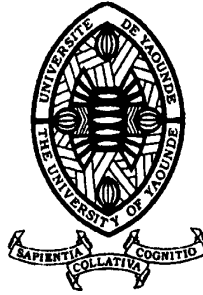


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UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I  
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UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I  
HIGHER TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
\*\*\*\*\*

## **Interference Challenges of Ewondo Learners ELF: Case study of GBHS Ekounou and Lycée Leclerc in Yaounde**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of a Postgraduate Teacher's Diploma(DIPES II) in Bilingual Studies

Par :

**Micheline Virgine ABE'E MENDOUGA**  
**BA in Bilingual Studies**

Sous la direction  
**Justin a NJIKA**  
Associate Professor



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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my parents: Mr Martin M. A. Mendouga and Mrs Marie J. Mendouga.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am infinitely grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Justina Njika, for her assistance all through this work. Her patience, timely and constructive criticisms were vital in the realization of this project.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the effect of the Ewondo language on the spoken productions of Ewondo learners of English. The work was motivated by the observation that, when most secondary school Ewondo speakers learning English speak, they negatively transfer phonological features of Ewondo, their mother tongue, to English. The researcher was therefore interested in identifying such aspects of negative transfer at the phonological level and systematically analysing them; assess the effect of these aspects of the negative transfer on communication; identifying the different factors that are responsible for the negative transfer in order to: suggest appropriate measures to be taken and reduce problems of Ewondo learners of English in terms of speaking. In order to systematically investigate the issue at stake, the work was undertaken within the theoretical framework of error analysis. The data were collected through survey methods of investigations and were analysed through both quantitative and qualitative methods. So this study probes into EFL teaching methodology in two secondary schools in Yaounde with a view to gauging their effects on the acquisition of EFL and the attitude of teachers towards a contrastive approach to pronunciation in the Cameroonian multilingual context. The findings reveal that, the spoken English of Ewondo learners is full of aspects of negative transfer. This could be attributed to factors that are psychological, linguistic, social and pedagogical. Some of these factors include students' negative attitude towards English and lack of sufficient exposure to English, difference between English and Ewondo sound systems, laziness and the lack of focus on pronunciation in the classroom.

## RESUMÉ

La présente étude porte sur l'influence de la langue Ewondo sur l'expression orale des apprenants Ewondo. Nous avons particulièrement été motivés par l'observation que lorsque les apprenants Ewondo s'expriment en anglais, ils transfèrent les aspects phonologiques de la langue Ewondo, leur langue maternelle, en anglais. Nous nous sommes donc proposés d'identifier ces aspects de transfert négatif en vue de les analyser; examiner leur impact sur la communication; d'identifier les différents facteurs qui peuvent rendre compte de ces interférences afin de proposer quelques mesures adéquates pour résorber le problème. Pour mieux mener notre étude, nous avons choisi le cadre conceptuel de «Error Analysis». Les données ont été collectées grâce au questionnaire, observation directe de l'utilisation de la langue par les informateurs et les interviews. Les résultats montrent que l'anglais des apprenants Ewondo est rempli d'interférence sur le plan phonologique. Ces nombreux cas d'interférence sont attribués aux facteurs qui sont d'ordre psychologique, social, linguistique et pédagogique. Il s'agit notamment de l'attitude négative que certains apprenants Ewondo ont encore vis-à-vis de l'Ewondo, le manque d'exposition suffisante à la langue anglaise par des apprenants, la paresse, les différences entre les systèmes phonologiques Ewondo et celui anglais ainsi que la négligence de cet aspect de la langue.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- MT: Mother Tongue  
EFL: English as a Foreign Language  
TL: Target Language  
L1: First Language, Mother Tongue or Native Language  
CA: Contrastive Analysis  
EA: Error Analysis  
EAH: Error Analysis Hypothesis  
L2: Second Language  
FL: Foreign Language  
FLP: Foreign Language Pedagogy  
FLC: Foreign Language Classroom  
L3: Third Language  
FLT: Foreign Language Teaching  
NNT: Non Native Teacher  
GBHS: Government Bilingual High School  
CBA: Competence Based Approach  
PLS: Pronunciation Learning Strategies  
CamE: Cameroon English  
CAH : Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

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## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that, this work entitled, “Interference Challenges Of Ewondo speakers Learning EFL: Case Study of GBHS Ekounou and *Lycée Général Leclerc* in Yaounde”, was carried by Micheline Virginie Abe’e Mendouga under my supervision.

Signature: .....

Justina A. Njika

Associate Professor

Department of English

ENS Yaoundé

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**APPENDICE**

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In recent years, English has spread its tentacles in the different parts of the world and today, the language enjoys a good status. Quirk et al. (1972:3) remark that it is “the most widely used language”. English has become a ‘world language’ enabling people with different native languages to communicate with each other in academic and non-academic settings. It is the lingua franca of the global community in major professional fields such as science, technology, commerce, and education. English is used in all spheres of life and it serves different purposes, notably, it is a language of science and technology, advertisement, a privilege language of diplomatic relations, education, sports, and an important tool for social integration and cohesion (Essossomo: 2013a). What is worth noting here is that, in the new ecologies where English has been adopted and adapted, the language generally undergoes some twists and turns and co-exists with other languages which generally serve as the mother tongues of most speakers. This is particularly the case with the multilingual Cameroon where English lives side by side with 286 home languages (see Ethnologue 2009).

From the linguistic perspective therefore, Cameroon is a veritable Aladdin’s cave of languages<sup>1</sup>. According to Simo Bobda (1994) citing Tadadjeu (1983:118), Cameroon has the most complex linguistic situation on the entire continent. Todd (1982:7) goes further by considering it as part of the most multilingual nations in the globe. Indeed, an inspection of the different languages that we have in Cameroon reveals that, of the four language families or phyla in Africa, only the Khoisan is not represented in Cameroon. Thus in this linguistic repertoire, languages are distributed among the three (3) of the four (4) major phyla as established by Greenberys (1996). These are:

- The Afro-Asiatic phylum represented by the Arabic family of the Northern Cameroon.
- The Congo-Kordofanian phylum to the Southwest represented by the Bantu languages and the West Atlantic subgroup (Fulfulde).
- The Nilo-Saharan phylum represented by Kanuri.

Essossomo (ibid) explains that,

This linguistic situation is further complicated by two languages inherited from the colonial masters and which serve as official languages, which are English and French respectively. Apart from them

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<sup>1</sup>See Essossomo 2013 for a clear explanation

we equally have Lingua Francas and one hybrid language, Camfranglais. This linguistic diversity explains why Cameroon is quite often referred to as 'Africa in miniature'.

This complex sociolinguistic situation and cultural diversity has serious consequences: English in Cameroon is greatly influenced by the languages with which it co-exist especially those that serve as the mother tongue of its speakers like Ewondo. That influence that the mother tongue (MT) exerts on the second language (L2) has been the subject of numerous studies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research. Most of the discussion has focused not only on negative transfer phenomena that are generally defined as "the incorporation of features of the L1 into the knowledge system of the L2 which the learner is trying to build" (Ellis 1994: 28); but also on what has recently been known as positive transfer. In fact, after a period in the 1950s-1960s when transfer was seen as the main cause of learning difficulties and a period in the 1970s when it was denied any place in the L2 acquisition process, we have now reached a point in the transfer debate where most authors acknowledge that "despite its sometimes irritatingly elusive character, transfer is one of the major factors shaping the learner's inter language competence and performance" (Kohn 1986).

Besides, it is also becoming increasingly clear that transfer phenomena need not be restricted to the learners' incorporation of L1 elements into their L2 production. As suggested by Odlin (1989: 27), transfer can also result from "similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired". In other words, transfer is not limited to the influence of L1 on L2, but can also involve the influence of L2 on L3. Moreover, there are well-documented examples in the literature in which it is the learners' L1 that gets influenced by some characteristics of subsequently acquired languages. Taken together, these findings suggest that transfer should no longer be seen as a unidirectional phenomenon (as was e.g. the case in Lado's *Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis*; Lado (1957) but as a multidirectional one (see e.g. Pavlenko & Jarvis 2002 on "bidirectional transfer" and Jarvis & Pavlenko (2008) on "forward transfer", "reverse transfer", and "lateral transfer"). Following Benson (2002: 68), it can be concluded from the above that "transfer does occur, but it is a far more complex phenomenon than hitherto believed". Despite intensive research efforts, many questions regarding the exact nature of transfer, the circumstances in which it occurs, and the psychological processes it relies on are still, to a large extent, left unsolved. This work critically examines the different aspects of negative transfers in the English of secondary school Ewondo learners of English. Only

aspects of negative transfer were examined in order to help teachers identify problematic areas for Ewondo learners and help them understand where transfer should be avoided.

This research endeavour was motivated by a number of factors. First, it was motivated by the observation that after several years of studies in English, most Ewondo learners of English still perform poorly in real life situation. Ewondo learners tend to impose particular forms of usage to English in every communicative act. They end up performing poorly in English as a school subject. They generally transfer phonological features of Ewondo, their mother tongue, to English. Such aspects of negative transfers, unfortunately, pose serious problems of intelligibility when it comes to communicating with other users of the language.

Secondly, the work was motivated by the lack of empirical works in the domain. Research in the domain of mother tongue transfer to English in general and Ewondo in particular in Cameroon is scanty. There has been no such research done involving the Ewondo Language and its interference in the learning of the English Language, in the multilingual Cameroon.

The particular issue that urged us to research was that although Ewondo learners of English are taught English in the Francophone subsystem of education at the secondary level for seven good years, they still face difficulty in expressing themselves effectively in English whereas after such a long period of studies, one would expect every learner who has successfully gone through this system to be fluent in English. For instance, Ewondo learners seem not to master the phonological system of English as they generally incorporate phonological aspects of the Ewondo language into English.

It is quite surprising that after seven years of English studies at the secondary level of education, most Ewondo learners of English cannot achieve proficiency in English. The students' performance is relatively poor when it comes to communicating orally. Their speech is still full of phonological interferences from their mother tongue. Four questions come to mind:

1. What aspects of negative transfer are found in the speech of Ewondo learners of English?
2. What social and pedagogical factors could account for the influence of the Ewondo language on English learning?
3. What is the effect of learners' negative transfers on intelligibility?
4. What measures should be taken in order to resolve interference problems of Ewondo learners of English?



In his book, *Linguistics across Cultures*, Lado (1957: 9) asserted that “individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture, both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives”. The aim of the present inquiry is therefore to systematically identify aspects of negative transfer in the spoken English of Ewondo learners of English both at the segmental and supra segmental (prosodic) levels. The identified cases of interference in learners’ speech will be used by L2 teachers to help the students learn English better without cross linguistic problems. The researcher intends to re-examine practices that, somehow, lead to low intake or low levels of learning and frustration. Learners’ linguistic and cultural alienation is being observed to make sure that Ewondo and English smoothly and harmoniously coexist and that the formal context of learning (school) is aware of parameters of each language system.

This study is significant. In fact, an examination of the differences between Ewondo and English helps to predict the possible errors that can be made by Ewondo learners of English. This work is particularly relevant for second/foreign language teaching. It is significant for English teachers in secondary schools as they will better realise the influence of L1 knowledge in the speaking of L2 and this might possibly change their approach in handling phonological errors in classroom practice. Teachers will no longer take the learner’s linguistic background for granted in EFL context. They will rather help learners identify problematic areas for Ewondo learners and help them understand where transfer should be avoided. It can make useful contributions to linguistic typology. Again, curriculum planners will be able to get a clearer picture of the scenario that takes place in the teaching of L2 in Cameroon secondary schools and adapt the curriculum accordingly.

The present work is limited in scope. Aspects of negative transfer occur at different levels of linguistic analysis in the English of Ewondo learners of English. However, the researcher, while keeping in mind the interrelationship between the different levels of linguistic analysis, limits her analysis to the phonological level. This work therefore excludes other levels of linguistic analysis like syntax, semantics, lexicology, graphology, and pragmatics.

This work consists of five main chapters. Chapter One contains the general introduction and preliminary information on the topic. Chapter Two surveys the literature related to the topic as well as the theoretical considerations, which provides the framework for the study. In Chapter Three, the researcher describes in details the different methods used in order to

collect and analyse data, the target population, the sample size and the sampling techniques used. In Chapter Four, the researcher analyses data with regard to the four research questions from the first chapter. Finally, in the last part of the work, the researcher overviews the entire research process, makes some recommendations and gives some suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on two main aspects. First, it discusses the theoretical frameworks that will be used for the analysis of the collected data. Second, it critically surveys the major works that are related to the present investigation and presents a contrastive general overview of the phonological systems of the two languages studied here namely English and Ewondo.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Considerations**

This study is undertaken within the theoretical framework of Error Analysis Hypothesis (EAH), interference supplemented by insights from Contrastive Analysis (CA). This will be undertaken following the model proposed by Weinreich (1953) and Lado (1957) respectively. In the subsections below, the notion of interference, and the effects of interference on the written and spoken productions of learners are presented followed by a quick overview of the Contrastive Analysis theory.

##### **2.1.1 The Contrastive Analysis (CA) Framework**

Contrastive Analysis also served as a backbone for the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. This theory considered interference as the basic process of second language learning. In this section, a short overview of how the Contrastive Analysis movement was formed is given, the related terminology is discussed and it is followed by the development of the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis through the three versions until it was displaced by other theories.

##### **Contrastive Analysis (CA)**

Contrastive Analysis investigates the differences between pairs (or small sets) of languages against the background of similarities and with the purpose of providing input to applied disciplines such as foreign language teaching and translation studies. With its largely descriptive focus contrastive linguistics provides an interface between theory and application. It makes use of theoretical findings and models of language description but is driven by the objective of applicability. Contrastive studies mostly deal with the comparison of languages that are ‘socio-cultural(ly linked’, that is languages whose speech communities overlap in some way, typically through (natural or instructed) bilingualism.

Contrastive Analysis has been the first major theory dealing with the relationship between the languages a learner acquires. Linguists have always been interested in comparing and contrasting different language systems and first pioneering works appeared at the end of the nineteenth century (James: 1981). The term ‘Contrastive Study’ was coined by Whorf in (1941) before that this discipline had been called ‘Comparative Linguistics’ or ‘Comparative Studies’ (Fisiak1981).After the Second World War, the interest in teaching foreign languages increased in the U.S.A. and many linguists were concerned with pedagogically oriented contrastive studies, especially in trying to predict learning difficulties on the basis of comparing the native language with the foreign language being learnt, and also with the study of bilingualism and language contact phenomena. It was believed that pointing to the similarities of the two languages compared will make the process of foreign language learning easier for the learner. Robert Lado’s formulation of the ‘Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis’ in his *Linguistics across Cultures* (1957) is considered the greatest contribution in the field of contrastive studies (Fisiak 1981, James 1981 and Krzeszowski 1990).

### **Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)**

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) was widely accepted in the 1950s and 1960s. in the U.S.A. and its original purpose was purely pedagogical. The teaching method which used the CAH as its theory of learning was the Audiolingual Method. Based on behaviorist and structuralist theories, the basic assumption for this hypothesis was that “the principal barrier to second language acquisition is the interference of the first language system with the second language system ...” and “... that second language learning basically involved the overcoming of the differences between the two linguistic systems – the native and target languages” (Brown 1980: 148). The term ‘interference’ here refers to “any influence from the L1 which would have an effect on the acquisition of L2” (Powell 1998: 2).

As Brown states, “it is quite common, for example, to detect certain foreign accents and to be able to infer, from the speech of the learner alone, where the learner comes from” (1980: 149).Lado’s practical findings were based on his own experience and family background. Being an immigrant to the USA and a native speaker of Spanish, he observed what difficulties his Spanish-speaking parents had with learning English and how interference was evident in their speech. In the preface to *Linguistics across Cultures*, Robert Lado explains:

The plan of this book rests on the assumption that we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the

language and the culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student. (Lado 1957 quoted in Brown 1980: 149)

Later in the same book he claims that the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult. The teacher who has made a comparison of a foreign language with the native language of the student will know better what the real learning problems are and can better provide for teaching them. (Lado 1957: 2 cited in Fisiak 1981: 4). This formulation of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was later called by Ronald Wardhaugh 'the strong version' of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Brown 1980: 157).

Another linguist supporting the strong version of the CAH was Fries. In his opinion, "the most effective [teaching] materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with parallel description of the native language of the learner" (Fries 1945: 9 cited in Powell 1998: 1). Although the practical process of contrasting languages is not the aim of this work, a brief outline of the procedure used is given, as Ellis (1994: 307) mentions it. The procedure involved four stages:

1. Description (i.e. the two languages were formally described)
2. Selection (i.e. certain items or areas were selected for comparison)
3. Comparison (i.e. finding similar and different items)
4. Prediction (i.e. in which areas the errors will most probably occur)

Wardhaugh believed that the strong version was "unrealistic and impracticable", since "at the very least, this version demands of linguists that they have available a set of linguistic universals formulated within a comprehensive linguistic theory which deal adequately with syntax, semantics, and phonology" (Wardhaugh 1970: 125 cited in Brown (1980: 157). This was rejected by the weak version of contrastive analysis which suggested that learner's errors should be treated or analysed a posteriori.

In the 1970s, Oller and Ziahosseiny proposed a compromise between the two versions of the CAH and called it a 'moderate version'. Their theory was based on their research of spelling errors in learners of English as L2 which showed that spelling errors were more common among those learners who used a Roman script in their native language (e.g. Spanish or French) than among those who used a non-Roman script (e.g. Arabic or Chinese). However, the strong version of the CAH would predict the contrary, that is, more difficulties on the part of the learners who had to acquire a new writing system (Brown 1980). Brown (1980: 159) concludes that interference is more likely to occur when there is similarity

between the items to be learned and already known items than in the case of learning items which are entirely new to the learner. He also points to the fact that most of the errors committed by L2 learners are ‘intralingual’ errors, i.e. errors which result from L2 itself and not from L1.

Whitman and Jackson carried out a study in which predictions made in four separate contrastive analyses by different linguists were used to design a test of English grammar which was given to 2,500 Japanese learners of English as L2. After comparing the results of the test to the predictions based on the four contrastive analyses, Whitman and Jackson found out that they differed a lot. They came to the conclusion that “contrastive analysis, as represented by the four analyses tested in this project, is inadequate, theoretically and practically, to predict the interference problems of a language learner” (Whitman and Jackson 1972 cited in Brown 1980: 158).

Thus, the strong version of the CAH has been proved inadequate, except for the phonological component of language, where it is quite successful in predicting the interference between the L1 and L2 in pronunciation in the early stages of L2 acquisition. Dulay, Burt and Krashen similarly conclude that “... present research results suggest that the major impact the first language has on second language acquisition may have to do with accent, not with grammar or syntax” (1982: 96). The weak version is not satisfactory because it is only able to offer an explanation for certain errors. The only version which remains acceptable is the moderate version. However, its findings as presented by Oller and Ziahosseiny are in contradiction with Lado’s original idea. This does not mean that the idea of L1 interference was completely rejected, but the CAH is applicable in practice only as a part of Error Analysis, which will be discussed later.

### **2.1.2 Error Analysis**

Foreign Language Pedagogy (FLP), in general, aims at conveying to teachers the essential information about the role of the learner and the teacher in the process of language learning, and provides them with theoretical, didactic methods and practical means for the Foreign Language Classroom (FLC). We can even go a step further by claiming that the mission of FLP is to research for and establish the supreme way of teaching a foreign language (FL) to the learners.

However, within this field of research it becomes quite obvious that the learners take in a rather passive role and do not contribute very much to new research data and, hence, new approaches towards foreign language teaching (FLT). This thesis can be held true, to give one

example, when we consider the various teaching methods for the FLC. Although the role of the learner is taken into account in each method, the learners are fairly more than “testing objects” of teaching models hypothesised by didactic scientists. On the other hand, one must admit that in correspondence with the recent emergence and establishment of the communicative approach (CA), the learners’ preferences and demands have been taken far more into consideration and their linguistic and communicative performances serve as source for methodological research input and constructive, teacher strategies-oriented as well as learner strategies-oriented output offered by science. Recently, and paradoxically enough, it can be perceived intensive discussion concerning the question how to deal best with errors produced by learners. More precisely, there has been a shift from the formerly applied “Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis” (CAH) toward the occupation with “Error Analysis” (EA).

The major distinction between CA and EA lays in the fact that the former has limited view in that it concentrates its survey on the differences between the learner’s first language (L1) and the second language (L2) as the most, if not only, significant source of errors or, as will be explained in the course of this paper, of “interlingual interference”. The latter, on the contrary also reveals errors that are deemed to be of “interlingual interference” (within the target language/ TL), which then can be traced back to the learner employing so-called learning strategies (mainly communicative strategies). From there, one can detect the correlation between the CA and the development of EA. Another reason for a revised contemplation of dealing with errors could be seen in context of worldwide globalization and English as “Lingua Franca”. For instance, for more than a decade by now we have been discussing the pros and cons of both non-native teachers (NNT) and teachers with native speaker-like competence and this is one of the questions yet to be answered by EA.

### **2.1.2.1 Error Analysis (EA) as an alternative to CAH**

As earlier mentioned, CAH is the historical predecessor of EA. Furthermore, it is “the studies of contrasts between the native language and the target language” which specifically examines “the effect of native on target language” (Brown 2000:207). Therefore, CAH inherits the belief that the L2 of a learner develops parallel to the system of the L1, which consequently may lead to interlingual interference (Macht 1980:355). Brown even claims that this effect can be observed vice-versa, that “the second language also influences the first” (Brown 2000:213). This is why CAH is often criticised for neglecting the impact of interlingual interference on the learners’ error production and for focusing too much on the negative interfering effect of the L1 on L2 learning. Indeed, CAH seems to ignore the fact of

the existence on intralingual errors (Brown 2000:215). He admits that interlingual interferences can almost occur anywhere and on any linguistic level.

### **2.1.2.2 Error Analysis Theoretical Framework**

Error Analysis is one of the most influential theories of second language acquisition. It is concerned with the analysis of the errors committed by L2 learners by comparing the learners' acquired norms with the target language norms and explaining the identified errors (James 1988). For Crystal (1999, P.108), Error Analysis in language teaching and learning is the study of the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a language, especially a foreign language. According to James (2001, p. 62) EA refers to 'the study of linguistic ignorance, the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance'. Another definition of Error analysis is given by Brown (as cited in Ridha, 2012, p.26). He defined Error Analysis as "the process to observe, analyse, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second languages and then to reveal the systems operated by learner". Error Analysis "involves a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining errors in learner language" (Ellis, 1994: 701). It provides a comparison of the language of the learner at some particular point in his course with the target language (Corder, 1973: 149).

### **2.1.2.3 The Framework of Error Analysis**

According to Corder, the following are the steps in any typical EA research:

1. Collecting samples of learner language
2. Recognizing the errors
3. Describing the errors
4. Explaining the errors
5. Evaluating the errors

Talking about the collection of errors, it is worth indicating that the nature and quality of errors is likely to vary depending on whether the data consist of natural, spontaneous language use or careful, elicited language use. Corder (1973) distinguished two kinds of elicitation: Clinical and experimental elicitation. Clinical elicitation involves getting the informant to produce data of any sort, for example, by means of general interview or writing a composition. Experimental elicitation involves the use of special instrument to elicit data containing the linguistic features such as a series of pictures which had been designed to elicit specific features.



The process of recognizing and identifying errors is one of comparing original utterances with their plausible reconstruction and authoritative reconstruction (that is an interpretation of the utterance derived from the learner himself) and identifying the difference. Recognition of errors is thus crucially dependent upon correct interpretation of the learner's intention.

Description begins when recognition has taken place. In the same vein, explanation of error can be regarded as a linguistic activity, concerned with accounting for why and how errors come about, Uboh (2004). It is thus from the explanation of errors that theories such as transfer, facilitation, interface, overgeneralization, conflict, ambiguity, equivocation, vagueness and misunderstanding emerge.

### **Relevance of Error Analysis in SLA**

In traditional foreign language teaching situation relying on behaviourist (behavioral) learning theory, errors are regarded as the linguistic phenomena deviant from the language rule and standard usages, reflecting learners' deficiency in language competence and acquisition device (Jie: 2008). In accordance with this thought, many FL teachers simply correct individual errors as they occur, with little attempt to see patterns of errors or to seek causes in anything other than learner ignorance. Presently, however, with the development of linguistics, applied linguistics, psychology, and other relevant subjects, FL teachers' attitude towards errors changed greatly. Instead of seeing errors as problems to be overcome or evils to be eradicated, most today's FL teachers tend to consider errors as evidence of the learners' stages in their target language development, which can provide information that can be used to sequence items for teaching or to devise remedial lessons (Ellis: 1986). In relation to the latter view, learners' errors in language learning should carefully be analysed. It is through analyzing learner errors that errors are elevated from the status of "undesirability to that of a guide to the inner working of the language learning process" (Ellis: 1986).

According to Corder (1967), EA has two objects: one theoretical and another applied. The theoretical object is to understand what and how a learner learns when they study a second language (L2). The applied object is to enable the learner to learn more efficiently by using the knowledge of his dialect for pedagogical purposes. At the same time, the investigation of errors can serve two purposes, diagnostic and prosodic.

Researchers interested in Error Analysis observe that errors are advantageous for both learners and teachers. It provides information to the teachers on students' errors. This helps

the teachers in three ways; firstly, to correct their errors, secondly to improve their teaching and thirdly to focus on those areas that need reinforcement (Al-haysoni: 2012).

According to Spillner (1991), errors are information in contrastive linguistics; they are thought to be caused by unconscious transfer of mother tongue structures or features to the system of the target language and they give information about both systems. Also, in their inter language hypothesis of second language acquisition, errors are indicative of the different intermediate learning levels and are useful pedagogical feedback. In both cases, Error Analysis is an essential methodological tool for the diagnosis and evaluation of the language acquisition process.

### **2.1.3 Interference Theory**

Interference is one of the most essential features of bilingual speech and there are three factors that are involved in language interference; the source language, the recipient language, and the element of interference. Interference is understood as a process which results from language contact. When an individual has two or more languages or two or more varieties of the same language in his or her memory, certain features of the other languages tend to interfere in his or her speech, when he or she is speaking one of these languages. Many linguists have defined interference.

Boey (1975:109) states that language interference in learning situation is students' habit of perceiving, performing, and tendency to speak L2 with the intonation or word order of his L1. He adds that not all error in L2 learning can be accounted for interference from L1. In addition, Krashen (1988:41) says that interference is error which shows the influence of the first language are simply the result 'falling back' on the first language when someone lacks of a rule in their second language. Moreover he states that interference occurs when the L1 and L2 rules are different and resulting errors.

Crowley (1992) defines interference as "the influence of one of linguistic systems of an individual on the other system of that individual. To Selinker (1972), interference is the error in the learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue. It is the influence that the learner's L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2. In learning a target language, learners construct their interim rules with the use of their L1 knowledge. It has been proven that interference is a normal occurrence in situations of bilingualism. It can be said to occur as result of an individual's knowledge of one or more languages, different from the first they acquired. This may imply that bilingualism or multilingualism leads to interference.

Interference has been defined as ‘l’utilisation d’éléments appartenant à une langue tandis que l’on en parle ou que l’on en écrit une autre’ (Mackey 1976 :397). We may look at this definition as implying that during the act of communication, be it written or oral, a bilingual individual whose first language is A uses the second language they acquired, in this case B and minute expressions from his/her first language intrude during the communication act, the instances where these intrusions take place can be known as interferences. These interferences are not premeditated on the part of the speakers. They are like a sort of psychological reflexion on their part.

As Dulay, Marina and Krashen (1982:82) point out, psychologically, interference is the influence of old habits when new ones are being learnt or the influence of the first during the acquisition of the second language. The old habits which are imbedded in us make it almost impossible to perfectly assimilate new ones. This does not nonetheless mean that new ideas cannot be acquired, but when two entities try to coexist and play the roles of tools used to express a view point orally or in written form, this always gives room for certain clashes. Instances where these clashes occur can be known as interference. These clashes can be said to be proof that the second language has not yet been perfectly mastered to such an extent as to avoid the speaker’s use of expressions or sound from their first language in order to explain the fact that they cannot find the equivalent of the said expression or sound in the second language. This theory is stressed by Ellis (1985) who considers interference as one of the cognitive processes responsible for the acquisition of a second language. To him interference occurs when learners experience certain difficulties during communicative processes. This, he continues, is usually due to the fact that in the course of communicating an idea, speakers lack the necessary phonological, grammatical or lexical equivalent in the L2 and so they resort to the L1 in order to make up the insufficiency. This is quite frequent with students.

Weinreich (1953:1) considers interference as “those instances of deviation from the norms of either language, which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language, that is, as a result of language contact.” This may imply that if during an act of communication (be it oral or written) individuals (usually bilinguals) while making use of a language (English for example), they are guilty of language they are using to communicate. Weinreich (ibid) goes ahead to say that if the difference between the systems (e.g. the phonic and grammatical systems ) of any two languages are great, that is, if the mutually exclusive forms and patterns in each language are more numerous, the learning problem will, as a result, be greater and this turn will lead to a potential area of interference (1953:1). Therefore, if the phonic and grammatical systems of

English and another language have great difference, this leaves more room for interferences because the bilingual may get stuck while communicating, and in order to make up for the lack of the correct expression in L2, they resort to the L1.

On his part, Mackey (1976:401) talks of three aspects while describing interference:

1. The first is to point out the foreign element used.
2. Next, what does the bilingual do with it? Is it used as a substitute for another term or for modification purposes?
3. Lastly, in what way does it replace the elements of the target language (here after TL)

In the case of the target population, these three points may apply because not only do they make use of foreign elements (though unconsciously) but they also use these elements as substitutes for the correct term and this is usually to cover up a lapse, especially during rapid conversations. These terms can also be used to modify a whole sentence or expression. Sometimes, they even replace those of the TL. Note should be taken of the fact that although interference may depend on the degree of bilingualism in the speaker, it is however a very peculiar characteristic of bilingualism.

Some linguists make use of other terms to talk about interference. Terence Odlin (1989:167) considers interference as a case of negative transfer' which he defines as "cross-linguistic influences resulting in errors, over production, under production, miscomprehension and other effects that constitute a divergence between the behaviour of native and non- native speakers of a language." To him, this kind of transfer (which can be contrasted with positive transfer) leads to underproduction errors and misinterpretation.

These will not be dwelt on because they are not our immediate concern. Our attention is on language interference and errors resulting from oral production. This can be used in the case of the Ewondo speakers of English because they sometimes make use of elements from their L1 when they cannot find its equivalent in the Target Language. This is common with most Cameroonians as well. One other oral production error quite common amongst this group of bilinguals is calques or loan translations, but this will later be studied in this work.

These (various) definitions about interference all boil down to the same fact: interference is a normal (although undesirable) aspect of bilingualism. A closer look at all the points which evolve around this phenomenon shows it is an unconscious display of an imperfect or insufficient acquisition of the L2 on the part of the speaker. This may imply that an individual has not yet fully mastered certain aspects of a given language (the L2).It may be the lexical or the phonological aspect. They are both felt at the oral level of the language.

Language interference is the transfer of elements of one language to another at various levels including phonological, grammatical, lexical, and orthographical (Berthold, Mangubhai, and Batorowicz (in Skiba 1997:1-5)). Skiba (1997) also states that analysed from the context of bilingualism, interferences are not code switching on the basis that it supplements speech. He concludes that when code switching is to compensate for a language difficulty it may be viewed as interference, and when it is used as a sociolinguistics tool it should not. However, Parera (1997:105) states that interference is used to refer to interaction of languages such as linguistic borrowing and code switching that happen when a language is in contact.

In addition to this, Weinriech (in Parera 1997:105) defines interference as those instances of deviation from the norm of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language. For example, as a result of this, language in contact will be referred to as interference phenomena. In contrast with this statement, Parera (1997:106) says that those who are interested in contrastive analysis argue that the occurring of interference is caused by unfamiliarity of L1 speech communities with the second language (L2) they learn. He also argues that the use of interference is better referred to bilinguals who are conscious and familiar to use both languages in order to search for information or to show prestige.

### **Types of Language Interference**

Linguists and researchers have discussed the phenomenon of interference from different perspectives and came out with different types. Dyakov (2008:2-13) divides language interference into two classifications: linguistics and extra linguistics principle. From linguistic principles, he subdivides language interference into: (1) graphic interference which influences the development of writing system as well as the spelling principle of the national orthography in general and separate lexical elements in particular, (2) lexical interference which influences the development of vocabulary as well as lexical modernization, (3) phonetic interference which influences the phonetic structure of a language, and (4) grammar interference which influences the grammar structure of a language.

The author adds that the extra linguistics principle is very closely bound with the concept of cultural and historical area that is depending on the influence of the three basic factors: religion, politics, and economy. He subdivides the extra linguistics principle into conscious and subconscious interference. Both of them are dealing with psycholinguistics principle. Subconscious interference is spontaneous and takes place under various extra

linguistics factors such as language contact. While conscious interference influences a language and causes changes in its inner structure. In addition, from linguistics principle, he also subdivides language interference into communicative interference (immediate contact with speaker of other languages) and model interference (religious and political and or cultural influence).

According to Grosjean (1989:9) in Pozos (2008:165) there are two kinds of interference. First, static interference which reflects permanent traces of one language on the other (such as foreign accent), and second, the dynamic interference which is the ephemeral accidental intrusions of the other language (as in the case of accidental slip on the stress pattern of words due to the stress rule of another language).

Weinreich (1953:14-47) divides type of language interference into three. There are (1) phonological interference which occurs when a bilingual speaker re-translates or re-produces his/her L1 by using the appropriate phonemes in his L2; (2) Lexical interference, which occurs when a bilingual speaker uses two or more parts or structures of different languages in a single word or lexicon; (3) Grammatical interference, which occurs when a bilingual speaker identifies morphemes, class of morpheme in language chain in syntaxes and uses it in the speech act. They are discussed in details below.

### **Phonological Interference**

Weinreich (1953:14) defines or explains that “phonological Interference arises when a bilingual individual identifies a phoneme of a secondary system with one in the primary system and when he produces it, he subjects it to the phonetic rules of the primary language.” Phonological interference involves the transfer of the phonological system of L1 to L2, which also includes the sound characteristics of the first language, for example, stress, rhythm, and intonation. This type of interference is likely where sound features of the two languages differ from each other, or if an element of one language is not represented in the other. Phonological interference is mostly observed in older learners, as the phonological system of their mother tongue tends to affect their pronunciation of L2. This phenomenon can be put down to neurological and physiological grounds: adding new pronunciation habits to the existing ones appears to cause great difficulty. For example, [θ] and [ð] pose problems of articulation to speakers of other mother tongues which do not have this particular sound often cannot produce it properly. They often replace it with a seemingly corresponding sound of their native language. Germans, for instance, often use [s] resp. [z] instead, while others, for example, native speakers of Arabic languages, pronounce [d] or [t] for [ð] and [θ].

## **Grammatical Interference**

Grammatical interference is defined as the first language influencing the second in terms of word order, use of pronouns and determinants, tense and mood. Interference at a lexical level provides for the borrowing of words from one language and converting them to sound more natural in another and orthographic interference includes the spelling of one language altering another. In other words grammatical interference refers to syntactical features, that is, sentence structure (=word order), use of pronouns and determiners, prepositions, tense among others. In English, for instance, adverbs of frequency also known as VP-adverbs are selected to the right of the verb in English and to the left in French as can be illustrated by the following sentences: I *often* see John (English); Je *voissouvent* Jean (French).

## **Lexical Interference**

Interference can also occur at the lexical level. Two different types could be distinguished:

### **a) Interference at the word level:**

This has to do with the use of a word from the source language (L1) while speaking the target language. One common reason for this is ‘linguistic deficiency’: a non-native speaker does not know a certain word, so he tries to make himself understood by replacing it with a word from his mother tongue. This ‘borrowed’ word can even be adapted phonetically and/or morphologically according to the rules of L2.

**b) Semantic interference:** in this case, the meaning of a word from L1 is extended to a corresponding word in L2. An example of this semantic transfer was provided by Saunders (1982): – a nearly 5 year-old German-English bilingual wanted to tell his English mother that he and his father had bought air tickets for the summer holidays: “Mum, we got the cards”.

### **c) Interference at the level of spelling**

This kind of interference means the transfer of writing habits or conventions of one language to the other. It predominantly occurs when learners of a language are not very familiar with its orthography yet, and therefore they might be tempted to apply the rules of spelling of their native language and/or follow their perception of the less familiar language.

## **2.2 Review of Related Literature**

This section critically overviews some research works that are closely related to the present investigation. It is a survey of some major works that have systematically investigated the influence of L1 on L2/L3 followed by a contrastive general overview of the segmental phonology of English and Ewondo. This will enable us to have tips on possible problematic areas in the acquisition of a second or third language by Ewondophone communities.

Interference has been an important research area over the past years. It has also been a subject of intensive research for linguists and scholars from many corners of the world. Different models describing the relationship, the similarities and differences between L1, L2 and L3 acquisition have been outlined in SLA research. Recent findings from the different investigations carried out suggest that L1 or a previously learned language transfer can occur in all linguistic subsystems of both comprehension and production in the target language, and can have a facilitating, inhibiting or modifying effect on L2/L3 acquisition. The likelihood of native language influence is affected by the typological distance between the languages involved and by several interacting non-structural, extra-linguistic factors such as different social and psychological conditions (Ellis: 1997, Kilborn: 1994). In other words, there is an interdependence between the first and second languages because acquiring one's first language gives one a certain "routine" or experience, strategies and metacognitive skills, which can be generalised to subsequent languages, but there are also language-specific constraints in L2/L3 perception and comprehension (McLaughlin: 1990).

Various researchers have concentrated on those errors which demonstrate the influence of one's native language on second/foreign language acquisition. Before Corder's work, interference errors were regarded as inhibitory; it was Corder who pointed out that they can be facilitative and provide information about one's learning strategies. Claude Hagège (1999) is a supporter of this concept and he mentions it in his book "The child between two languages", dedicated to children's language education. According to Hagège, interference between L1 and L2/L3 is observed in children as well as in adults. In adults it is more obvious and increases continuously, as a monolingual person gets older and the structures of his first language get stronger and impose themselves more and more on any other language the adult wishes to learn.

In contrast, as regards children, interference features will not become permanent unless the child does not have sufficient exposure to L2/L3. If there is sufficient exposure, then instead of reaching a point where they can no longer be corrected (as often happens with phonetics features), interference features can be easily eliminated. Hagège stresses that there



is no reason for worry if interference persists more than expected. The teacher should know that a child that is in the process of acquiring a second language will subconsciously invent structures influenced by knowledge she already possesses. These hypotheses she forms may constitute errors. These errors, though, are completely natural; we should not expect the child to acquire L2 structures immediately.

In addition to studies of L1 transfer in general, there have been numerous studies for specific language pairs. In addition, Thanh Ha Nguyen (1995) conducted a case study to demonstrate first language transfer in Vietnamese learners of English. He examined a particular language form, namely oral competence in English past tense marking. He tried to determine the role of L1 transfer in the acquisition of this English linguistic feature as “a function of age, time of exposure to English, and place and purpose of learning English”.

The influence of L1 on L2 was also examined by Lakkis and Malak (2000) who concentrated on the transfer of Arabic prepositional knowledge to English (by Arab students). Both positive and negative transfer were examined in order to help teachers identify problematic areas for Arab students and help them understand where transfer should be encouraged or avoided. In particular, they concluded that a teacher of English, whose native language is Arabic, can use the students' L1 for structures that use equivalent prepositions in both languages. On the other hand, whenever there are verbs or expressions in the L1 and L2 that have different structures, that take prepositions, or that have no equivalent in one of the languages, instructors should point out these differences to their students.

Albert and Opler (1978) considered 35 adult speakers and claimed that people show more lexical interference on similar items. So it may follow that languages with more similar structures (e.g. English and French) are more susceptible to mutual interference than languages with fewer similar features (e.g. English and Japanese). On the other hand, we might also expect more learning difficulties and thus more likelihood of performance interference at those points in L2 which are more distant from L1, as the learner would find it difficult to learn and understand a completely new and different usage. Hence the learner would resort to L1 structures for help.

Similarly, Gumperz (1985) made an attempt to analyse how Indian indigenous languages acting as the mother tongue of his speakers affect the acquisition of English. The researcher focused on one level of interference namely phonological interference. The findings reveal that in most of their social intercourses, Indian home languages exercise a negative influence on English. Most speakers generally transfer features of Indian home

languages to English. Such features pose serious problems of intelligibility when it comes to communicating with other users of the language.

In like manners, Poullisse & Bongaerts (1994) studied bilingual speech production regarding the use of L1 content or function words in L2 speech as a form of borrowing that speaker employ in order to compensate for their lack of knowledge in the target language. The use of L1 forms in speech is regarded as a compensatory strategy, the general argument being that the use of L1 forms occurs because the L2 system is not highly developed and automatized as the native language system. Romaine (1989) made a detailed and extensive analysis on this same phenomenon. Her work dwelled on the influence of the first language on the second language of a bilingual speaker. Unlike Gumperz (1985) who limited his analysis on phonological interference, the researcher went further by examining the phenomenon at the morphological, semantic, syntactic and lexical level. Her findings reveal that bilingual speakers generally assimilate features from their L1 when expressing themselves on a variety of contexts.

Carroll (1964) studied 53 young children that L2 requires the L2 learner to often preclude the L1 structures from the L2 learning process, if the structures of the two languages are distinctly different the circumstances of learning a second language are like those of a mother tongue. Sometimes there are interferences and occasionally, responses from one language system will intrude into speech in the other language.

Kengue (1986) investigated the influence of French on English in the domain of translation. His study stemmed from the observation that in Cameroon, most translations in all domains are influence by the French language. Focussing on the case of the translation of public notices in the metropolitan town of Yaounde, the findings display a wide range of cases where French influences English. Interestingly, the researcher shows that such “funny translations” seem not to pose any particular problem of intelligibility.

Bhela (2000) studied the influence of native language interference in learning the second language as the target language. She observed the features of interference of L1 on L2 and what are the effects on the syntactic structure of a written task of a second language learner. She found that when the participants of her study write in the target language, the learner rely on their native language structures to produce a response. As the structures of L1 and L2 have differences, there has been a relatively high frequency of errors occurring in the target language, thus indicating an interference of the native of language on the target language as expected. This study shows that interference of the first language on the target language or second language mostly causes error.

In his description of some linguistic issues, Simo Bobda (1994) in his work *Watch your English* equally made a striking remark that, in the Cameroonian setting, French greatly influences not only the way most Cameroonian call things, concepts, institutions and administrative procedures, but also the way most of them construct sentences, the form of the words, the way they use articles and prepositions. One main observation, such cases of negative transfer seems not to pose any problem of indelibility among Cameroonian speakers themselves.

Enokenwa (1987) critically examined the extent to which home languages (Pidgin English and French are responsible for the poor performance of Cameroonian learners of English at the lexical, grammatical and semantic levels. The researcher took students of forms four and five of the Government Secondary school of Eyumojock as the case study. Expectedly, the findings reveal that the above-mentioned languages exert quite a negative influence on the oral and written performances of learners.

Belinga (1987) examined how Cameroon Pidgin English which acts as Cameroon's popular lingua franca, interferes on the oral productions of young learners of class one and seven of bilingual primary school in the capital city of Yaounde. This influence was discussed at two levels: the lexical and the phonological level. Once more, the negative influence of such languages on English is felt. Of all the languages that were involved in her study, Cameroon Pidgin English appeared to be the most influential language.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

In this chapter the focus is on the methodology that has been used in the present study. First of all, it presents the geographical setting of the study. Secondly, the target population is described together with its sample size and technique. Then, the research tools used, and the different methods of data collection are discussed. The chapter ends with a discussion of the methods used for data analysis. The tools for the data collection are appended at the end of the study

#### 3.1 The Geographical Setting of the Study

The ongoing study is carried out in Yaounde, the metropolitan and political capital of Cameroon. The choice of Yaounde as a geographical setting of research can be accounted for by the fact that we could identify Ewondo-speaking communities around GBHS Ekounou and Lycée Général Leclerc in villages like: *Atangana\_Mballa*, the Emveng at Olézoa near to *Lycée Général Leclerc* in Yaounde, and *Mvog Belinga* also known as Ekounou. Majority of informants came from those places. In addition, the choice was also dictated by financial and time constraints. In total, two Government High Schools were involved in this research endeavour namely Government Bilingual High School Ekounou (GBHSE) in Yaounde IV and Lycée Général Leclerc Ngoa-Ekele (LGLN) in Yaounde I. The latter is purely Francophone with English as a compulsory school subject whereas the former context has both the Anglophone and the Francophone sub-systems of education co-existing. It is also because of time constraints that the study could not extend its scope to private schools.

#### 3.2 The Population of the Study

The target population for this study consisted of two main groups of informants: Ewondo English language learners and teachers from the above mentioned secondary schools in Yaounde. The selected students are from *Terminale*, *Première* and *Seconde* classes (the complete second cycle).

##### 3.2.1 Student Informants

The common characteristic of our student informants here is their linguistic background. The target population was supposed to be made up of Ewondo speakers learning English as a Foreign Language in the second cycle of the Cameroonian Francophone Sub

system of education. So, in total, 71 students were sampled, among which 41 from GBHS Ekounou and 30 students from Lycée Général Leclerc in Yaoundé. Concerning GBHS Ekounou, there were eighteen (18) students selected from *Terminales* (TleA2 ALL); fourteen (14) in *Premières* (P<sup>ère</sup> A3 ALL) and eight (09) in *Secondes* (2ndeA1 ALL). Students were all Cameroonian, Ewondo speakers, ranging from 14-23 years and, they were of both sexes (male students and female students). Informants from Lycée Général Leclerc are also from the second cycle of the francophone system of education: six (6) of them are from *Seconde A2*, thirteen (13) from *Première A3* and eleven (11) were taken from *Terminale A1*. The general observation here might (is) be the fact that female Ewondo learners of English outnumbered male ones. This information is summarized in the table below.

**Table 1: Distribution of student informants**

<b>Schools</b>	<b>GBHS EKOUNOU</b>			<b>Lycée Général Leclerc</b>		
<b>Classes</b>	Tle A2	P <sup>ère</sup> A3	2nde A1	TleA1	P <sup>ère</sup> A3	2nde A2
<b>Number of students</b>	18	14	09	11	13	06
<b>Total</b>	41			30		
	71					

The most important sociolinguistic variable that guided the choice of the above population is the Region of origin of the informants. Concerning their educational background, the students were all from a francophone background with English as a compulsory school subject and already in the second cycle. The choice is completely subjective as focus was supposed to be on those who have been studying English for at least five years. This was to collect data from learners who are about to reach the university level with poor English in general and underdeveloped speaking competence in particular. Moreover, in the first cycle students might not have been cooperating as they are still too young and less conscious than those from the second cycle.

### 3.2.2 Teacher Informants

It seemed necessary to get teachers' advice and opinion on the issue examined here. There was a need for this study to get teachers confirm or reject the hypotheses posited (stated) by the study. Also, they interact with this category of learners every day and could

better describe the linguistic behavior of Ewondo learners of English in spoken and even written productions.

So, nine informants were contacted in this category, though only six English language teachers ended up to be considered. Four of them were from Government Bilingual High School Ekounou and two came from *Lycée General Leclerc*. Three teachers faced some difficulties as they could not be free in time and could not be followed endlessly. The allocation of teachers by schools is given below.

Six English language teachers provided as much information as possible for this study. Their sex, qualification and teaching experiences were taken into consideration in their selection. The necessary and detailed information, concerning teacher informants, are presented in table below

**Table 2: Teachers' Qualification**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Male	02	33.33 %
	Female	04	66.66 %
<b>Qualification</b>	DIPES I	01	16.66 %
	DIPES II	04	66.66 %
	BA	01	16.66 %
<b>Teaching experience</b>	1 – 5 years	01	16.66 %
	6 – 10 years	03	50 %
	11 - above	02	33.33 %

From the above table, it can be deduced that 33.33 per cent of the informants were male English language teachers and 66.66 % of them were female teachers. In terms of qualification, 16.66 percent had a DIPES I, 66.66 per cent have a DIPES II and 16.66 per cent operating in part time teaching. All the above information can be used in assessing the reliability of the data collected from teacher informants.

### **3.3 Research Instruments**

The research instruments used for this investigation involved observations, questionnaires and interviews. Each instrument is presented below and as already mentioned above, these tools are found in the appendices.

#### **3.3.1 Observations**

Observations enabled us to observe the student informants in two different settings: formal (classroom environment) and informal settings (out of the classroom confinements).

Both participant and non-participant observations were used in this study. Learners were observed according to situations (formal and informal). The first step was the researcher's personal experience. Having been a learner of English for quite some time one could notice intrusions of Ewondo linguistic features into the English of Ewondo learners of English. But since research is not subjective, we had to go back to class so as to observe what actually happens in formal settings. The aim was to verify and see if learners still transferred linguistic knowledge from their L1 to the target language. To that effect, two golden opportunities were offered to us namely the teaching practice and the celebration of the 2016 Bilingualism Day in schools.

The observation lasted from February to March. Depending on the time tables, three days per week were enough for us to observe three selected classes in Lycée Général Leclerc and each period lasted for fifty five minutes. Tuesdays and Wednesdays were spent at GBHS Ekounou where a period lasted for fifty minutes. With the help of teachers, more attention was paid to some students whose list of names was made ready before the class. In fact, before we could start observing, the researcher went to each of the selected classes to have focused group work with the intention of identifying Ewondo speakers who could also make themselves available for the collection of the data. When it was the time to observe, the researcher sat in the classroom and listened to the selected informants' presentations during English language lessons.

An observation checklist was conceived before going to observe informant spoken language in English. The checklist was made up of four main columns with Syntax, Grammar, Phonology and Lexicology being the main linguistic levels to be analysed from learners' oral speech in order to identify the one that was most problematic to Ewondophones. They were observed during informants' oral class presentations. Each participant was observed and a tick fell on the most affected linguistic level followed by an arrow to indicate if the identified interference case caused problems of intelligibility. In total, nine lessons were observed of which three by bilingual classmates on teaching practice. More details are given in the

research procedure. The same observation checklist was also used in informal setting like the preparation of some special activities for the celebration of 2016 Bilingualism Day.

A whole week was devoted to activities related to the celebration of the Bilingualism week was an opportunity for observation and collection of data for the present study. So, apart from sitting in class to observe student informants, we were lucky enough to be on teaching practice when secondary school had to prepare activities for the celebration of the 2016 Bilingualism Day. Prior to that, students were busy designing activities such as poems, sketches, speeches and songs in English for Francophones and in French for Anglophones. We had Speeches from oral presentations on the occasion of the Bilingualism Day (GBHS Ekounou). This was mostly observed when they were still getting ready, preparing activities (speech writing, poems, songs and performances) for the celebration of bilingualism in their school. We helped them correct their works.

More attention was paid to Ewondo learners of English who took part in the activities. The researcher immediately recorded and analysed their speeches as they rehearsed or wrote poems, speeches, sketches and songs. They read aloud in the presence of the researcher who listened. At times they had to demonstrate what they said or read. This was also done in order to identify problematic areas in informants' oral performances. Aspects of interferences of the learners' L1 or L2 in their spoken English were observed at four key linguistic levels, namely Syntax, Grammar, Phonology and lexicology. It should be mentioned here that not all of the informants participated in the above activities (12 informants from both schools)

**Table 3: Summary of the Observation Sessions**

<b>Number of classes</b>	<b>Six(2 <i>Secondes</i>, 2<i>Premières</i> and 2 <i>Terminales</i>)</b>
<b>Participants</b>	Seventy-one
<b>Observation sessions</b>	Nine : 2 per classs in GBHS Ekounou
<b>Duration</b>	February – March
<b>Period</b>	50 -55 minutes

### 3.3.2 The Questionnaire

Two different questionnaires were designed and administered to two categories of informants: learners and teachers of English. This was meant to provide necessary information from participants; that will help the understanding of the issue at stake.



### **The Students' Questionnaire**

Seventy-five (75) copies of the students' questionnaire were administered to seventy five (75) students and were to be filled in and return on the spot. It globally aimed at assessing Ewondo speakers' attitude towards English as a medium for communication. The first four questions, eighth, ninth and tenth ones defined family composition so as to have a general and clear view of these learners' immediate linguistic environment, the teaching methods used by their teachers and other factors responsible for some on the difficulties they face in EFL learning. The fifth, sixth, seventh, eleventh and twelfth questionnaire items would help elicitation of data concerning learners' problematic linguistic level and the consequences of negative cross-linguistic transfers on communication. The last question was designed to give room to possible solutions to Ewondo speakers' challenges in EFL classrooms. The questionnaire consisted of thirteen questions: seven straight (direct questions) YES or NO questions; six open-ended questions.

All the questionnaire items were tested successfully prior to the administration of the questionnaire in class. Informants were selected before proper administration. They were all supposed to be Ewondo speakers, and then they could receive a copy of the questionnaire when they were free. Seventy-five copies of the questionnaire were administered, but only 71 were returned because students in *Seconde* have proven very distracted and ended up destroying their questionnaire. A sample of the students' questionnaire will be proven in Appendices.

### **The teachers' Questionnaire**

The teachers' questionnaire comprised of nine (9) fundamental questions. The first part of the questionnaire required the respondent to write their qualifications and teaching experience. The fifth questionnaire item catered for the most affected linguistic area in cases of interference or aspects of negative transfers from the learner's mother tongue to English. The seventh served to elicit data on the effects of negative transfers on intelligibility whereas the first four and two others (6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>) discussed teachers methodology in EFL classrooms and their attitude towards the learner's linguistic identity. All of the above required a tick from informants. The last question gave the possibility for teachers to make suggestions in order to solve the identified problems or challenges.

### **3.3.3 Interviews**

Thirty two informants were interviewed. The interview has proven very important for the collection of data. It was even the key to more relevant, practical phonological information from the spoken sources. Eight sessions were enough since we could not spend too much time running after some informants who were not always willing to participate. So we had to stop at a certain point of the time because after eight sessions all the frequency of common pronunciation mistakes could be obtained.

The interview was subdivided into two steps: the first part was meant to collect background information about informants and four questions were asked to informants to that effect as seen in the interview list in the appendices. The second part consisted in reading aloud tests: a list of words was to be read by informants. The main objective here was to collect consistent facts related to the first research question of this study which is about aspects of negative transfer resulting into interferences between English and the learner's linguistic background. First of all, learners' performance of a variety of oral tasks designed by the researcher, and both impromptu and extemporaneous speaking on the informants' chosen topic constituted the activities carried in this phase of data collection. Those conversations were recorded using an Android cellphone. During breaks, Ewondo learners of English sat in the staffroom with the researcher and each time there was a possibility to have them free. Students were called upon to interact with the researcher. They discussed issues related to their studies and, described the behaviour of their English student- teachers. Then, the interview list and a common pronunciation mistake checklist are provided in the appendices: they are made up of specific questions and a list of selected words for the study that were read aloud by only thirty-two (32) informants out of the 71 selected). This number can be justified by time constraints and learners' caprices. The pronunciation mistakes checklist contains sounds that were to be focused since they did not exist in the Ewondo language and might not be familiar to Ewondo learners of EFL. Their performances were recorded.

### **3.4 Research Procedure**

The following observation procedure was adopted:

- 1- Student informants were selected before observation sessions: they were met in their classes and the researcher could have focus-group work with them the first day she was introduced to the class by the teacher. So it was made clear that only Ewondo learners could be of help to the researcher. The first instrument that was administered was the questionnaire (for student informants).

- 2- Only Speaking and Reading-Comprehension lessons were selected for observation sessions.
- 3- A list of the selected informants' name was drawn for each class that was to receive the researcher for the collection of data.
- 4- Activities in class were monitored by the teacher.
- 5- Periods lasted for either fifty minutes (GBHS Ekounou) or fifty-five minutes (Lycée Général Leclerc Yaounde) each. Twenty-five (25) minutes were used for oral presentations of group work.
- 6- During class presentations and group work the researcher handed the list over to the teacher. So, both the teacher and the researcher paid particular attention to the selected population.
- 7- During the preparation of the celebration of the Bilingualism Day, the researcher, still on her teaching practice, had the opportunity to follow her informants to take part in their activities and help them prepare some of these activities (drama performances, poetry and speech writing and reading).
- 8- The same informants also sat with the researcher several times for interviews.

Before concluding the actual study, the researcher visited the selected secondary schools in order to obtain permission from their principals. In the two schools, we were directed to the discipline masters who granted us written authorizations to observe the desired English classes. Time-tables were given and appointment taken with English teachers who were in charge of the selected classes. Looking at time-tables of the different classes in the second cycle, we chose hours at which we were free, since we collected data for the present study during the teaching practice when we had other classes to teach or to observe and lessons to prepare. We could then have face-to-face encounters with teachers to give reasons for our presence in their next English Language lessons. They could then tell us before time when they could have interesting lessons for us to attain the class and observe group work activities.

### **3. 5 Data Collection Procedure**

The first step towards the collection of data was the identification and selection of informants to provide data to the study. We went to the classrooms when there was no teacher in class in order to have a talk with students. The aim was to avoid giving the questionnaire to those who were not from an Ewondophone linguistic background. They got to understand our intention was to work with Ewondo-speaking learners of English only. The

student questionnaire could then be administered this specific population. At times we had to stop if a teacher came in for a class or if informants were tired or hungry. The problem we face is the fact that when we came back some of our informants were absent and could not return the questionnaire. But the researcher insisted till almost all the copies were returned. Then observation sessions had to follow.

During observation sessions, the observer sat in the classroom in the best position to hear and to see the participants. Since activities were monitored by the teacher, the latter focused more on some learners to help the researcher in the collection of the desired data as agreed before coming to class. Sited at the back of the classroom, the researcher had her observation check list from which to tick and she focused on Ewondo learners of English in order to indicate linguistic levels that constituted an obstacle to effective communication in their oral productions. Special attention was paid to phonological features. Occasionally marginal notes were used to explain the class formation of any unusual circumstances. When there was a major change in class formation, the communication pattern or subject under discussion, a double line was drawn and the time was indicated. As soon as the observation was completed, we retired to the staffroom and completed a general description of each separate activity and its period. We summarized information from the observation on a second observation sheet designed as follows:

This first observation constituted notes on the researcher's initial data on speech features and linguistic levels that interfered from an old habit to new habits alongside tentative explanations. Notes were taken on how often learners come into contact with English and problem areas in the process of English language learning. Prior to this, we went for library research on language contacts and the phonological interference possibilities between English and the learners' linguistic background. This was to seek confirmation or contrary views to our observation and the conception we had formed.

Before proceeding to the observation, in the selected classes, it was necessary to establish certain ground rules which became conventions for coding. In the formal setting the language used was supposed to be standard in form and meaning. With pre-established ground rules, it was easier for the researcher to select and define (tick) categories to be observed:

1. Focus was only on Ewondo-speaking English language learners. They were purposely assigned a group work (all the Ewondo speakers worked in the same group as organized by the teacher).

2. In total, nine group works of oral presentations could be observed by the researcher from February to March (one group for each time we had the possibility to attend EFL classes).
3. Presentations lasted for twenty-five minutes and each presenter could talk for at least one minute (60 seconds).
4. Participants would introduce themselves before they could start talking or expressing their viewpoint on a specific topic of discussion, in English.
5. Four linguistic categories were observed while a participant had the floor namely grammar, phonology, syntax and lexicology.
6. When a given category posed problems of intelligibility, a tick and a falling arrow were used whereas a single tick was used to only signal a problem area that also affected the speech of informants and which required remedial classes. A single tick meant the message was passed across though there were mistakes and interferences.
7. A star was used to indicate the nature of factors that could account for the interference category that mostly affected and hindered intelligibility.
8. In cases of interlingual interferences, the language (s) that interfered in the oral speeches of Ewondophones was indicated.

The next step in the research was to regularly try to convince informants to follow us to the staff room for the interview. It should be mentioned here that this was not an easy task because students had classes to attend; they went out for break and had to look for something to eat before we could have them. Moreover, we were not always sure to have the staff room free, or to be free at the same time as the students. The latter difficulty was reinforced by the fact that the researcher went from one school to the other and at different periods; at times there were clashes in the time tables. Data from the spoken source (recorded learners' oral productions) were systematically transcribed after the listening procedures. Then, the researcher matched the informants' actual renditions with RP. The aim of this comparative study was to determine features that are distant from RP and that pose problems of intelligibility.

### **3.6 Method of data analysis**

Responses to the questionnaires and results from observation sessions were classified in tables and pie charts and histograms drawn in order to identify clearly the most problematic linguistic area to Ewondo learners of English. The students' and the teachers' questionnaire

were analysed concurrently. The statistical method used was the calculation of percentages using the formula below:

$$\frac{F}{P} \times 100 = X\%$$

Where **F** stands for frequency

**P** for Population

**X** for any number inferior or equal to 100

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. By implication therefore, the data we analyze directly answers the research questions which are clearly spelt out in Chapter One. The first question is about the identification and description of aspects of interference and related negative transfers in the oral performances of Ewondo learners. The second question focuses on some related sources of interference whereas the third is concerned with the effects of learners' negative transfers on intelligibility.

#### 4.1 Aspects of Interference and Related Negative Transfers

The researcher systematically analysed some sample speeches from the informants. From the analysis, there are some salient aspects of interference and negative transfer in the spoken English of Ewondo learners. In the following sections, we will look at some cases of negative transfer at the phonological level which is our focus.

##### 4.1.1 Identification of the most affected Level of Linguistics

Here are facts from the nine observation sessions, and questionnaires. The following table summarizes the six observation sessions carried out in GBHS Ekounou.

**Table 4: Observation checklist I: results from GBHS EKOUNOU (Summary)**

Classes	Lexicology			grammar			Phonology			Syntax		
	2nde A1	PA3	TleA 2	2nd e	P	Tle	2n de	P	Tle	2nde	P	Tle
<b>Participa nts</b>	08	14	18	08	14	18	08	14	18	08	14	18
<b>Number affected</b>	02	03	05	03	03	02	05	09	12	02	02	01
<b>percenta ges</b>	25%	21.4 %	27.7 %	37 %	21.4 %	11.1 %	65 .5 %	64.2%	66.6 %	25 %	14.2 %	05.5 %

From table 4 above, the most affected area that challenges Ewondo learners of English is phonology where the highest percentages of 65.5% in 2<sup>nde</sup>, 64.2% in 1<sup>ere</sup> and 66.6% in T<sup>le</sup> of interference are registered during their oral presentations.

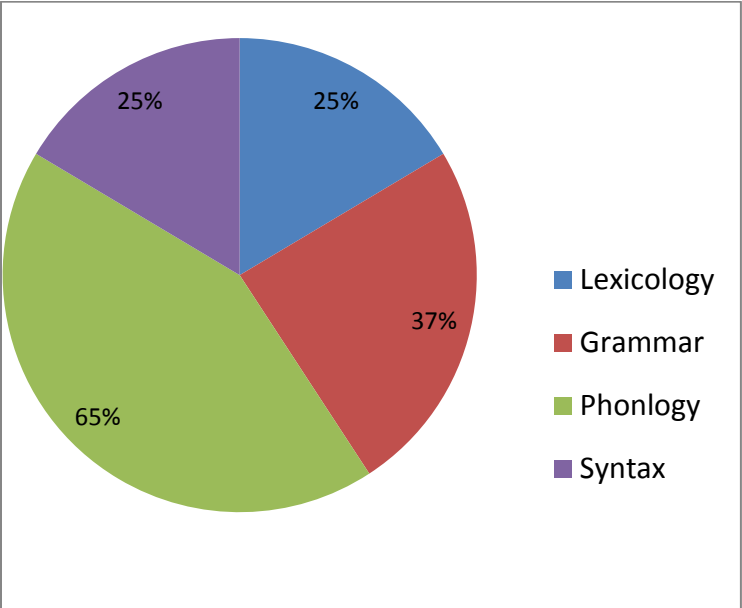


Figure 1: 2<sup>nde</sup> students’ problematic linguistic areas

Figure 1 above demonstrates that Ewondo-learners face difficulties at many levels of linguistic analysis namely lexicology, grammar, syntax and phonology. However, phonology remains the most problematic because 65% of the informants in *Seconde* classes displayed in their speech phonological features from their mother tongue.

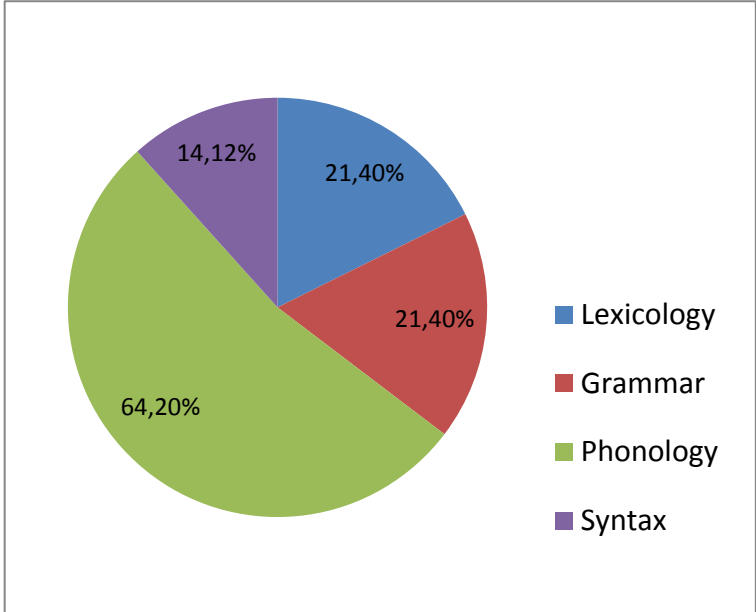
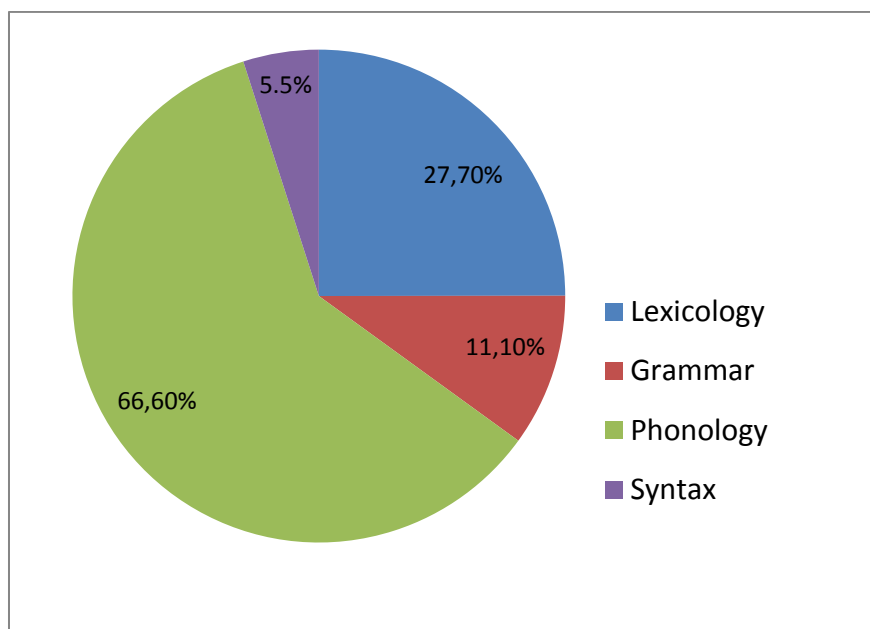


Figure 2: *Premiere* students problematic linguistic areas



The above figures does not contradict findings from *Seconde* classes because majority of Ewondo learners of EFL, 64% face pronunciation problems whereas only 14.12% are facing problems in Syntax, 21.40% in Lexicology and Grammar.



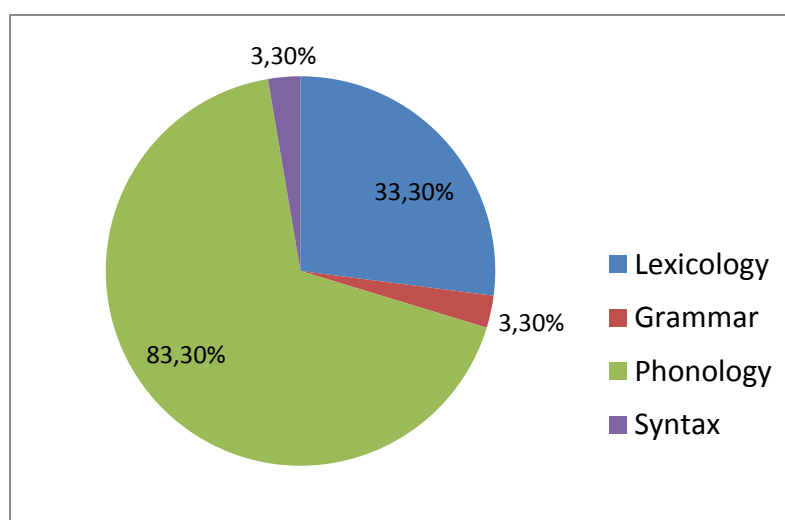
**Figure 3: Terminale students' problematic linguistic areas**

Figures 1, 2 and 3 above, reveals students from G.B.H.S. Ekounou face difficulties in all linguistic areas. However, phonology appears to be the most problematic area. In *Seconde* up to 65% of students indicated that phonology is the linguistic area where they face serious difficulties in. This percentage is not very different from what is obtained in *Premiere* and *Terminale* 64.2% and 66.66% respectively. In the section below, we present key fact from the *Lycee General Leclerc*.

**Table 5: Observation check list II: results from *Lycee General Leclerc* Ngoa-Ekele**

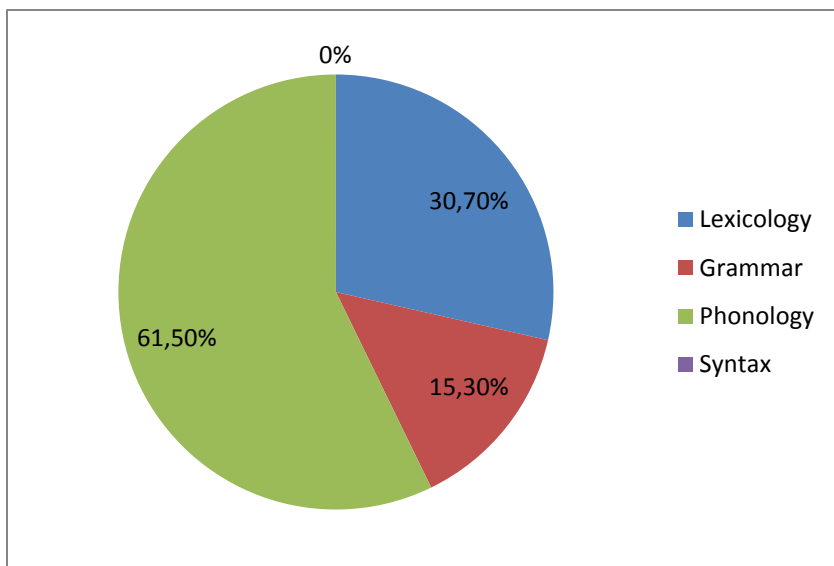
	lexicology			grammar			Phonology			Syntax		
Classes	<i>2nde</i> <i>A1</i>	<i>PA3</i>	<i>TleA</i> <i>I</i>	<i>2nde</i> <i>A1</i>	<i>PA3</i>	<i>Tle</i> <i>A1</i>	<i>2nde</i> <i>A1</i>	<i>PA3</i>	<i>TleA</i> <i>I</i>	<i>2nde</i> <i>A1</i>	<i>PA</i> <i>3</i>	<i>Tle</i> <i>A1</i>
Participants	06	13	11	06	13	11	06	13	11	06	13	11
Number affected	02	04	02	02	02	01	05	08	06	01	00	00
percentages	33.3 %	30.7 %	18.1 %	3.3 %	15.3 %	9.0 %	83.3 %	61.5 %	54.5 %	3.3 %	0 %	0 %

The data from the above table confirm results from our first observation setting, **Lycee General Leclerc** where the most problematic linguistic level in EFL classes is pronunciation, also referred to as Phonology. The highest percentages of interference are recorded in phonology as clearly shown above: 54.5% in *Terminale*, 61.5 per cent in *Première* and interestingly enough, 83.3 per cent in *Seconde*. The figures below summarise students from *Lycee General Leclerc* most problematic linguistic areas.



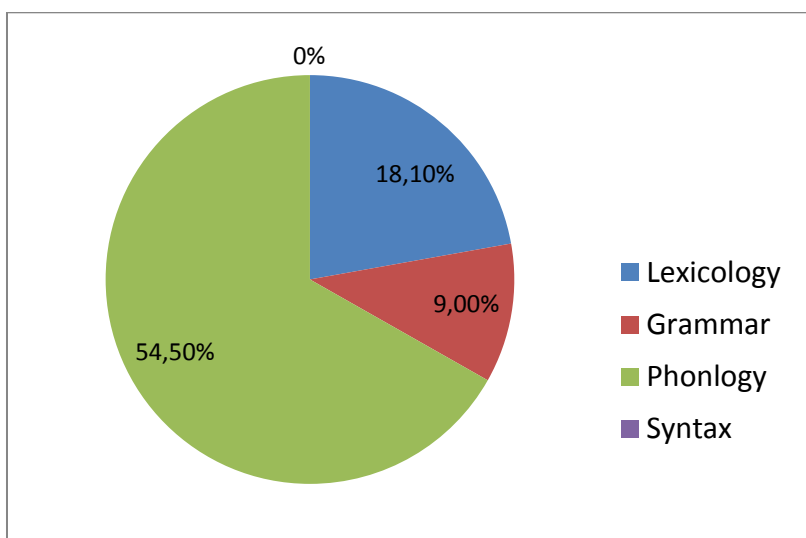
**Figure 4: 2nde students from *Lycee General Leclerc* most problematic areas**

From figure 4 above, 3.30% of the informants encounter grammatical challenges, 33.30% would face problems related to lexicology, only 3.30% need efforts in syntax and up to 83.30% are seriously affected in terms of pronunciation in their oral speech.



**Figure 5:** *Lycee General Leclerc Premiere* students problematic linguistic areas

The analysis that was made concerning figure 4 also holds for Figure 5 as most learners interviewed, 61.50%, cannot express themselves conveniently in oral conversation because they face problems of pronunciation in English.



**Figure 6:** *Lycee General Leclerc Terminal* students' problematic linguistic areas

It should be mentioned that facts from teachers' questionnaire do not contradict the above findings because the six (6) teachers were unanimous on one fact: learners performed better in other skills than in speaking.

#### **4.1.2 Aspects of Negative Transfer at the Segmental Level**

The data analysed in this subsection come from interviews. In the process of analyzing the sample speeches of the informants, the researcher notices that some Ewondo sounds are

negatively transferred to English. Thus, RP sounds undergo a number of changes in the English of learners. Let us discuss the different changes that RP sounds undergo in the speech of the informants.

#### 4.1.2.1 RP Vowels in the English of 32 Ewondo-learners of EFL.

RP vowels undergo a number of changes in the English of Ewondophones. In some contexts, they tend to be substituted for by some other sounds (mostly monophthongs). Yet, in others, they are restructured in a number of ways. The classes of vowels that are generally restructured are diphthongs and triphthongs.

#### 4.1.2.2 Substitution of RP Monophthongs by Ewondo sounds

Many RP vowels are substituted for by Ewondo sounds in the English of Ewondo learners. The major changes noticed in the process of analyzing data are summarized in the table below:

**Table 6 : Realisation of RP monophthongs by Ewondo learners**

RP sound	Equivalent Ewondo	in	Frequency	Percentage	Illustrations
/ɪ/	/i/		32	100%	S <u>ī</u> ster, p <u>ī</u> t, s <u>ī</u> ck, lucky
/ʊ/	/u/		32	100%	P <u>u</u> t, t <u>oo</u> k, c <u>oo</u> k,
/ɜ/	/ɔ/		32	100%	Ch <u>ur</u> ch, w <u>or</u> m, world
/ə/	/a/		32	100%	<u>A</u> bout, aloud
	/ĩ/		28	87.50%	C <u>o</u> nverse, c <u>o</u> n <u>s</u> istent
	/ɔ/		4	12.5%	
	/e/		32	100%	H <u>e</u> llo
/æ/	/a/		32	100%	at, cat, mathematics
/ɑ/	/aR/		26	81.5%	C <u>a</u> r, p <u>a</u> rt, m <u>a</u> r <u>ch</u>
	/a/		6	18.5%	
/ʌ/	/ɔ/		32	100%	C <u>o</u> me
	/aĩ/		30	93.75%	c <u>o</u> untry,
	/ĩ/		20	62.5%	M <u>o</u> nday
	/oa/		12	37.5%	

As shown in table 6 above, RP monophthongs undergo changes in the English of Ewondo learners. The high front lax /ɪ/ is replaced by the unusual RP sound /i/ which 100% learners are more familiar with. The phenomenon is so systematic that it applies in all contexts of occurrence in words. The same goes with the high back rounded short /ʊ/ which, as shown in the table is always pronounced just as in Ewondo that is /u/. Evidence from the same table equally reveals that, the mid high central /ɜ/ is replaced by the mid low rounded /ɔ/ which exists in both Ewondo and RP. The mid low central /ə/ has as many as three substitutes in the speech of Ewondo learners. The realization of the sound depends on the grapheme or orthographic sequence that represents it. Thus, /ə/ is replaced by /a/ when represented by grapheme /a/ by 100% of informants in words like *about* and *aloud*. /ə/ becomes /ɔ/ in the speech of 87.50% of learners when represented by the orthographic sequence *-on* and /e/ when the letter stands for it. As far as the low front short /æ/ is concerned, it is worth noticing that this sound is systematically replaced by /a/ which is part of the phonological repertoire of the Ewondo language. This is done by all the 32 participants. Talking about the low back /ɑ/, the table shows that it tends to be pronounced just as in Ewondo and French which are the informants' background languages. In fact, the pronunciation of the sequence *-ar* as /a/ or /aR/ is negatively transferred to English and this sequence is pronounced likewise in English. Finally, the table shows that, the RP low back vowel /ʌ/ is pronounced in four different ways in the English of Ewondo learners namely /ɔ, aĩ, ỹ, oa/. It is pronounced /ɔ/ in *come*, /aĩ/ by 93.75% informants in words like *country* and *count*, /ỹ/ by 62.5 per cent of the participants and /oa/ by 37.5 % of them in *Monday*.

#### 4.1.2.3 Some Vocalic Processes

The analysis of the collected data reveals that there are some processes that RP monophthongs tend to undergo. The most striking processes include the non-distinction between tense and short vowels. Thus, vowel length is unquestionably neutralized. All RP tense vowels are shortened in the English of Ewondo learners. Let us take the case of the RP tense /i/ is realized just as its short counterpart in the English of Ewondo learners namely /i/. This generally occurs in words like *Peter*, *seat* and *eat*. As a result of the non-distinction between tense and short vowels, it is also observable that some short vowels which are the counterpart of tense ones do not exist in the English learners. This is particularly the case with the RP /ɒ/ which is absent in our analysis. The following section discusses some major

changes that RP diphthongs and triphthongs undergo in the spoken English of Ewondo learners of English.

#### 4.1.2.3.1 RP Diphthongs and Triphthongs in the English of Ewondo-learners

RP diphthongs and triphthongs undergo two major changes in the spoken English of Ewondo learners of English. The analysis of the collected data reveals that they are restructured in a number of ways in some contexts. In other contexts, they are monophthongised. Let us discuss each of the two processes in detail below.

#### 4.1.2.3.2 The Restructuring of RP Diphthongs and Triphthongs

English diphthongs and triphthongs are restructured in a number of ways in the English of Ewondo learners. Let us focus on diphthongs first. We realize that, almost all the eight RP diphthongs are restructured as shown by the renditions of RP diphthongs by the learners. As a general observation, the first element of the two components of the diphthong tends to be maintained while the second element is what actually changes depending of the nature of the sound. The following table shows the different re-adaptations that RP diphthongs are prone to.

**Table 7: Restructuring of RP diphthongs by Ewondo learners**

RP diphthongs	Equivalent in Ewondo	Frequency	Percentage	Illustrations
/aɪ/	/ai/	32	100%	Lie, wine, Friday
/ɛə/	/ɛr/	32	100%	Air, fair
/aʊ/	/aɔ/	32	100%	Out
	/ao/	23	71.88%	Cow, vow
	/au/	9	28.22%	
/ɔɪ/	/ɔj/	25	78.12%	Boy, joy
	/ɔi/	7	21.88%	
	/oa/	22	68.75%	Toilet
	/oi/	10	31.25	
/ɪə/	/iɛ/	25	78.12%	Near, fear
	/iœ/	7	21.88%	
	/e/	32	100%	Period

From table 7 above, we notice that RP diphthongs are restructured in the speech of Ewondo learner of English. Let us take the case of some diphthongs that end with the high front short /ɪ/. We realize that the first component of the diphthong is not affected at all whereas the second component, which here is /ɪ/, is systematically modified to the Ewondo /i/ by the 32 informants, thus giving an unusual RP diphthong. Two diphthongs were identified in the analysis namely /aɪ/ and /ɔɪ/ which were articulated /ai/ and /ɔi/ respectively by 100% Ewondo learners of English. /ɔɪ/ is also rendered as /ɔj/ by 78.12% informants or /oa/ by 78.75% learners. Another striking point to make here is that the diphthong /ɔɪ/ was also pronounced /oi/ by 31.25 learners as the result of the influence of Ewondo.

Some other changes that diphthongs undergo in the spoken English of Ewondo learners stem from the non-application of some phonological rules and/or processes by learners. Let us take the case of /ɛə/ and /ɪə/, the analysis reveal that the two diphthongs are pronounced /ɛr/ and /iɛ/ as Pre-R breaking is not attested in Ewondo language. The second element of RP diphthong /aʊ/ also changes significantly and is rendered in three different ways namely /aɔ/ in *out*, /ao/ and /au/ in the two words *vow* and *cow* respectively.

#### 4.1.2.3.3 Monophthongisation of RP Diphthongs

Monophthongisation is another major change that RP diphthongs undergo in the spoken English of Ewondo learners. In some cases, the first element of the diphthong is maintained while in other contexts they are monophthongised to a different Ewondo monophthong. From the analysis of the collected data, the following striking cases were brought out. Let us summarize them in the following table.

**Table 8: Monophthongisation of RP diphthongs by Ewondo learners**

RP diphthongs	Equivalent in Ewondo	Frequency	Percentages	Illustrations
/eɪ/	/e/	29	90.62%	T <u>ab</u> le, ch <u>ai</u> n
	/ɛ/	03	9.37%	
/əʊ/	/o/	32	100%	Go, so, window
/ʊə/	/ u/	14	43.75%	T <u>ou</u> r, p <u>oo</u> r,
	/ uœ /	18	56.25%	

As shown by the table above, RP diphthongs are monophthongised to a variety of Ewondo monophthongs. So, the diphthong /eɪ/ was monophthongised to /e/ by 90.62% informants and /ɛ/ by 9.37 % of them in the word table and /ɛ/ in the word chain. The monophthongisation of the RP diphthong /əʊ/ is systematic in the English of Ewondo learners and the sound is thus pronounced /o/ in all contexts of occurrence as could be illustrated by the three words *go*, *so* and *window*. This could partly be accounted for by the fact that, in Ewondo, there is no diphthong like the RP /əʊ/ that is represented by the grapheme O in words.

Another RP diphthong which is monophthongised in the English of Ewondo learners is /ʊə/. In fact, this diphthong is non-existent in Ewondo and learners therefore tend to realize it differently depending on the orthographic form of the word. In the data, the sound is pronounced /u/ by 43.75 % participants just as in Ewondo where we have it in words like *assou*, *ossou*, *ossoun*. As could be seen, in the Ewondo language, it is the sound /u/ that generally occurs in the *-ou-* context and students negatively transfer this to English. The analysis of the aspects of the spoken English of Ewondo learners of English equally shows that 56.25 % of the learners tend to pronounce the RP diphthong /ʊə/ as /uœ/ in the *-oo-* context as can be instantiated by the pronunciation of the word *poor* as /puœ/ by some informants. In the section that follows, we shall discuss aspects of negative transfer in the realization of RP triphthongs by Ewondo learners of English.

#### **4.1.2.3.4 The Restructuring of Triphthongs in the English of Ewondo-learners**

As aforementioned, triphthongs are also restructured in the English of Ewondo learners. This could be accounted for by the fact, in Ewondo, this class of vowels is non-existent. As such, learners tend to have recourse to the process of sound restructuring in order to articulate RP triphthongs. The major changes that RP triphthongs undergo in the English of Ewondo learners are presented in the following table:



**Table 9 : Realisation of RP triphthongs by Ewondo learners of English**

RP triphthongs	Equivalent in Ewondo	Frequency	Percentages	Illustrations
/əʊə/	/owa/	32	100%	<u>Lower</u>
/aʊə/	/awa/	32	100%	<u>Flower</u> , <u>hour</u> , <u>towel</u>
/eɪə/	/eja/	32	100%	<u>Player</u>
/ɔɪə/	/ɔja/	32	100%	<u>Loyal</u>
/aɪə/	/ia, i/	32	100%	<u>bias</u> , <u>tired</u>

From the table above we deduced that triphthongs pose serious problems of articulation to all of the 32 Ewondo learners of English interviewed. Since they are inexistent in Ewondo, informants tended to adapt and cope with triphthongs through a series of transformations and linguistic processes revealing phonological interferences. Kouega (1999) quoted in Essossomo (2013) explains the process of the restructuring of triphthongs by saying that,

The triphthongs of RP [...] take up the syllabic structure VCV where the consonant element C is represented by the glides /w, j/. Actually, the central vocalic element of triphthongs, namely /ɪ/ [...] and /ʊ/ [...] are pronounced forcefully that they sound like the glides /j/ and /w/ [...]. The initial V of these triphthongs is pronounced /e, a, ɔ/ while the final V element is rendered /ɛ, a, ɔ/ depending on the spelling of words.

This is particularly obvious with regard to the realization of RP triphthongs by Ewondo learners as shown by the table above. Evidence from the table reveals that the triphthong /əʊə/ is pronounced /owa/ by learners in the word *lower* and /aʊə/ as /awa/ in the word *flower*. As could be seen, the intermediate element of the triphthong that is /ʊ/ is pronounced forcefully and glides to /w/. When the intermediate element is /ɪ/, this element will glide to /j/ giving the triphthong structure VCV. This is clear in the pronunciation of the triphthong /eɪə/ as /eja/ in the word *player* and as /ɔja/ in the word *loyal*. It is also observable that /aɪə/ is diphthongized to an unusual diphthong /ia/ in the word *bias*. In other words like *tired*, learners generally monophthongise it to the Ewondo sound /i/. The section below continues with the discussion of aspects of negative transfer with a focus on consonants.

#### 4.1.2.4 RP Consonants in the English of Ewondo-learners

The analysis of the collected data reveal that some RP consonant sounds also undergo changes in the spoken English of Ewondo learners. Depending on the context, RP consonant sounds tend to be substituted for by some other Ewondo consonants just as in Ewondo. This is shown by the renditions of RP consonant sounds by Ewondo learners of English as shown in the table below.

**Table 10: Articulation of RP consonants by Ewondo learners of English (32 informants)**

RP consonants	Equivalent in Ewondo	Frequency	Percentages	Illustrations
/tʃ/	/ts, ʃ/	32	100%	<b>Church, chocolate, choose</b>
/dʒ/	/dz/	32	100%	<b>Joke, judge, procedure</b>
/θ/	/t/	32	100%	Faithfully, <b>thesis</b>
/ð/	/d/	32	100%	<b>Mother, father, they</b>
/ʃ/	/s /	32	100%	<b>Nation, sugar, ocean</b>
/ʒ/	/z/	32	100%	Vision

As this table reveals that the RP palatal sound /tʃ/ is pronounced /ts/, an Ewondo affricate sound mostly before the letter U as shown by the pronunciation of the word church. This realisation is so systematic that one is tempted to say that /tʃ/ has as a substitute in the English of Ewondo learners /ts/. It is also observable that learners generally replace the voiceless palatal affricate /tʃ/ by the voiceless palato-alveolar /ʃ/ in a number of words. This is clear in the pronunciation of the sound as such in the words *chocolate* and *choose*. The above findings are from the reading-aloud test conducted during interviews.

The voiceless palatal /tʃ/ is not the only consonant that undergoes changes in the spoken English of Ewondo learners. We also have the case of its voiced counterpart /dʒ/ which is systematically replaced with the Ewondo voiced palatal /dz/ as can be illustrated by the words Joke, judge and procedure. Thus, while the voiced palatal /dʒ/ generally occurs in j+o,u,a or d+u contexts, we will have /dz/ in the English of Ewondo learners.

In the same manner, the RP voiceless /θ/ and voiced /ð/ are systematically substituted for by the voiceless /t/ and voiced /d/ in all contexts of occurrence. This is due to the fact that these

two RP sounds do not exist in Ewondo so learners are not familiar with them. Therefore, they are pronouncing them just as in other non-native varieties of English.

The voiceless palato-alveolar /ʃ/ also tends to be replaced with the voiceless alveolar fricative sound /s/ which is attested in both English and Ewondo. This can be illustrated by the pronunciation of the words **nation**, **sugar**, **ocean** where /ʃ/ was systematically replaced with /s/. The same goes with its voiced counterpart /ʒ/ which learners tend to replace with the voiced fricative /z/ in the word *vision*.

#### 4.1.2.5 Some consonantal phenomena

There are some interesting consonantal processes that caught our attention in the process of analysis of the collected data. The most striking consonantal process that we discuss in the subsections below includes consonant deletion and cluster simplification.

##### 4.1.2.5.1 The deletion of syllabic consonants

This study observed that, in order to simplify English heavy clusters, Ewondo learners of English delete some consonants in words. This mostly affects consonant clusters like -ld-, -nd-, -st- and -ft-. This confirms Essossomo's findings on the issue. In the table below, we have instances of deletion.

**Table 11: Deletion of consonants by Ewondo learners (32 informants)**

RP cluster	Equivalent in Ewondo	illustrations	Pronunciation in RP	Pronunciation by Ewondo learners	Frequency	Percentages
ld	L	world	wɜld	wɔl	32	100%
nd	N	find	fɑɪnd	Fain	32	100%
St	S	most	məʊst	Mos	32	100%
Ft	F	cleft	klɛft	Klɛf	32	100%

##### 4.1.2.5.2 Vowel epenthesis in the pronunciation of RP heavy cluster by Ewondo learners

From the analysis of the collected data, we noticed that 100% of the learners generally insert an epenthetic vowel when pronouncing some clusters in words, clusters which were complex because they are not attested in the Ewondo language. Thus, words with the syllabic consonants /l/, /t/, and /n/ usually take an epenthetic vowel. Thus, in the combination dl, kl, nr, ml, nl, learners will insert an epenthetic vowel in between the two consonants as shown by the pronunciation of the following words by Ewondo learners in table 16 below.

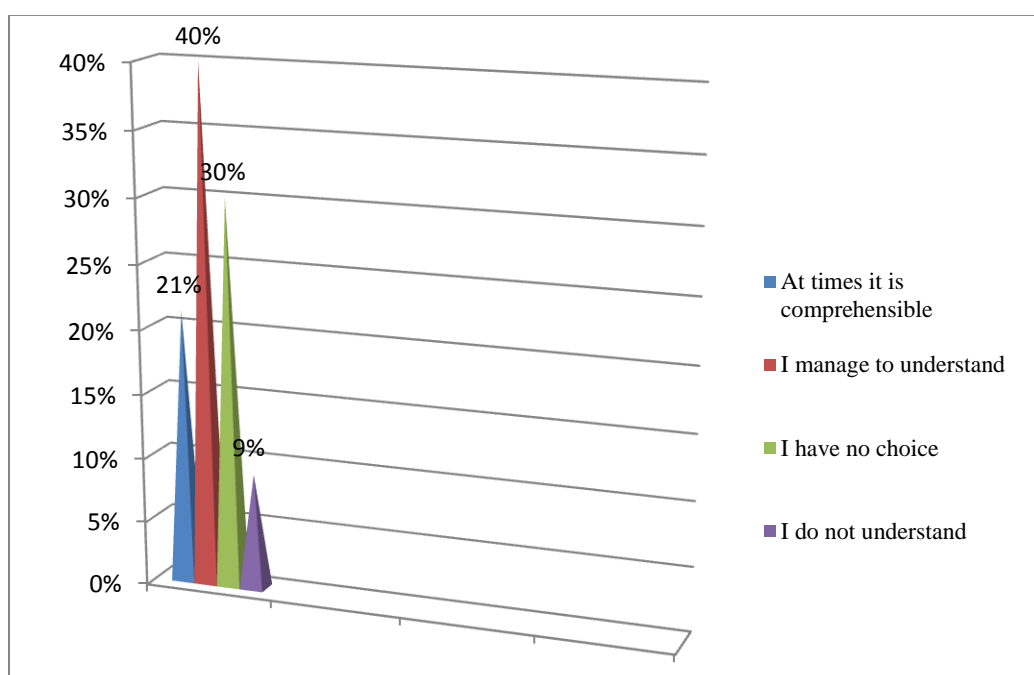
**Table 12: Vowel epenthesis in the English of Ewondo learners (32 Ewondophones)**

RP cluster	Equivalent in Ewondo	Illustrations	Pronunciation in RP	Pronunciation by Ewondo learners	Frequency	Percentages
Dl	dɛl	model	mɔdl	Model	32	100%
Kl	kɔl kal	faculty typical	fækltɪ tɪpɪkl	fakɔlti tipikal	32	100%
Nr	ner	general	dʒɛnrɪ	dʒeneral	32	100%
Ml	mal	formal	fɔml	fɔmal	32	100%

#### 4.2- The effect of learners' aspects of negative transfer effective communication

Negative transfers from Ewondo to English pose serious problems to Ewondophones during verbal interactions. In fact, though Ewondo learners, like many Francophones, try to memorise grammatical rules, they end up producing incomprehensible utterances due to wrong pronunciation. Their speeches are full of phonological features pertaining to their First Languages (Ewondo/French). Oral conversations with this population, most often than not, are interrupted because of cases of unintelligibility, misinterpretation and ambiguity, and misunderstanding or conflict leading to frustration.

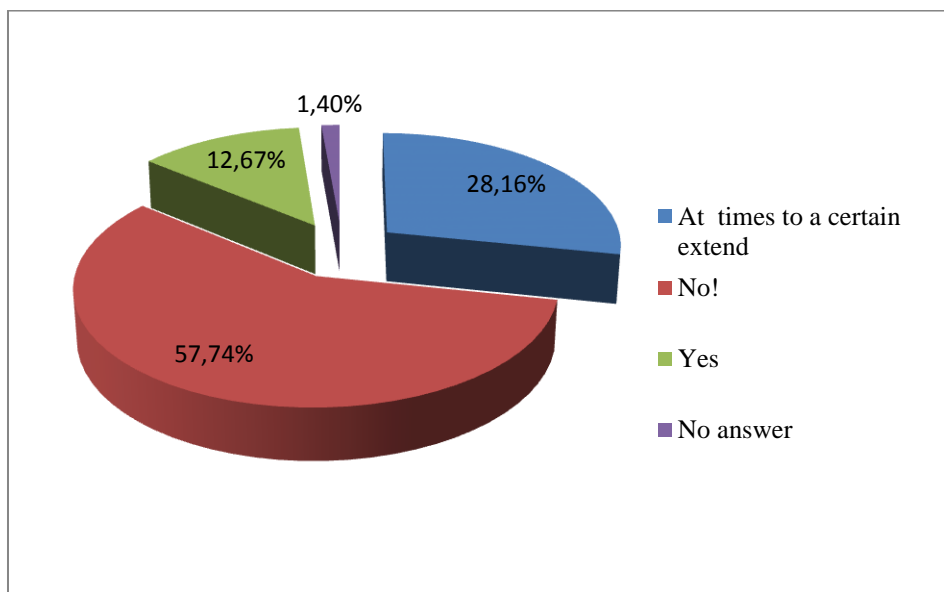
Teachers were asked in their questionnaire to judge the speaking ability of their learners in relation to English as a medium of communication.



**Figure 7: Students' Speaking ability**

The above figure 7 shows that the quality of Ewondo learners' of English is mediocre and this hinders effective communication in EFL classes. EFL teachers do not always succeed in getting the message from their Ewondo learners of English. Out of the six teachers who responded to the questionnaire, 9 per cent say they do not understand at all what is often uttered by their learners and that they usually try to exploit extra linguistic parameters in order to continue teaching and check learners' understanding of lessons. 30 per cent of the teachers take it as an obligation and they say they have no choice since the approach to language teaching is supposed to be learner centered. 40 per cent of teacher informants assert they are just managing, even though it is not easy to understand or get the message from their learners' spoken English. 21 per cent EFL teachers say that at times learners' spoken English is comprehensible but not always.

The above views were confirmed by learners themselves when they were asked to answer the seventh questionnaire item labeled "Does your *pronunciation* of English sounds and words affect intelligibility? Or *do you always pass the intended message?* Their reactions to the above question are presented in the following figure



**Figure 8: Learners' pronunciation quality and effective communication in English**

Figure 8 above shows that oral communication with Ewondo learners is always problematic because of their interference of phonological features from Ewondo in their speech. This correlates with facts from the nine (9) observation sessions.

Ewondo learners of English produced unintelligible English words in verbal interactions. Their utterances at times sounded nonsensical as they made no sense to the hearer. Their audience could hardly identify some linguistic items because of their bad pronunciation when two or three sound systems interfered in spoken English. During class presentations, Ewondophones were regularly interrupted by either the teacher or the class and they had to give the spelling of the intended word in order to make their speech comprehensible to the hearers. Thus, certain words (like *about*, *stand*, *judge*, *sure* and *thin*) were often written on the board by participants or simply spelt out orally.

There were many conflicts during interactions when some English words were wrongly said. For example, while pronouncing the word *wine* the audience had the impression to hear something else. The teacher and the researcher could imagine the intended word with reference to the context of usage. Whereas, students in class, especially those who sat near to the researcher gave other versions to the informants' utterance: *wind*, *win* instead of *wine*. The word *short* was heard as *gort* sending the audience away from the intended message. /stænd/ pronounced as /sætæn/ caused confusion since the audience was forced to move into a variety of directions resulting into *Satan*, *stain*, *say ten* and possibly *stand*. Unfortunately, majority of those items were not meant to represent the informant's intention in the speech. Misinterpretations were also reinforced by the wrong use of stress mixed up with the Ewondo tonal system as learners did not master the differences between the two linguistic systems.

### **4.3 Factors Responsible for Informants' Poor Pronunciation of English Sounds**

Five key factors were identified as being sources of phonological errors: the first factor is linguistic in nature. The second factor is psychological and has to do with learners' attitude towards English and English Language teachers. The third one is the pedagogic methods used in EFL class where every participant is extremely examination conscious. The fourth factor is social because of the informants' linguistic identity and family background and personal factors like learners' laziness are not to be taken for granted because learners have an important role to play in order to improve the quality of their spoken English.

#### **4.3.1 Linguistic Factors Accounting for Phonological Interferences**

Language differences constitute sources of pronunciation errors which can be either intralingual or interlingual ones. Focus is here on interlingual phonological deviations in Ewondo learners' oral speech. So, at the linguistic level, each EFL learner has got a mother tongue and other languages that can interfere in the target language during the learning

process. In each conversation they have a variety of options from which to choose and this contact between many languages in the brain of an EFL learner can lead to many linguistic phenomena like negative transfers. It is worth mentioning that not all English vowels, consonants and supra segmental elements are attested to the Ewondo language. Sounds that fall under this category are more likely to pose serious problems to Ewondo speakers learning English. Ewondo learners' sources of errors can be interlingual in nature, that is, they can be due to contacts between different linguistic systems. The table below illustrates the most problematic sounds to Ewondo learners of English.

**Table 13: Phonological differences between English and Ewondo**

Segmental differences				Supra segmental differences	
Consonantal level		Vocalic level		English	Ewondo
<b>Unknown RP to Ewondo</b>	Ewondo sounds	Unknown RP to Ewondo	Ewondo recognized vowel sounds	RP	Ewondo
/tʃ/	/ts/	Monophthongs: /ʌ/, /ɜ/, /ʊ/, /ɪ/, /æ/, /ɑ/	/i/, /u/,	stress	Tones
/dʒ/	/dz/		/ɔ/, /a/, /e/, /ə/, /ɛ/		
/θ/	/t/	Diphthongs: /aɪ/, /ɛə/, /aʊ/, /ɔɪ/, /ɪə/	None		
/ð/	/d/				
/ʃ/	/s/	Triphthongs: /əʊə/, /aʊə/, /eɪə/, /ɔɪə/, /aɪə/	None		
/ʒ/	/ʒ/				

Differences displayed in the above table remain unknown to majority of Ewondo learners of English even in the second cycle of secondary education.

Most, if not all, of the informants are not aware of linguistic differences between their mother tongue and the English language they are learning. So, this subsection investigates learners' awareness of these phonological differences at both the segmental and supra segmental levels between English and Ewondo. It is important to know whether

Ewondophones are conscious of the presence of English words in their Ewondo lexicon and to see their capability to identify phonological differences that are likely to influence the acquisition of English in a negative or positive way.

**Table 14: Learners’ awareness of phonological differences between Ewondo and English**

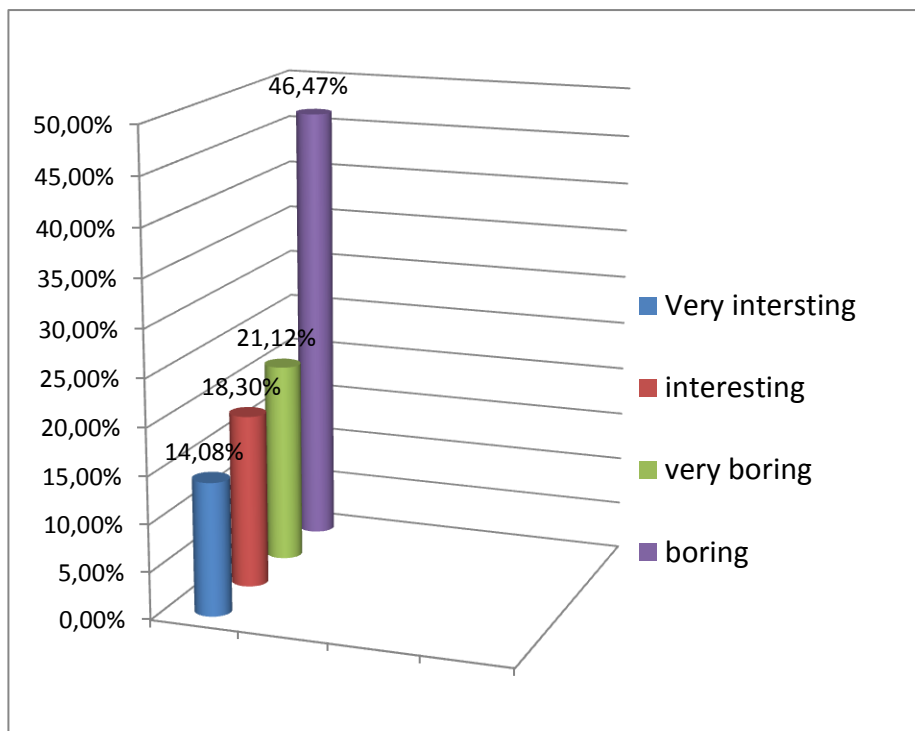
	Yes		No		No answer		Total
	number	percentage	number	percentage	Number	percentage	
<b>Awareness</b>	3	4.2%	68	95.7%	0	0%	100%

In the above table, only 3 of the 70 learners making up 4.2 per cent of the informants are aware of the presence of English words in their mother tongue lexicon and the differences in terms of pronunciation between those same words in English and Ewondo. Unfortunately majority of the informants are totally ignorant of the effects of any of the language differences on the process of learning English. Sixty eight of the 70 learners making up 95 % of the Ewondo learners of English could hardly see the difference between the pronunciation of some selected words in English and in the Ewondo language pronunciation. So, majority of them are not aware of phonological differences between English and Ewondo. This can account for their wrong pronunciation of some RP sounds.

#### **4.3.2 Psychological Factors Accounting for Phonological Interferences**

Results from interviews and questionnaires reveal that informants’ attitude towards the language to be acquired can also be responsible for negative phonological transfers resulting into phonological interferences in an EFL context. The figure below gives an overview of informants’ responses when they were asked to elaborate on their opinion about English and English teachers.





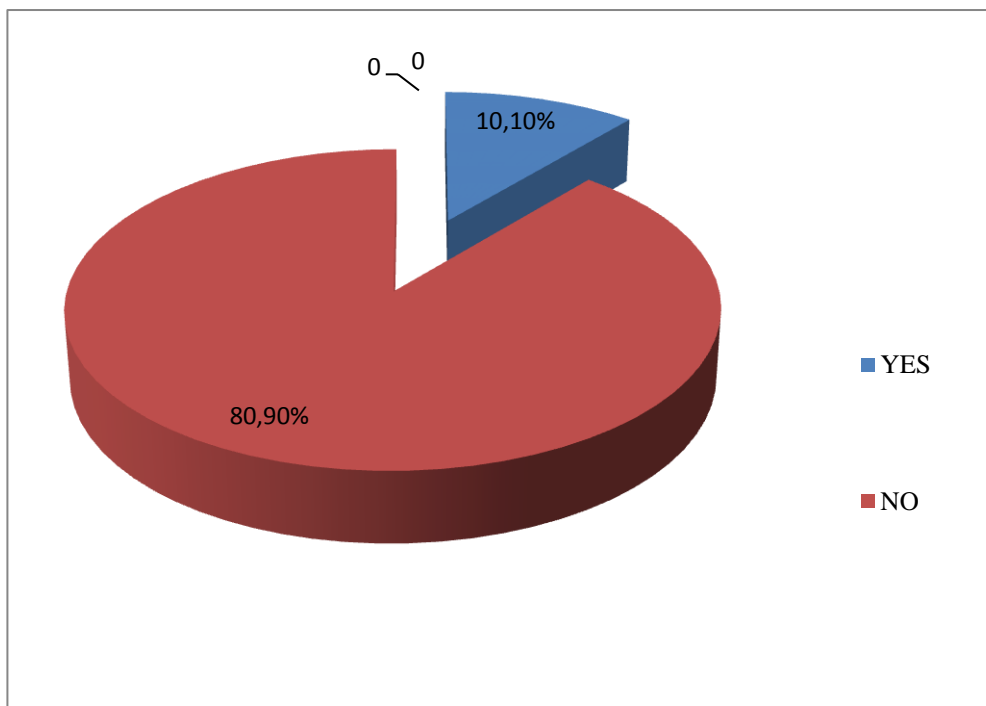
**Figure 9: Learners attitude towards English (class, teacher and didactic material)**

From the above figure, majority of informants, 33 out of 71 (46.47%) found English language and everything related to it boring. They did not hide their unfavourable attitude towards English. This attitude is even extended to their course book, exercise book, TV channels and even the teacher in charge of this school subject in their time table. Such learners regularly feel sleepy during English class, ask for permission to leave the class or manage to be absent to avoid embarrassment.

This attitude seems not to depend on the teacher's teaching aids and methodology. Such a behavior cannot facilitate EFL learning. The above 46.47 % of informants even wish English Language is taken out of the entire curriculum as a school subject. Learners' psychological state of mind hinders the acquisition of English.

### **4.3.3 Pedagogic Factors Accounting for Phonological Interferences**

Facts from the first part of the interview sessions and questionnaire reveal that most teachers and learners are extremely examination conscious. When requested to elaborate on their teachers' teaching approach to pronunciation, with regards to other languages that are spoken by the class, learners gave the following responses to the ninth questionnaire item



**Figure 10: English Language teachers using a contrastive approach**

From the figure above, 80.90 % of student informants assert that their teacher did not make any reference to other languages they speak. Even the use of French remains problematic as teachers insist that learners should express themselves exclusively in English in EFL classes. The 10.10%, who said YES, insisted on the fact that it was possible in class for their EFL teacher to show some pronunciation differences between English and French only, but never any other language.

Teachers tend to pay more attention to lessons and aspects that are directly linked to end of year official examinations. Hence teachers in their scheme of work do not insist on Pronunciation since it is not really tested during those examinations. More attention is paid to Grammar, comprehension, and vocabulary. They believe the final comfort at the end for each English-Language teacher is to see their English learners at ease on the examination day. Spoken English or learners' oral performance is not part of the evaluation in official examinations like Probatoire and Baccalaureat.

Here is the summary of teachers' responses to the third, fourth, sixth and eighth questionnaire items. A 100% of teachers paid no attention to the learner's mother tongue because they believed English should be taught exclusively in English and it would be cumbersome to always go from English to learners' mother tongues in the midst of the diverse ethnicity that characterizes EFL classes in Cameroon. No teacher believed the said contrastive approach to the teaching of pronunciation was possible. They could not master the phonology

of each of the mother tongues spoken by their learners. The current approach to English language teaching favours exclusive English teaching and almost no place is given to any other language in EFL classrooms. The learners' linguistic identity has not been of great interest to teachers and researchers as well. This situation makes more difficult the acquisition of the target language learned in a multilingual ecology.

Teachers went further to confess that in the second cycle, they do not give much attention to pronunciation since it is not properly tested in official examinations. Four teachers out of the six gave 0 -10 per cent of their time teaching phonology properly. Most of the time, this is not planned and they can make reference to pronunciation aspects in any other lesson (Grammar, Vocabulary or reading) when necessary. One of the teachers allocated 15 – 20 % of the EFL teaching time to pronunciation whereas another one would spend only 10 per cent of the time teaching pronunciation. None of them indicated it was possible to go beyond 20 % because of time constraints and their examination-orientated approach to EFL teaching.

#### 4.3.4 Social Factors: Learners' Family Background and Linguistic Identity

A number of social factors are also responsible for students' aspects of negative transfer. These are presented in the following table:

**Table 15: Informants family background information**

	Purely Ewondophone homes	Mixed homes	Total
<b>Informants</b>	53	18	71
<b>Most used language(s) at home</b>	Ewondo	Ewondo + French	
<b>Percentages</b>	74.6 %	25.3 %	100%

From the above table fifty-three student informants are from purely Ewondo-speaking families where both the father and the mother speak the same dialect. Eighteen of the informants are from mixed homes where one of their parents is not a 100 % Ewondophone and speaks this language with a few nuances. Nevertheless the above facts constitute evidence that informants were from homes where Ewondo was one of the most spoken languages for interactions out of the classroom environment. In fact 74.6 % of informants are surrounded by Ewondo-speaking communities and most of their friends are Ewondophones with whom they communicate using Ewondo along together with French and 25.3 % of informants have got

two mother tongues spoken along with French to communicate with parents, brothers, sisters and friends.

These facts from the above table then constitute one of the factors favouring the influence that the Ewondo language exerts on the acquisition of English.

#### **4.3.5 Personal Factors Accounting for Phonological Interferences**

Learners' laziness in matters concerning English further reinforces phonological deviations from the First language (L1) to the Target language (TL). Most of the English Language Learners (ELL) interviewed, sixty two (62) out of the seventy one (71) confessed to us that they never read their English materials once back home. According to these informants there was no way they could study English every day as they do with other school subjects once back home. This was true except at the eve of official examinations when they begin to memorize grammar rules. It is only in class that they come into contact with the Target Language.

#### **4.4 Possible Solutions**

Both teachers and students made some suggestions while responding to the last items in the two questionnaires suggested in relation to learners' challenges. The First to react to the question were the six teachers who participated.

##### **4.4.1 Teachers' Suggestions**

Four solutions were provided by the six teachers interviewed: one out of the six would think pronunciation can't really be learned in class no matter all the suggested Pronunciation Learning Strategies (PLS). Two of them put the blame on learners who tend to be reluctant to any suggestion about how to go about EFL learning. Those learners were asked to change their attitude towards English and everything related to the language. The general tendencies centered on the teaching program and the evaluation methods in Cameroon. At this level, five (5) teacher informants believed the time allocated to EFL teaching should be revisited. Time constraints did not allow them to go deeply into all the items of the syllabus. The school year was at time very short for teachers to cover the syllabus. So they paid more attention to what seemed more relevant.

The six teachers were unanimous on the fact that official examination methods did not favour the teaching of pronunciation in EFL classrooms. Pronunciation should be tested as part and parcel of official examinations. This would prompt learners to pay attention to

speaking. Since the majority of learners were examination conscious, they tended to give more value to aspects that are tested in official examinations. So in their teaching, teachers must focus on other skills and levels of linguistic analysis. Teachers spent much of their time teaching Grammar, Vocabulary, Writing and reading comprehension but hardly insisted on Phonology. This fact is concurrent with previous research indicating that pronunciation was highly neglected in EFL classrooms (Galaczi, Post, Li & Graham, 2011; Fang, 2012, Essossomo 2013, Suwartono 2014).

#### **4.4.2 Learners' Suggestions**

The general trend in learner's responses was that English is a complicated language that is not easy to learn. So the 33 who found English boring believed the solution would be the suppression of EFL teaching from the school curriculum. Nevertheless 23 informants said they were totally responsible for their poor pronunciation of English words and they believed English is interesting or very interesting). They said their speaking difficulties were highly strengthened by their lack of motivation and interest in the language. They were not willing to make any effort in order to change their situation in English since they believe it was still possible to succeed in life even without English or without being bilingual.

On the one hand, the first thing that was to be done was to change their attitude towards this language that has long been considered boring. On the other hand, in their opinion, the use of the first language when necessary in EFL classes would be of help to boost their interest into the target language. To be taught exclusively in English makes lessons inaccessible. They wished English was taught using the same method as with Deutsch. A contrastive approach to English teaching would be of great help as the class would at time move from the Target Language to any of the L1 they already master in order to bring out differences or similarities which may help assimilate the new knowledge.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This Chapter summarises the key findings of the investigation, discusses the pedagogical implications of the study; makes recommendations. The research also gives some suggestions for further research.

#### 5.1 Summary of the findings and pedagogic implications

This study sets out to look into aspects of negative transfer in the spoken English of Ewondo learners of English. The work was conducted in two secondary schools in the metropolitan town of Yaounde namely in the GBHS Ekounou and Lycée Général Leclerc Ngoa-Ekele. Focus was on Ewondo learners of EFL from *Seconde*, *Première* and *Terminale*. Both teachers (six) and learners (71) served as informants for this study. The work aimed at identifying aspects of negative transfer in learners spoken production with a view to analyzing them, assessing their impact on communication, identifying the different factors that account for such aspects and suggesting appropriate measures for solving the problem.

From the analysis of the data collected through nine observations sessions, two different questionnaires and interviews, we realized that Ewondo learners negatively transfer phonological features from Ewondo to English when they use English. The Ewondo language affects Ewondo EFL learners' speech at the level of Phonology more than Grammar, Lexicology, and Syntax. Facts from questionnaires reveal that in the Government Bilingual High School Ekounou, 62.5% in *Seconde*, 64.2 % in *Première* and 66.6 % in *Terminale* face pronunciation problems. The situation in Lycée Général Leclerc corroborates with results from the previous setting as they reveal that 83.3 % of the Ewondophones in *Seconde*, 61.5 % in *Première* and 54.5 % in *Terminale* also produce oral speeches full of interfering phonological features from Ewondo to EFL. The above results clearly present how the learner's linguistic background can affect the acquisition of a new set of linguistic habits pertaining to the phonology of a Second Language. The spoken English of Ewondo learners are full of phonological features negatively transferred from their mother tongue (Ewondo) to English. Such aspects of negative language transfers were revealed from the analysis of the

sample speeches of the informants. It was observed that when this category of English language learners communicated in English, there was intrusion of Ewondo phonological features into their spoken English. Such features, which do not operate in compliance with Standard English, pose serious problems of intelligibility and this hinders effective communication (see Essossomo: 2013). English sounds, which are not familiar to learners, undergo serious changes in their speech. They are substituted for by segments from their mother tongue. This is seen in sounds like: : /tʃ/, /θ/, /dʒ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /ʌ/, /ɜ/, /ʊ/, /ɪ/, /æ/, /ɑ/, /aɪ/, /ɛə/, /aʊ/, /ɔɪ/, /ɪə/, : /əʊə/, /aʊə/, /eɪə/, /ɔɪə/, /aɪə/. This unfortunately generally leads to intelligibility breakdown. Such aspects of wrong pronunciation must therefore be discouraged and must be corrected at all costs.

The analysis of the collected data equally reveal that the different factors that account for students' aspects of negative transfer are linguistic, psychological, pedagogic and personal. At the linguistic level, it was discovered that learners have background linguistic knowledge on which they stand firmly before they can acquire the Target Language. So, since they do not master the differences between all the languages they speak, they tend to mix up features from their different background languages. Another linguistic factor at the linguistic level is the difference between Ewondo and English phonological systems. There are none negligible differences between the two systems such that sounds that are not familiar to Ewondo learners of English posed serious problems. At the psychological level, 46.47% of the students found English and everything related to it boring and 21.12% found it very boring. Such negative attitudes do not favour any language learning and must be addressed urgently. At the pedagogic level, it was noticed that, pronunciation is neglected in the teaching of English. So, learners are not used to the sounds of English. 100% of the teachers admitted they had never paid any attention to learners' linguistic background in teaching Pronunciation. This is impossible, in their opinion, in a multilingual context like Cameroon. Moreover, four teachers, out of the six, could not pay more than 20 % of their time teaching pronunciation since they were examination-conscious and they knew speaking was not tested in official examinations. Personal factors were related to learners' laziness. 62 learners, out of the 71 admitted they hardly read their books and material related to English Language learning out of the classroom ecology.

Some solutions were suggested by both learners and teachers: the six teachers were unanimous on the fact that the time allocated to EFL teaching in secondary schools is not enough for them to teach English pronunciation with all Pronunciation Teaching Strategies (such as using phonetic symbols and transcription, repeating after the teacher, and minimal

pair drilling. 5 teachers suggested oral performance should be included as part and parcel of English paper official Examinations. Learners' suggestions to solve phonological negative transfers from Ewondo to English had two main tendencies: 33 informants had a very negative attitude towards English and wanted it to be suppressed from the school program whereas, 23 believed English was not only important for their future career but it was interesting. So, they promised to make efforts and stop being lazy.

### **5.3: Recommendation**

In the light of all the above findings, the researcher would like to make some recommendations to the National Inspectorate of English, to course book writers and to EFL teachers.

#### **5.3.1: To National Inspectors of English**

While acknowledging that efforts have been made by the Ministry of Secondary Education to promote quality ELT in the Francophone subsystem of education, it should be noted that there is still much to do with regards to students' and teachers' attitude towards the mother tongue in EFL classrooms. Since the majority of Francophone EFL learners lose interest and motivation in learning English because they are almost always frustrated when pronunciation challenges prevent them from passing their message in oral communication, it would be advisable if the Ministry amends the current teaching methodology by deciding officially to allow quotas of L1 use in EFL classroom depending on the level of study. For instance, 60 % of time could be allotted for English and 40 % to French and other languages that can affect the acquisition of English like the learner's mother tongue in 6ème and 5ème; 75 % of English in 4ème and 3ème and 90 to 95 % of English in the whole second cycle in the Francophone subsystem of secondary education. Such a structured multilingual teaching method has been used in many other multilingual linguistic environments like Mozambique, where it yields better results. If implemented in the Cameroon multilingual context, the multilingual approach could yield far better results than an English-only policy.

However, to officially allow Mother Tongue exploitation in the English class would mean to make sure EFL teachers are not only bilingual but also linguists in their classroom. To implement the contrastive approach to EFL teaching, the teachers who are being trained to that effect need to be linguists in the sense that they have to master some specificities pertaining to national languages like Ewondo and the Foreign Language they are called upon



to teach in schools. This will help an EFL teacher in the Cameroonian context to anticipate learners' pronunciation errors resulting from the Mother Tongue.

### **5.3.2 To EFL Teachers**

The first suggestion is that pronunciation should be taught in EFL classroom till *Terminale* for secondary school learners. Secondly, EFL teachers should always bear in mind that before students come to school, they already have a set, if not many, of linguistic habits helping them to communicate efficiently in social interactions. Learners then tend to better comprehend English items which they can assimilate with knowledge already available (Wolff 2005). This means that EFL teachers should develop a systematic contrastive EFL teaching method. Lado in Brown (2000: 209) justifies his special emphasis on negative L1 transfer by arguing that it can serve as a source for predicting potential difficulties of students when learning the TL. "Those elements that are similar to the (learner's) native language will be simple for him or her and those elements that are different will be difficult." (Lado in Brown 2000: 209). Whatsoever, the main belief of CAH still remains: Interferences have to be detected and overcome by learners with the help of teachers. (Brown 200:208). In this concept learners have to recognize that there are interferences between their L1 (which is not only French) and the TL in order to eventually make them disappear. Thus, learners in the process of acquiring their L2, create, at least contemporarily, their own system of the TL, which is composed by features of both their first language(s) and the L2: interlanguage.

More importantly, during our teaching practice we were privileged to receive the National Inspector on several occasions and we could discuss the CBA as an approach to EFL teaching/learning. The sample lesson plans following the Competence Based Approach (CBA) that we discussed gave importance to the learners' contributing previous knowledge and the diverse ethnicity of Cameroon EFL learning environment. The contrastive approach to EFL teaching/learning at the early stage (6ème, 5ème) of English language learning will help better implement the Competence Based Approach (CBA) which requires the teacher to stop being a preacher but to act like a guide and let the learners build up his own new knowledge taking into account the learner's contributing previous knowledge in the acquisition of new habits. In a CBA lesson, the specificities of the class are an important variable that should guide any teacher. So the multilingual status or diverse ethnicity of our EFL classrooms must not be taken for granted in lesson planning. A contrastive approach teaching help teacher anticipate on learners' possible errors.

### **5.3.3 To Course Book Writers**

There is a need to corroborate the role of Mother Tongue awareness in EFL pedagogy as far as course materials are concerned. In fact, if almost no importance or no place is given to French which is the first language of instruction to Francophones, the situation is more than alarming concerning the learners' Mother Tongue in an EFL classroom. In other words if at least, as Enama (2010: 62) says, the course book writer of *Way Ahead* in English is to be encouraged for his initiative of suggesting to EFL teachers to say some weather-related items to the class in French, no author of English course book material has ever taken into consideration the learners' linguistic background. These materials should take into account the relationship between students' linguistic identity, culture and the TL. Thus a truly Foreign Language (FL) pedagogic instrument should be contrastive, making clear references to the relationship between the TL and the learner's linguistic background (not only French but also national languages).

### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

The main aim of this study was to investigate interferences challenges of Ewondo learners of English. Focus was on phonology. A similar study could therefore be carried out using the same informants at any other level of linguistic analysis. In the same manner, the study limits itself to the metropolitan town of Yaoundé. A similar study could therefore be conducted in another town in Cameroon and even in rural areas. It is also worth noting that in this research endeavour, only secondary school students were considered and even only Ewondophones from the second cycle (2nde, Première and Tle) served as informants. The spoken English of primary school and/or university Ewondo learners could therefore be an important area of investigation in further inquiries.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondent,

The present questionnaire has been designed to serve academic purposes. It is intended to get your opinion concerning the difficulties that secondary school Ewondo learners of English face speaking English.

Kindly answer the questions as objectively and sincerely as possible. Either fill in the required information in the spaces provided or place a tick in the box of appropriate responses.

Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Region of origin: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Region of Origin : \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many languages do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_ languages. Kindly list them in their order \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ acquisition.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Which of the above language do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the most used language at home? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you like English? **Yes**  **No**  or what would you qualify everything related to English? **Interesting**  **very interesting**  **boring**  **very boring**
5. Do you face any difficulty when you want to speak English? **Yes**  **No**
6. In your opinion the most difficult aspect of English learning is:  
a. **Writing**  b. **Speaking**   
Justify your answer: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Does your *pronunciation* of English sounds and words affect intelligibility? (do you always pass the intended message) A. **Yes**  b. **No**  c. **At times**
8. Should any other language be used in the English class? **Yes**  **No**



9. Does your English teacher show contrasts or differences between English and any of languages you speak, in terms of *pronunciation*? **Yes**  **No**
10. Do you believe there is any difference between English and your mother tongue in terms of pronunciation? **No**  **Yes**  **possible**
11. Do you know some English words that also exist in your mother tongue? \_\_\_\_\_. If **YES**, Kindly list five of those words: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
12. Is the pronunciation of the words you listed different from your Mother Tongue to English? **Yes**  **No**
13. What do you think should be done in order to improve your *pronunciation*? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for you cooperation!

## APPENDIX II

### TEACHERS'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Dears Teachers, we would be grateful if you could provide answers to the following questions designed to facilitate a research project on the “Interference challenges of Ewondo Learners of EFL” in some selected secondary schools in Yaounde. The research is purely an academic exercise and information provided will be kept confidential.

Please, tick the appropriate answer where required.

**Qualification:** BA  DIPES I  DIPES II

**Teaching experience:** 1-5 years  6-10 years  10 – above

1. Should English be taught exclusively through English? **Yes**  **No**
2. Do you believe in the impact of the learners' first language on their acquisition of English? **Yes**  **No**
3. In your opinion, can a learner's mother tongue be treated as a first language in an EFL classroom? **Yes**  **No**  **Why?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How often does the linguistic identity of your learners influence your EFL teaching approach?
  - a. **Never**
  - b. **Very often**
  - c. **Sometimes**
  - d. **Fairly frequently**
  - e. **Others** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Which language skill is the most affected by your learners' linguistic background?
  - a. **Speaking**
  - b. **Writing**
  - c. **Reading**
  - d. **Listening**

6. Have you ever paid any particular attention to the Pronunciation of Ewondo learners of EFL, since we are in the Centre Region of Cameroon? Yes  No

**Why?**(Justify your answer) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

7. Does the Ewondophones' pronunciation of English words affect comprehension? Yes   
No  or Do you understand the speech of your learners? **I don't understand**   
**I manage to understand**  **I have no choice**  **At times a bit**

8. What percent of the time do you think Pronunciation should be taught in the EFL class in a school year? (Tick only one answer)

**0-10**  **10**  **15-20**  **25- 40**  **50 and above**

9. What would you suggest in order to improve the pronunciation of your EFL learners?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**Thank you!**

### APPENDIX III

#### OBSERVATION CHECK LIST

This observation checklist is intended to record informants' general behavior during oral speeches in English in and out of the classroom confinement in order to identify the affected linguistic level that is mostly affected by Ewondo . The observer is a student teacher from Higher Teacher Training College Yaounde, Bilingual studies level 5 currently on teaching practice.

##### Obervation checklist I

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Class:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic under discussion:** \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Linguistic levels (categories) of interferences</b>			
	<b>Syntax</b>	<b>Grammar</b>	<b>Phonology</b>	<b>Lexicology</b>
Student A				
Student B				
Student C				
Student D				
Student E				
Student F				
Student F				
Student G				

##### **Observation checklist II (summary)**

	<b>lexicology</b>	<b>grammar</b>	<b>Phonology</b>	<b>syntax</b>
<b>Classes</b>				
<b>Total number of informants</b>				
<b>percentage</b>				

## APPENDIX IV

### Topics of discussion during class observations

#### I-GBHS EKOUNOU

*Secondes* : For or against early marriage ? (debate)

*Premières*: Importance of music (Debate)

*Terminales*: The effect of man's activities on the Amazone forest. (Presentation)

#### II-LYCEE GE NERAL LECLERC NGOA-EKELE

*Seconde*: There are controversies surrounding the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline (Reading lesson =group work followed by oral presentations)

*Première*: Advantages and disadvantages of pace travel (group work followed by oral presentations during a reading lesson)

*Terminale*: Modern day slavery ought to be punished (group work followed by oral presentations during a reading class)

## **APPENDIX V**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDING QUESTIONS**

#### **Step I: Informants' personal information**

Kindly answer the following questions

1. How often do you listen to songs in English?
2. How often do you watch movies in English?
3. Do you speak English outside class?
4. How often do you practice reading aloud at home?

#### **Step II: Reading aloud test**

Kindly read aloud the following words

Sister, Pit, Sick, lucky, put, took, cook, church, urge, worm, about, converse, hello, at, cat, Mathematics, car, part, march, come, country, Monday, lie, wine, Friday, air, fair, out, cow, boy, toilet, near, period, table, chain, go, so, window, tour, poor, lower, flower, hour, towel, player, loyal, bias, tired, church, chocolate, choose, joke, judge, procedure, faithfully, thesis, mother, father, they, nation, sugar, ocean, vision, world, find, most, cleft, model, faculty, typical, general, formal.

**APPENDIX VI**

**INTERVIEW PRONUNCIATION CHECKLIST**

**RP sound segments on which to focus during the interview**

	Monophthogs								diphthongs					Triphthongs					Consonant sound segments																		
	ɪ	ʊ	ɜ	ə	æ	ɑ	ʌ	ɑ	ɛ	a	ɔ	ɪ	e	ə	ʊ	ə	a	e	ɔ	a	ɪ	ʃ	ʒ	θ	ð	ʃ	ʒ	l	n	s	f	D	K	N	M		
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