead respectively of /d /;/b /; / ŋ /; / p/ ; / h / and / h /. This explains the reason why foreigners, mainly Europeans mispronounced some local names: Agboton /ag-boto-n /; Dansoukpè /dansÚk-pɛ/

These phonemic consonants make the *wemɛ* different from English. As for the English language itself, there are some consonants quite authentic and different from *wemɛ*. We have for instance:

/ θ /	in	thief	which means	ajotɔ
/ ð /	in	they	which means	yéɛ
/ ʃ /	in	sheep	which means	lɛngbɔ

/ / in measure which means jɛnù

Another important difference lies in the fact that English is a tonic language, unlike *wemɛ* which uses accent.

Example: /f rɪst /forest which means zùngbó

Here the stress is on the first syllable. Some other differences can be noticed as far as vowel phonemes are concerned. First of all, it is important to make the nuance between the oral vowels and the nasal vowels (see the charts above). The English vowels prove to be different. For instance, we have the vowels / ϵ /, / \circ /, / ϵn / and / n / do not exist in English. The same occurs in English with vowels like / æ /, / Λ /, / ə /. All these differences make the oral production difficult to *wemɛ* learners. Nevertheless, though English and *wemɛ* languages share a lot of phonemic consonants, some of the words which have been borrowed from English into *wemɛ* language contribute to the similarities between the two languages.

3-3: The similarities

3-3-1: Between *Saxwɛ* and English language

Taking into account the numerous characteristics of the two languages which we have seen so far through their phonological aspects, we can say that no real grammatical or syntactical rules link English and *Saxwɛ*. But the need of contact leads the two languages to meet: many people from *Saxwɛ* have settled in Ghana for jobs or religious matters. Through their contacts with English native speakers, *Saxwɛ* locutors have been obliged to borrow English lexical items so as to express the new realities brought about by the former. Thus, the borrowed items do not conserve their original phonological forms, in other words, they are modified. These modifications are due to the fact

that the phonology and the morphology of the two languages (English and *Saxwɛ*) are not the same. The following examples are illustrative :

- School	/sku:l/	Sukulu
- Teacher	/ti:tʃə/	Cícà
- Driver	/draivə(r)/	Dréjà
- Barber	/ba:bə(r)/	Bàbà
- Church	/tʃɜ:tʃ/	cɔci
- Flower	/flaʊə(r)/	Flàwà
- Father	/ˈfa:ðə(r)/	Fàdà
- Watch	/ˈwɒtʃ/	wécì
- Matches	/ˈmætʃl:z/	màcésì
- Robber	/ˈrɒbə(r)/	hɔbà
- Trousers	/ˈtraʊzə(r)s/	tlɔzà
- Lorry	/ˈlɒri/	lɔlì
- Gin	/ˈdʒin/	jìnì
- Shop	/ʃɒp/	cɔfù
- Carpenter	/ka:pintə(r)/	Càpità
- Soldier	/ˈsɔldzə(r)/	sɔjà
- Iron	/ˈaɪən/	ayɔnù
- Air	/ˈeə(r)/	àyà
- Beer	/ˈbiə(r)/	bìyà
- Cup	/kʌp/	kɔnkpò

3-3-1-1: Between *Wémɛ* and English language

Taking into account the numerous characteristics of the two languages which we have seen so far through their phonological aspects, we can say that no real grammatical or syntactical rules link English and *wémɛ*. But the need of contact leads the two languages to

meet: many people from *wemε* have settled in Nigeria for jobs or religious matters; whereas nigerians used to come to *wemε* markets especially Azowlissè in order to buy agricultural products. Through their contacts with English native speakers, *wemε* locutors have been obliged to borrow English lexical items so as to express the new realities brought about by the former. Thus, the borrowed items do not conserve their original phonological forms, in other words, they are modified. These modifications are due to the fact that the phonology and the morphology of the two languages (English and *wemε*) are not the same. The following examples are illustrative:

Shop	/ʃɒp/	Cɔ̀fù
Worry	/'wʌrɪ/	wɔ̀li
Bread	/bred/	blɛ̀dì
Brick	/brɪk/	blíkì
Police	/pə'li:s/	polísi
Doctor	/'d ktə/	dótõ
Church	/tʃɜ:tʃ/	cɔ̀cì
Cement	/sɪ'ment/	sémɛ̀nti
Gold	/gəld/	gólù
Job	/d b/	jóbù
Cook	/k k/	kùkù
Change	/tʃeɪndʒ/	céngì
Corner	/'kɔ:nə/	kɔ̀nà

CONCLUSION

From the first year of the primary (private school) or secondary school Benin children come into contact with a new language that is the English language. The acquisition of this language poses some difficulties. The influence of the mother tongue or native languages on this process has been my preoccupation and I am interested in the wémɛ and Saxwɛ languages. To attend my goal, I read about some linguists to deepen my knowledge on the matter.

This research paper starts with the literature review on the findings of scholars and some senior graduates in the field. The Second chapter deals with the theoretical framework which points out the definition, and some theories of the concepts by some scholars. The last chapter states the study area and subjects where I described the geographical situation of wémɛ and saxwɛ, the linguistic characteristics of wémɛ and Saxwɛ language and English language and the analysis of the findings. The second step of this research work deals with my investigation of the Native languages selected wémɛ and Saxwɛ. The information given by the interviewed people having wémɛgbé as their native language has revealed that children in wémɛ encounter many difficulties in the process of the acquisition of English. For instance they have no contact with native speakers since they don't have opportunities for an immersion in English speaking countries like Nigeria, Ghana, etc.

The Saxwɛ language speakers concern the same people as the Wémɛ language since they are both Benin local languages. The information given by the interviews showed that difficulties are related to the pronunciation because many people from Saxwɛ have settled in Ghana for jobs or religious matters so, through their contacts with English speakers, they have acquired some new words that they are

finally accustomed to, thus the borrowed words, do not conserve their original phonological forms, but they are modified.

Talking about the acquisition of English in saxwε and wémε areas, I have noticed that the saxwε and wémε languages influence the learners in terms of pronunciation. This negative impact affects their oral production so that they make use of borrowing and interferences. In other words, saxwε and wémε children borrowed words they the accustomed to in their native languages so that the pronunciation is quite different.

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