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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Effect of Home-Model on the Spoken English of the Nigerian Child Bunmi Balogun-Oguns	1-14
Phonological Variation of English Loanwords in Duala Dictionary Abubakar Abba Kaka (PhD) and Musa Sabo	15-30
Societal Revitalisation: A Post-Colonial Reading of Tor Iorapuu's <i>April 1421</i> Emmanuel Bunduga Tyogema	31-39
Female Empowerment and Liberation of the Mind in Aiwanose Odafen's <i>Tomorrow I Become a Woman</i> Fatima Bukar Abba	40-50
Language Shift, Maintenance and Death in Hadejia Emirate: A Sociolinguistic Survey Bashir Uba Ibrahim, Ph.D.	51-68
Literary Exploration of Forced Marriage: a Postcolonial Feminist Analysis of Zulu Sofola's <i>Wedlock of the Gods</i> and Ola Rotimi's <i>our Husband has Gone Mad Again</i> Ladan Nujir	69-80
Poverty as Offspring of Corruption: An Analysis of Leadership Failure and Militancy in <i>Night Rain</i> by Chris Anyokwu Patience Haye Dakup	81-92
Oral Prose Narratives in Green: An Ecocritical Reading of Mwaghavul Folktales Vera Anap Aaron And Sandra K. J. Simon	93-106
Language and Hate Discourse: A Pragmatic Investigation of Sam Omasetye's' <i>From Don to Done'</i> : Samuel Edem	107-127
Artificial Intelligence In Islamic Media and Da'Wah: Opportunities, Ethical Challenges and the Role of Maqasid Al-Shariah Muhammad Umar	128-145
Phonologic al Variation of English Loanwords in Duala Dictionary Abba kuka and Musa Sabo	146-163
A contrastive analysis of kanuri and Kurama language sound system Dr. Sammani Hassan Hussain	164-183



Analysis of Move Operation in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Hafsat Ado Ahmad and Dr Takim Ajom Okongor

184-202

Linguistic Choices and Process Types in Governor Inuwa Yahaya's Inaugural Speech

Adamu Yusuf Fari, Hadiza Musa Amshi, and Amos, Michael

203- 214

Creativity in Students' Slang Usage

Nasiru Musa and Juliet David Aluke

215-225

Logico-Semantic Relations in Abubakar Othman's Palm of Time: Systemic Functional Analysis

Fatima Bawa, Fatima Muhammad Mansur and Hadiza Musa Amshi

226-235

Narrative Discourse Analysis of Qur'an and Hadith Using Labov and Waletzky (1972) Schema

Kabiru Zubairu

236-252

Examining Lacanian Ideation of Patriarchy in Lola Shoneyin's *the Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*

Prof. Audee T. Giwa and Amina Nasiru Haruna

253-262

Pragmatic Implicatures of Animal Metaphors in Selected Nigerian Pidgin English Proverbs

Naomi ALU and Ngozi Gift OKATA

263-280

Comparative Analysis Of Stylistic Deviation Of Social Roles Register In Terrorism Discourse: A Case Study Of Joe Biden's And Sanusi Lamido Sanusi's CNN Interviews

Prof Bulus Wayar and Kabiru Zubairu

281-291

Exploring The Concept of Hybridity and Mimicry in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Khadijah Saleh Abdu

292-302

Womanist Perspectives on Female Struggle and Survival in Razinat T. Mohammed's *Habiba and Other Stories*

Hannatu Fibemi Makka and Ibrahim Bala Kanti

303-312

ظاهرة الموازنة في التراث العربي والنيجيري: دراسة وصفية

مختار منصور محمد

313-330

A Linguistic Stylistic Analysis of the Inaugural and Independence Day Speeches of General Ibrahim Babangida and President Muhammadu Buhari: A Comparative Approach

Habibu Sule and Nkeiruka Esther Gordons

331-341



An Analysis of Urhobo Language Meronyms

Muhammad Dayyib Auwal, PhD and Yusuf Ahmed Gwarzo, PhD 342-351

Authorial Pessimism in Northern Nigerian Female Character Portrayal: A Study of Razinat T. Mohammed's Habiba

Bilkisu Abubakar Arabi, Professor Maureen Amaka Azuike, and Professor Jeff Godwin Doki 352-370

Exploring The Island's History, Cultural Heritage And Aftermaths of Colonialism in Michael Ondaatje's Anil's Ghost

Rasika Shiranthi Samanmalee Somasundara and Professor Jeff Godwin Doki 371-389

Pragmatic Strategies, Politeness Forms, and Power Relations in Conflict Talk: A Linguistic Analysis of the "I Am Not a Fool, Sir" Interaction in Nigerian Institutional Discourse.

Lamido Muhammad Tukur 390-396

A Pragmatic Analysis of Politeness In Nasir El-Rufai's Speech and Social Media Users' Responses: Polite Language as a Tool for Social Inclusion and Sustainable Development

Adi Shimoudi Jonathan 397-414

Rhetorical Patterns in Political News Reporting: A Corpus-Driven Genre and Discourse Analysis of Nigerian Newspapers

Bello Alim Babi And Dr. Aminu Suleiman 415-428

A Review of: *The Songs of a Bard* by A. I. Sabo (Lagos: Something for Everybody Ventures, 2021, 49 pages)

Ismail Bala 429-433

A Review of: *Songs of Silence*

Abdullahi Ismaila 434-437



Phonological Variation of English Loanwords in Duala Dictionary

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Abstract

Loanwords refer to the process through which a language adopts words or linguistic units from another language. This study explores the incorporation of loanwords from English into the Duala language, focusing on the phonological, morphological adaptations. The research applies Grammatical Adaptation Theory of Haspelmath, M. (2009) to understand the mechanisms of linguistic borrowing. The findings are in twelve (12) domains : transport (2(1,07%)), administration (20(10,75%)), foods (17(9,13%)), education (3(1,61%)), technology (25(13,44%)), places and names (20(10,75%)), unity of measure and times (26(13,97%)), sports (2(1,07%)), household (15(8,06%)), health (5(2,68%)), religion (6(3,22%)), and miscellaneous (45(24,19%)). The borrowed words changed their features in Duala language by deletion, consonant and vowel changes, assimilation etc. The findings show how the new lexicon enriches the vocabulary of Duala.

Key words: language contact, domains, classification, adaptation, loanwords

Introduction

Studying loanwords in the Dictionary: Duala- Français (1972) involves analyzing English words that have been incorporated into the Duala language, reflecting the historical contact and social dynamics between these languages. The study reveals how the borrowed words are phonologically, morphologically and syntactically adapted in Duala, revealing the linguistic integration and the resulting hybrid forms of the language.

Duala language

Duala is a member of the Sawabantu group of Bantu languages. It is spoken by about 87,700 Duala and Mungo people in the southwest of Cameroon, particularly in and around Douala, the capital of the Littoral Region according to the census of 2005. Duala is also known as Douala, Diwala, Dwela, Dualla and Dwala. Duala speakers call it *Duālā* or *bwambo ba Duālā*. Dialects include Douala proper, Bodiman, Oli, Pongo and Mongo. Some linguists classify them as separate languages. Duala first appeared in writing in the Latin



alphabet in 1870 in a translation of the Bible by Alfred Saker, a British missionary and linguist. Other orthographies for Duala were devised by French and German missionaries and linguists. A common alphabet for the languages of Cameroon, the General Alphabet of Cameroonian Languages, was created in 1978. There are classes in Duala in schools and universities, and it is used to some extent as a medium of instruction in primary schools. There are also some television programmes in Duala. Duala is a language of wider communication that originated in Cameroon; it belongs to the Niger-Congo language family.

National languages of Cameroon

The incredibility of linguistic diversity of Cameroon is easily visible in its huge wealth of national languages. 55 Afro-Asiatic languages, 169 Niger-Congo languages, 4 Ubangian languages, and 2 Nilo-Saharan languages are spoken in Cameroon. The Niger-Congo languages spoken here can be further classified and includes 140 Benue-Congo languages, 28 Adamawa languages, and one Senegambian language. An orthography system for all Cameroon languages was established in the 1970s. It is known as the General Alphabet of Cameroon.

About the lingua franca, Pidgin English is used in the country's Northwest and Southwest provinces. In the north, Fulfulde plays the same role. In the East, South, and Center provinces of Cameroon is Ewondo.

Camfranglais is a hybrid of the English and French languages and is prevalent in the locations where French -speaking and English-speaking Cameroonians meet.

Dictionary

Studies on the Duala language have started for a long time. It has been over a century that a small Duala-English dictionary was published: *A Vocabulary of the Duala Language*, Cameroon Western Africa Mission Press, 1862, with 63 pages. It was a missionary by the name of Alfred Saker who arrived in Douala in 1845 who began writing and printing the Duala language. His passion for his religion motivated him with persistence of work on this language. The translation of the Bible in the Duala language has made it possible to better control the language. In 1848, he published the translation of the Gospel of Mathieu, in 1862 the New Testament (2nd edition in 1882); and in 1872 the Old Testament.

Paul Helmliner's *Dictionary Duala-Français suivi d'un lexique Français-Duala* (1972) is a comprehensive bilingual dictionary of the Duala language spoken in Cameroon. It was a significant resource for linguistic studies and was published as part of a series on African Languages and Literatures. The work includes a Duala-French dictionary, followed by a French-Duala lexicon. This dual structure makes it useful for both native Duala speakers and French -speaking linguists or learners. With 664 pages, the dictionary provided a substantial collection of vocabulary for its time. The book provides a



detailed look at the vocabulary of Duala, a Bantu language with a noun class system.

Review of Related Studies

There are many researches that have been carried out in the area of linguistics borrowings by various researchers. For example, Greenberg (1960) explains the term borrowing from the perspective of Arabic to Hausa that is Hausa may have borrowed from Arabic independently or, have passed from Arabic into Hausa via Kanuri. The present research is on how English words are borrowed into Duala language.

On the other hand, Baldi (1995) carried out a study on the adaptation of Arabic phonemes into Yoruba language. He established that dropping of consonant without replacement does not exist in Yoruba, the substitution of Arabic word phonemes by nearest Yoruba phonemes, the breaking of consonant clusters is also absent in Yoruba by vowel insertion, replacement of an Arabic diphthong through Hausa Language.

Baldi (1991) studied three languages, Arabic, Hausa and Kanuri while Baldi (1995) examines adaptation of Arabic phonemes into Yoruba language as a result of contact but the present research work is on two languages, that is, Duala and English as a result of language contact by explaining importation and substitution.

Taki (1993) explains the concept of borrowing words, from one language into another and transforming them into forms other than their source.

Some of the terms used include: 'nativization, domestication and naturalization of words'. He goes further by opting for the term naturalization of words because it is more suitable for linguistic usage, and portrays the fact that, in most cases the words borrowed are transformed into different forms from the source.

He also explains the concept of borrowing by using these terms, that is, nativization, domestication and naturalization while the present research is on importation and substitution as a result of language contact.

Shettima and Abdullahi (2010) explain that Kanuri exhibits basic CV and CVC syllabic structure. They point out that loanwords in Kanuri must satisfy this basic structure. All onset and codas of loanwords must have epenthesis vowels, unless the codas are consonant /l/, /m/, /n/, and /r/ as in *luwasár* (onion) or sibilant /s/, as in *fos ofis* (post office). On the other hand, if the coda is a cluster of consonants and the final consonant is a stop, then it has to be deleted unless there is a nasal preceding the consonant. Nasals that are part of the coda cluster are incorporated as syllabic consonants, and the stop, is considered an onset that demands an epenthesis vowel. For example: On set Coda: "Prisoner > fursəna", "Post office > fos ofis", "Trader > tareda". Secondly, in the case where the coda consists of nasal, nasal cluster, an epenthetic vowel is inserted after the nasal cluster. For example: "Mint > minti", "Paint > penti". Thirdly, the syllabic



change as: “CCV onset CVCV”, “CVC (nasal) coda CVC”, and “CVC (+nasal) C coda CVCV”. They explain that loanwords in Kanuri must satisfy the syllabic structure while the present work is on importation and substitution of loanwords from English into Duala language.

Naboula, L. (2019) explains the reasons for which gbà̀yà takes words from French. It shows also in which way words are taken. By so doing, it gives the information’s of the process of use while speaking gbà̀yà. By the use of descriptive grammar, linked to the structuralism theory, also emphasize on the practical observation, it has come to description and analysis. The data analyzed are some words in gbà̀yà. Those words, which make up an interview done with the native speakers who gave us a list of gbà̀yà words, has been transcribed, cut and described. At the end of this analysis, it appears that many types of words are taken from French with justifications or not. This work has permitted us to see that the words taken from French has enriched and developed the gbà̀yà language. It is similar to our research in duala language.

Zipei Guo, (2020). Loanwords account for 80% percent of English vocabulary, which are necessary in the process of English learning. This article reviews five aspects of loanwords in English. The historical background of English loanwords is divided into four stages, which are Romano -Celtic Period, Old English, Middle English and Modern English respectively. We review the

historical, social, cultural reasons of borrowing. Two ways of classification are reviewed: the linguistic-based classification (Haugen) and the product-based classification (Zhang). In terms of the borrowing process, asymmetry, complexity, flexibility and creativity are four notable characteristics. The benefits of learning English loanwords involve three aspects, which are related to teachers, students and translation.

Alfred, J. M. (2016) shows how a lexical borrowing is an important aspect of language change. The study of loanwords can give important insights into the cultural and socio-historical circumstances of a language. This paper examines lexical borrowing patterns in Chichewa/Chinyanja. Using data from the Chinyanja monolingual dictionary, the paper attempts to determine the kinds of borrowings that are common, the degree of lexical borrow ability, and the common source languages for the loanwords, and how these borrowings compare with borrowing patterns in other languages. The paper also shows that words are borrowed even when native equivalents are available in the target language. This leads to semantic narrowing for some of the words.

Magdaline B. N. (2019) in a general observation of the lexical stock in the Ejagham language shows that the language has panoply of borrowed words which originate from Indo-European languages such as English, French and German as well as some



local languages. The presence of loanwords in this language to a large extent can be explained by Cameroon's earlier colonization by the said countries, resulting to language contact, Schneider (2007), Melchers and Shaw (2011). Interestingly, loanwords in Ejagham have undergone some phonological and morphological restructuring thereby making them conform to the phonetic and syllable structure of the said language. This paper is an analysis of the phonological processes that loanwords undergo to suit the word structure of the recipient language. The work has been divided in two main parts. The first part is a presentation of the syllable structure of the Ejagham language. The second part is a presentation of data and analysis of the loan items from the donor to the recipient language.

Sofia Rüdiger. (2018) in his study investigates South Korean students'

attitudes towards English loanwords and their use. Even though English enjoys high prestige in Korean society and is considered a requirement for personal and professional advancement, usage of English loanwords is evaluated predominantly negatively or with mixed feelings. For loanwords that semantically deviate from Standard English meanings and thus demonstrate Korean identity (i.e., Konglish loanwords), the evaluations turn even more to the negative. Nevertheless, participants also posit positive aspects of general English and Konglish loanword use and, additionally, put forward a variety of perceived reasons for using English words. This study shows that general positive attitudes related to a language can be reversed or at least modified when it comes to the combination of the prestigious language with the native language.

List of Loanwords

Table 1: we have registered 186 loanwords in the list below

S/No	English	Duala
1	Office	ofis
2	Pan	pán
3	Pancake	parikoko
4	Pap	pap
5	Pattern	patan
6	Party	pati
7	Part and party	Páti pàti
8	Paint	pén
9	Paper	pepa
10	Pencock	Píkók
11	Pillar	Píla
12	Pin	Pin
13	Piece	písís
14	Fear	píya



15	Pork	pókí
16	Police	polís
17	Puncheon	pónjí
18	Post	post
19	Pump	Pómbí
20	Pump	Pómbo
21	Pound	Pón
22	Pawpaw	Popó
23	Putty	Potí
24	Portugal	Potoki
25	Prayer	preya
25	Priest	prísí
27	Rent	Rent
28	Rubber	Roba
29	Ice	ais
30	Hammer	ámedi
31	Angel	angel
32	Aunt	ántí
33	Antimacassar	atmakása
34	Bank	bank
35	Bicycle	básiko
36	To baste	Bés ou besa
37	Bench	bénjí
38	Bear	Ber
39	Bible	Bíbel
40	Business	bisín
41	Beer	Bíye
42	Blue	blu
43	Bottle	bótedí
45	Ball	Bo
46	Body	Boii
47	button	Bótin
48	buttonhole	Bótínhol
49	bread	Bred
50	brick	bríki
51	bricklayer	briklea
52	brush	bros
53	candle	Cándel
54	Crane-work	cánwóki
55	cap	cápi
56	carriage	Cárét
57	To change	Cenci , cenc
58	chocolate	cókólát
59	church	cóci



60	meaning	dimíniń
61	report	dípót
62	dear	díye
63	dock	Dok
64	doctor	Dokita
65	drawers	dro
66	duty	dútf
67	agent	éjent
68	farm	fam
69	flour	flawa
70	Frying-pan	fraipan
71	frank	Frank
72	gather	géda
73	gold	gol
74	governor	Góbina
75	gramme	gram
76	grater	greta
77	ham	ham
78	Hammer 2	háma
79	hour	háwa
80	Iron	hayon
81	headman	hedman
82	Hem	hem
83	hospital	hospital
84	Hold	holkat
85	hinge	ingis
86	engine	injin
87	Ink	ink
88	jealousy	jalasi
89	Jack	Jékí
90	Jealousy	Jelesi
91	coverlet	Kabaslóti
92	Cover	kaba
93	Coffee	kafe
94	cockroach	kakrot
95	Crackers	kalákasi
96	kerosene	kalasin
97	Camel	kamel
98	carpenter	kampita
99	Counter	kanta
100	Copper	kápa
101	cutter	káta
102	cake	kenki
103	kilo	Kikilo



104	Kilometre	kilometa
105	clock	Klóki
106	Quinine	kinin
107	king	kíne
108	kettle	kítri
109	clerk	klaki
110	cocoa	kokó
111	income	kóme
112	cooper	kópa
113	Coat	kófi
114	coffee	Kofi
115	common	Kómon
116	copper	kópedi
117	Cost	Kós
118	Crew-man	kruman
119	cook	Kúke
120	lantern	lanta
121	glass	labi
123	labourer	lebla
124	lace	lési
125	letter	leta
126	ribbon	Libon
127	liter	lita
128	Loya	lawer
129	mark	máki
130	machine	mosin
131	mail	médi
132	mildew	melejú
133	meter	meta
134	minute	minuti
135	meeting	mítin
136	monday	Móndí
137	money	Moní
138	jew	mujū
139	mulatto	muláto
140	sign	sain
141	shop	sápi
142	saucepan	saspan
143	saturday	Satide/satude
144	screw	sekrú
145	silver	silba
146	silk	siliki
147	slipper	silipas
148	shirt	simi



149	singlet	Singlet
150	snour	sinō
151	Six pence	Sispén
152	store	sito
153	screw	skru
154	square	skwe
155	soda	soda
156	saur	Sō
157	shovel	Sobel
158	To salt	Solo
159	summons	Sómon
160	Sunday	Sondi
161	To suffer	Sopa
162	soap	Sópí
163	shirt	sótí
164	To spell	Spel/sipél
165	stamp	Stamp
166	soup	Supi
167	tobacco	Tabako
168	turpentine	Tapíntái
169	tarpaulin	Tapot
170	starch	Tási
171	towel	Táwedi
172	table	Tébedi
173	temple	Tempel
174	tennis	Tenis
175	tea	Tí
176	ticket	tiket
177	net	Timba
178	trowel	tráwel
179	three penny	Trópen
180	trousers	Trosis
181	wire	wayan
182	week	wíki
183	wick	wikin
184	window	winda
185	horse	Wósi
186	yard	yala

Methodology of the Study

The models of approach adopted in this study are those of Dikwa (1988); Abdullahi (2013); Abanga et al (2018), Abba Kaka (2024), all of

whom have treated loanwords in African language, particularly a Nilo-Saharan language (Kanuri). They categorized loanwords into different domains. In attempting to explain



the nature of loanwords adaptation in Duala, we adopted the phonetic approximation model by Haspelmath (2009) to understand the mechanisms of linguistic borrowing.

The data of our study were directly extracted from the dictionary *Duala-Français suivi d'un lexique Français – Duala* (1972).

Distribution of loanwords

The loanwords are distributed in the following domains with variable score: transport, administration, food, education, technology, places and names, unity measure and times, sports, household, health, religion and miscellaneous.

Table 2

S/N	DOMAINE	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
1	Transport	2	1,07%
2	Administration	20	10,75%
3	Food	17	9,13%
4	Education	3	1,61%
5	Technology	25	13,44%
6	Place/names	20	10,75%
7	Utility measure/time	26	13,97%
8	Sports	2	1,07%
9	Household	15	8,06%
10	Health	5	2,68%
11	Religion	6	3,22%
12	Miscellaneous	45	24,19%
		186	99,94%

- 1. Transport** also known as transportation, refers to the movement of people, animals, and goods from one place to another. It involves the use of various modes, such as vehicles, infrastructure, and logistics, to facilitate the efficient and safe transfer of individuals and cargo.

	English	Duala	French
i.	bicycle	básiko	Vélo



- | | | | |
|-----|----------|-------|---------|
| ii. | carriage | Cárét | chariot |
|-----|----------|-------|---------|

Explanations:

Vowel sounds: "Bicycle" has /aɪ/ and /ɪ/, while "Básico" has /a/, /i/, and /o/. "Bicycle" contains the diphthong /aɪ/, whereas "Básico" has monophthong vowels. "Bicycle" ends with /əl/ (schwa sound), while "Básico" ends with /o/. With the total number of 186 borrowed words from English language, we have two (2) words from Transport and its represent 1.07%.

2. Administration refers to the process of managing and directing the affairs of an organization, government, or institution. It involves planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling resources to achieve specific goals and objectives.

	English	Duala	French
i.	office	ofis	bureau

The main difference lies in the vowel sound /ɒ/ (or /ɔ:/) in "office," which might be pronounced slightly differently in "ofis" depending on the language or accent. The stress pattern and phoneme sequence are similar.

ii.	police	polis	police
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The stress pattern differs /pə'li:s/ has stress on the second syllable, while /'pɒlis/ has stress on the first. The vowel sounds also differ: /ə/ and /i:/ in "police" versus /ɒ/ and /ɪ/ in "polis."

iii.	bank	bank	banque
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None, if both are pronounced as /bæŋk/. If "bank" in the second instance has a different pronunciation, it would depend on the specific phonetic transcription provided.

iv.	governor	gobina	gouverneur
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The phonemes and syllable structure differ significantly. "Governor" has /gʌvərnər/, while "Gobina" has /gɔʊ'bi:nə/, with different vowel sounds and consonants (/v/ vs. /b/).

The total number of one hundred and eighty-six (186) borrowed words from English language; we have twenty (20) words from Administration and its represent 10.75%.

3. Food refers to any substance consumed to provide nutritional support for the body. It can be of plant or animal origin and contains essential nutrients such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, or minerals.

	English	Duala	French
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- i. Pawpaw popo papayer

Vowel sounds (/ɔ:/ vs. /ou/), stress patterns, and potentially regional pronunciation variations.

- ii. Beer biye bière

Syllable structure, phoneme sequence, and stress pattern differ significantly.

- iii. bread bred pain

No differences if both are pronounced as /bred/. Both have the same phonemes and syllable structure.

- iv. Chocolate coklat chocolat

Initial consonant sound (/tʃ/ vs. /k/), vowel sounds, syllable structure, and stress pattern.

We have a total of one hundred and eighty-six (186) borrowed words from English language; the domain of administration obtained seventeen (17) words which represent 9.13%.

4. Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and habits through various forms of learning, teaching, and training. It encompasses a wide range of activities, from formal schooling to informal learning experiences.

English

Duala

French

- i. Bench benji banc

The phonemes /tʃ/ in "bench" and /dʒ/ in "Benji" differ. "Bench" is monosyllabic, while "Benji" has two syllables.

- ii. Table tebedi table

The vowel sounds differs /eɪ/ in "table" versus /ɛ/ in "Tebedi." The syllable structure and phoneme sequence also vary.

- iii. Ribbon libon ruban

The initial consonant sound differs— /r/ in "ribbon" versus /l/ in "Libon." The vowel sound in the second syllable also differs— /ən/ in "ribbon" versus /ɔn/ in "Libon."

With total number of one hundred and eighty-six (186) borrowed words from English language; the domain of education scored three (3) words which represent 1.61%.



5. Technology can be defined as the application of scientific knowledge, tools, and techniques to solve problems, improve efficiency, and enhance human life. It encompasses a wide range of fields, including engineering, computer science, and biotechnology.

	English	Duala	French
i.	Kerosene	kalasin	kerosene

The vowel sounds and phoneme sequence differ. "Kerosene" has /ε/ and /ə/ with a distinct /i:/ sound, while "Kalasin" has /ə/ and /a/ with /ɪ/.

ii.	Engine	injin	moteur
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The initial vowel sound differs— /ε/ in "engine" versus /ɪ/ in "injin."

iii.	machine	mosin	machine
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The vowel sounds and consonant phonemes differ— /ə/ and /ʃ/ in "machine" versus /ɔ/ and /s/ in "mosin." The length of the vowel /i:/ in "machine" contrasts with the short /ɪ/ in "mosin."

iv.	pump	pombi	pump
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The vowel sound differs— /ʌ/ in "pump" versus /ɔ/ in "pombi." "Pombi" has an additional syllable and the final consonant sound differs— /p/ in "pump" versus /bi/ in "pombi."

With the total number of 186 borrowed words from English language, we have twenty-five (25) words from Technology and its represent 13.44%.

6. Place refers to a particular point or area in physical space, often with defined boundaries or characteristics. It can be a location, site, or setting that holds significance or meaning. While name refers to a word or phrase that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. Names can be proper (specific) or common (general).

	English	Duala	French
i.	lawyer	lawer	avocat

The presence of the /j/ sound in "lawyer", versus its absence in "lawer," which instead has a schwa sound /ə/

ii.	slipper	silipas	slipper
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The syllable structure and vowel sounds differ significantly. "Slipper" has /ɪ/ and /ər/, while "Silipas" has /ɪ/, /i:/, and /ə/. The phoneme sequence and stress pattern also vary.

iii.	Trousers	trosis	pantalon
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**English****Duala****French**

i. Doctor

dokita

médecin

The vowel sounds and syllable structure differ. "Doctor" has /ɒ/ and /ər/, while "dokita" has /ɔ/ and /i:/. The phoneme sequence and stress pattern also vary.

ii. hospital

hospital

hôpital

The final phoneme and syllable structure differ slightly. "Hospital" ends with /əl/, while "hospita" ends with /a/.

iii. Dock

dok

cale sèche

The vowel sound differs slightly— /ɒ/ in "dock" versus /ɔ/ in "dok." While both are monosyllabic and share the same phonemes, the vowel quality might vary slightly.

iv. Quinine

kinin

quinine

The presence of /w/ in "quinine" and the vowel length /i:/ differ from "kinin," which lacks /w/ and has a short /ɪ/. The phoneme sequence and syllable structure also vary slightly.

With the total number of one hundred and eighty-six (186) borrowed words from English language, we have five (5) words from health and its represent 2.68%.

11. Religion refers to a system of beliefs, practices, and rituals that people use to connect with a higher power, the divine, or the sacred. It often involves a set of principles, values, and morals that guide individuals' lives and provide a sense of meaning and purpose.

English**Duala****French**

i. angel

angel

ange

There are no differences in phonological analysis between the two instances of "angel."

ii. Bible

bibel

bible

The vowel sound differs— /aɪ/ in "bible" versus /i:/ in "bibel." The phoneme sequence remains similar, but the vowel quality varies.

iii. Church

coci

église



linguistics borrowing, particularly from English, German, French, Fulfulde, etc. reflects the historical cultural and social interactions between the different communities. The vitality and survival of languages depend on this intercultural exchange.

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