

NOUCHI: AN IVORIAN LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

Nouchi is a French language variety specific to Côte d'Ivoire. Created and used by most of Ivorian citizens, this language is knowing extension and has even exceeded the frontiers of Côte d'Ivoire. The popularity of this argot elsewhere in the world and its inherently Ivorian characteristics make it acquire the status of Ivorian linguistic identity. The objective of this paper is to point out the linguistic features that have allowed this language to acquire such a status in most countries of the world. From the results of our study, it can be retained that Nouchi language appears as an Ivorian linguistic identity abroad because of the great linguistic value that Ivorians have ascribed to Nouchi in many important domains of their daily life. These suitable intercommunicative domains that are politics, internet, music and media (Radio, TV and newspapers) have favored this language to be discovered by most of people in the world as a significant language for Ivorians citizens. The strong link they have realized between Nouchi and Ivorians permitted them to attribute the status of Ivorians' linguistic identity to Nouchi.

KEYWORDS: French, Nouchi, identity, language, culture, local languages, popularization

RESUME

Le Nouchi est une variété de langue Française spécifique à la Côte d'Ivoire. Créée et utilisée par les Ivoiriens, elle est en vogue et a même dépassé les frontières de la Côte d'Ivoire. La popularité de cette variété de langue Française perçue ailleurs dans le monde et ses caractéristiques linguistiques fondamentalement liées à la culture Ivoirienne lui confèrent le statut d'identité linguistique Ivoirienne à l'étranger. L'objectif de cet article est de montrer les caractéristiques linguistiques qui ont permis qu'un tel statut d'identité linguistique Ivoirienne soit acquis par le Nouchi dans plupart des pays Francophones. Les résultats de notre étude nous permettent de retenir que la grande valeur linguistique que beaucoup d'Ivoiriens ont attribué au Nouchi dans les importants domaines tels que la politique, l'internet, les media et la musique ont énormément contribué à la popularisation de cette langue et à sa reconnaissance comme statut de l'identité linguistique Ivoirienne.

Mots Clés : Français, Nouchi, identité, langue, culture, langues locales, popularisation.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the world countries have a language permitting to exhibit their respective identities. Generally speaking, the kind of language that has acquired a very specific symbol in a country is ranked to a status of national or official language. In the context of Côte d'Ivoire which is a former French colony, the current official and national language is French. It is this official and national language which was supposed to set this country's distinct identity. However, French language is not always spoken following this standard language rules. As a matter of fact, a new specific French language called Nouchi has been developed in the nation. According to the Ivorian linguist J. K. N'guessan, (1990, 373-374), Nouchi which was born in the 1970s and 1980s in groups of young who were gangsters and criminal called marginal background of Abidjan has been for the first time revealed in an article by the Ivorian linguists Bernard Ahua and Alain Coulibaly in the Ivorian newspaper "Fraternité Matin" on September 6th 1986 (S. Lafage 2002, 2-3). Nouchi was an argot, because it was only used by most of Ivorian urban criminal groups likes "Far-M, Yang System, Ninja Gorges, Mapless and Youpless" which were supposed to be dangerous and distinguished themselves from the other members of the society. In this context, Nouchi was basically considered by many language specialists like Jeremi, Kouadio. N'guessan (1990) as a fashionable language that would later disappear.

However, Nouchi which was viewed as a language spoken only by uneducated young people is knowing so much extension today in the nation. Indeed, this language is gaining more existence value in the country because it is used by most of Ivorians from different social strata such as singers, politicians, journalists, students. This drives Jeremi, Kouadio Nguessan (2006, 177), based on N. N'Guessan's (1999) investigation to conclude that today Nouchi language has emerged because it is no more a marginal groups language but "the first language used by most of young Ivorian from five to thirty years old" (My translation) . Additionally, B. M. Ahua (2008, 1) confirms this language great evolution in the country by underlining that Nouchi is currently regularly used by most of Ivorian young people.

Nouchi with its cultural features is so used in the country and also spread abroad that it is considered as the symbol of Ivorian linguistic identity abroad. But what are the main reasons why it is considered as one of the symbols of Ivorians' linguistic identity? The main purpose of this paper is to point out the process whereby the Nouchi language has acquired the status of

Côte d'Ivoire's linguistic identity. The methodological approach used to carry out this work is based on documentary research, internet, music and media.

1. Methodology

1.1. Research Methodology

This study tries to scrutinize how Nouchi language has been promoted so as to be considered as an Ivorian linguistic identity abroad. Conducted through the lens of the qualitative research approach, this research work details the development of Nouchi language. In order to reach the objective of this paper, two variables have been considered; they are about the domains in which Nouchi is frequently used and Nouchi specific words as well as expressions.

1.1.1. Domains of Nouchi language use

The study investigates the Ivorian linguistic characteristics on some domains of life such as music and media (Radio, TV, newspapers) that enable Nouchi language to be recognized as an Ivorian identity. This qualitative data collection method has also favored the achievement of documentary research in order to have written documents that we found mainly in libraries and online.

1.1.2. Data

The written documents provided us with Nouchi words and expressions that represent the data of this research paper. They constitute its vulgarization and promotion in the domains mentioned above.

1.2. Method of Data Collection

The search of Nouchi words and expressions has required the use of media (TV, radio and newspapers), music and internet consultation. This method has been helpful to obtain some interesting words and expressions very useful for the completion of this investigation.

2. Results and Discussion

The first article of Côte d'Ivoire's constitution (1960) states that French language is the only official language, because of its official use in administration, education, technological development and Ivorian regular communicative realities on media (TV, Radio and newspapers). However, through music, internet and even TV, Radio and newspaper, Nouchi is greatly incorporated in the French language. In fact, Nouchi is a language made up with the association of French language with many Ivorian local languages. Considering the official language status of French language in Côte d'Ivoire, other French speakers, elsewhere in the world attribute to Nouchi the status of Ivorian linguistic identity because this French variety is specific to Ivorians' culture.

Nouchi is listened and heard everyday locally as well as internationally through Media, internet and Music. Nouchi is so having a staggering evolution in Cote d'Ivoire and out of this country's frontiers that it is devoted the great valuable status of Ivorian linguistic identity. This language is closely related to Ivorian cultural and linguistic features that, it allows many people in the world to distinguish an Ivorian to any other French speakers. Nouchi appears for many Ivorians as a powerful means of self- affirmation because it has permitted them to appropriate the language imposed to them during colonization.

As it can be noticed, originating from a criminal or marginal group and known as argot, Nouchi is acquiring a new linguistic status in Côte d'Ivoire, which is a 'Pidgin' due to its composition of two or several languages.

2.1. Features of Nouchi Language

2.1.1. A Combination of French and Ivorian Local Languages

Nouchi is a very important language for Ivorians today. -It is so important that during an international seminar, the sociolinguist S. J. Silué (2019) in a video of his presentation published by 'Fraternité matin', mentioned that one of the main features of Nouchi is that this specific French language is the social hyphen between many Ivorian socio-cultural realities. It makes French language contain many Ivorian local languages. The symbolic value of Ivorians' identity that people confer to Nouchi abroad is due to the fact that it is perceived as one of Ivorian main linguistic intercommunicative realities which contain many linguistic items of Ivorian local languages. As a proof, many lexical items from Ivorian popular local languages like Baoulé, Dioula, Bété and Senoufo can be found in Nouchi sentences. For example, many

Nouchi sentences regularly used by Ivorian are lexical items borrowed from Ivorian local languages:

Table I: Sentences with Borrowed Words from Dioula language

Nouchi	Meaning
1- Ton môgô n`est pas enjahé dêh!	Your friend is not happy at all.
2- Frangin, un chauffeur djawiri finit en brousse.	Brother, a driver in rush can have accident.
3- Yéhé maga les baramôgôs.	I want to steal the hardworkers.

Personal Construction

Table II: Sentences with Borrowed Words from Baoulé language

Nouchi	Meaning
4- Ya likefi mon gah.	Don`t worry my friend. There is nothing
5- Djo, tu aimes trop gouassou.	My friend, you like too much receiving present.
6- Djo, faut blêblê avec ta go là dêh.	Please, go slowly with your girlfriend.

Personal Construction

Table III: Sentences with Borrowed Words from Bété language

Nouchi	Meaning
7-Ma doubéhi est choco dêh.	My beloved is very beautiful.
8- Le woudi ne se dégba jamais.	A man never gives up.
9- Ohman et Ohpah sont moisis.	My mother and my father have no money.

Personal Construction

Table IV: Sentences with Borrowed Words from Senoufo language

Nouchi	Meaning
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Personal Construction

As it can be noticed, the words: “môgô, djawiri, baramôgô, dabali, moisi, dégba, maga, go, choco, likefi, gah, enjahé gouassou, doubéhi, woudi, ohman, ohpah, tchêrê” appear in these sentences that are supposed to be French sentences. However, these sentences can never be found in a standard French lexical Dictionary just because they are from Ivorian local languages. These words' appearance in these French sentences make that these sentences become Nouchi sentences.

2.1.2. The Nouchi as a French Language Adaptation

The addition of Ivorian local languages' words to standard French is not the only feature differentiating standard French from Nouchi language. Apart from this feature, Nouchi is marked by numerous linguistic processes use during sentence formation. These linguistic processes include re-semantisation (as in “chauffer” which means in standard French “to make become hot.” But in Nouchi, the expression ‘Djo, ne chauffes pas mon coeur’ means ‘my friend, don't make me angry’), truncation (in the case where the standard French adjective ‘malhonête (dishonest)’ is replaced in Nouchi by ‘malho’), and restructuration (in which the structure of the sentence “Subject, Verb, and Object” is not respected as in ‘ Djo, les baramôgôs , les bravetchê non ka grigra Dieu va les soutra ’ means ‘Brother, the hardworkers and courageous people need to struggle so that God helps them’).

From this analysis about the features of Nouchi, it can be noticed that Nouchi language contains some Ivorian local languages words and has many specific linguistic features like: standard French words re-semantisation, truncation and restructuration.

2.2. Domains of Nouchi language extension

2.2.1. The Nouchi in the Political Field

The political leaders are known as the ones who regularly convey messages to people of their country. They are people who are supposed to use standard French in order to communicate with their country's population or specific community. However, most of Ivorian politicians resort to Nouchi language when they speak to their people. Indeed, when political leaders have political meeting with other local group of community, they sometimes resort to

Nouchi words to make themselves better understand and closer to the public. For example, the former Prime Minister Soro Guillaume used Nouchi during a meeting with population by asserting: “On veut pas de premier ministre flêkê flêkê” (2010).

In addition, another national authority who used Nouchi words to send message to population, is the former minister who is the mayor of Koumassi, Cissé Bacongo who said on the national TV during the national telecast “Tempo”: “population de Koumassi, on est au kohi.” (2016). Moreover, during the presidential election campaigns, we heard politicians using Nouchi in their address to population. In fact, the candidate of PDCI¹, Henry Konan Bedié during electoral campaign (2010) said in an area of the capital city (Abobo): “les Refondateurs vont fraya.” On December 2019, one former minister who is known as one of the main responsible of PDCI party, Maurice Kacou Guikahué asserted: “Tchoco tchoco, le PDCI sera au pouvoir en 2020.” Another example is the one of the former president Laurent Gbagbo who said: “je suis un president choco, “on appelle ça taper dos”, “Ils vont prendre dra” (2010).

As it can be noticed, Ivorian politicians use Nouchi language. The use of Nouchi by these politicians demonstrates that Nouchi is for them an important means to vehicle messages and be sure that all the citizens will receive and understand their messages. These examples enable us to show that even politicians, who are mostly highly educated and from also high social background resort to Nouchi during their address to population. This really confirms the fact that from any level of education, people in Côte d’Ivoire, use Nouchi language in their daily interaction if they want to be well-understood by population. Apart from the political field, Nouchi is regarded as Ivorian linguistic identity because; it plays a specific role in many Ivorian domains.

2.2.2. The Nouchi in the Internet domain

Science and technological evolution make internet appears as a precious means of communication and an important means for sending and receiving information. Nouchi language is so important for Ivorian citizens that an internet website has been created for promoting Nouchi language and sharing information to Ivorians about their country in specific French which is Nouchi. One example of the Nouchi website visited by Ivorian is “<http://www.nouchi.com>”.

¹ - PDCI (Parti Démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire) is the name of a political party in Côte d’Ivoire

Another internet website which has really contributed to Nouchi language promotion in most of the world French speaking countries. This website is playing the role of Nouchi's dictionary on internet. In fact, the website: “<http://www.dictionnairenouchi.com>” is the internet website always promoting or enabling people to discover new Nouchi words and sentences online. It regularly publishes new Nouchi words with their definition. In a word, Nouchi language is everyday well-learnt on internet because it is regularly published and promoted on internet by these well- known and visited websites online.

Apart from internet, Nouchi is regarded as Ivorian linguistic identity because it has played a specific role at Ivorian media level.

2.2.3. The Nouchi in the Media

The term “Media” concerns the national television, Radio and Newspapers. The media aim at providing people information. Media have served as very important means of Nouchi language popularization communication because they enable the diffusion of information over a wide range of people through Nouchi. In fact, the country's public and private media use Nouchi to entitle many of their broadcasts. For intense, in a famous Ivorian TV channel called “A+ Ivoire”, there is an important broadcast entitled “Gbê est mieux que dra”. On the national Radio station like ‘frequence 2’, there is a very important broadcast entitled: “place publique”. On “ONUCI FM” radio station, there is a program entitled “kpakpato pressé” which role is to convey the daily information. During the diffusion of all these broadcasts on national Radio and TV, people are totally free to use the language they want for expressing their viewpoints. These media make me listen and retain too many Nouchi words and sentences like:

Table V: Nouchi sentences from media

Nouchi sentences from media	Meanings
11- Tchoco tchoco, il va dékrou notre blé.	Anyway, he will give our money.
12- Les bramôgos sont versés waha.	The hardworkers are numerous here.
13- Ce gar est un môgô souahé.	This man is a bad person.
14- Arrêtes de kpatra tous ceux qui vont te soutra demain.	Stop to beat people who will help you tomorrow.
15- Il aime djêguê la cotché de son tonton qui le démoisit.	He likes washing the car of his uncle who gives him money.

16- Go yêrê aime pointeur gaou ou gnata	Clever woman appreciates to be loved by a stupid man.
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Personal Construction

In addition, we can give several national TV and Radio advertisements with Nouchi words like:

Table VI: National TV and Radio advertisements with Nouchi words

Nouchi sentences	Meaning
17- Si t'es yêrê, t'es cool utilise la capote.	If you are clever and cool, use condom.
18- A Abobo on koz en gbonhi.	In Abobo, we tchat together.
19- Prix non affiché ce n'est pas affaire dèh.	Not displayed price, it is not good.
20- Baramôgô ! Viens t'enjailler !	Brother, come to enjoy yourself !
21- Quand ya dra #170# te soutra.	When you are in trouble, #170# helps you.

Personal Construction

Apart from these advertisements, some TV and Radio broadcasts' presenters like Didier Bleou are regularly heard using the following Nouchi words during their presentation:

Table VII: Nouchi sentences from TV and Radio broadcasts Presenters

Nouchi sentences	Meaning
22- Est-ce que ça va les gars?	Do you feel well guys?
23- Comment ça va les gos ?	How do you feel girls?
24- Est-ce que les baramôgôs sont là ?	Are hardworkers around ?

Personal Construction

In a word, Nouchi is a kind of language that people currently use on Ivorian national TV and Radio. However, apart from these national media of Information and diffusion, Nouchi is devoted a serious importance on the country's newspapers. Indeed, in addition to all these Nouchi's language examples on the Ivorian TV and Radio, Nouchi language receives a special importance at the level of newspapers in the country.

The increasing number of press organs in the country makes that there is a serious competition between them. To face competition and make their specific publications better understood and appreciated than the others, the Newspapers press organs resort to new

communication strategies. Among these communication strategies, Nouchi's language appears as an important tool. Among the Ivorian newspapers, the important ones are : "Fraternité Matin, Le jour Plus, Le Patriote, Notre Voie, Soir Info, L'Inter, le Temps, L'Intelligent d'Abidjan, Nord Sud..." These newspapers' publications regularly resort to Nouchi's words as testifies the following newspapers articles titles:

Table VIII: Newspapers' articles titles

Newspapers and date of publications	Newspapers' titles in Nouchi	Meanings
25- Notre Voie'', N° 3984, published on May 11 th 2011	Election wouya wouya, le FPI ² bel et bien absent.	Useless election, FPI really missing.
26- Notre Voie'', N°708, published on December 19 th 2011	Tout sur le nouveau djôssi des exilés	Everything concerning the new job of the banished people''
27- Aujourd'hui'' N°13, published on February 24 th 2012	Ouattara lance son projet d'éducation banan banan.	Ouattara launches his useless project of education.
28- Patriote'' N°3122, published on September 2 nd 2011	Merci garçon pile.	Thank you powerful boy.
29- L'Intelligent d'Abidjan'' N° 2425, published on December 27 th 2011	C'est gaté entre Gbagbo et ses partisans.	There is a problem between Gbagbo and his supporters.
30- Notre Voie'' N°3980 published on May 07 th 2011	Election koutcha; le FPI bel et bien absent.	FPI really missing in the not democratic.

Personal Construction

In a word, many national newspapers use Nouchi words in their publications. This has enabled people to discover Nouchi in the country and in other countries. Concisely, Nouchi is well-known around the world because it has acquired a specific value at Ivorian Media level. This language is so used in those Media, that it is closely related to Ivorian identity. Apart from

² FPI :(Front Populaire Ivoirien) is the name of a political party in Cote d'Ivoire.

Media generally speaking, Nouchi has been well-promoted and has a great importance at the level of Ivorian Music.

2.2.4. The Nouchi in the Domain of Music

Before Nouchi language creation, most of Ivorian songs were essentially sung in standard French languages. However, the advent of Nouchi will constitute a new valuable tool for musicians to vehicle their messages since, the genesis of this language has coincided with the appearance of new kind of music styles; we can give as example ‘Ziguéhi, Coupé Décalé, Zouglou and Rap Abidjanais’. As a matter of fact, Nouchi brought a considerable help to the success of these types of music. If we consider for instance Ziguéhi music, Nouchi was the main language used by ‘Ziguéhi’ music forerunner like Kéké Kassiri, RAS and Gor la Montagne to be known as good Ivorian singers. The famous song of RAS entitled “kita ki, kitata ki, entre les mans et les gomis ohh” can be provided as a good example of Nouchi words originating from that Ivorian music style.

Moreover, another kind of Ivorian music in which Nouchi holds a significant place is Zouglou. Indeed, Ivorian music through ‘Zouglou’ enabled Nouchi language to be popularized in the world, since the title “Premier Gaou” of the group ‘Magic System’ permitted them to be known in the world and win many distinctions. Thanks to Zouglou Music, many Nouchi words have been discovered like:

Table IX: Nouchi sentences from Zouglou Music

Nouchi sentences from Zouglou Music	Meanings
31- Ça me dégba léhio.	It disappoints me too much.
32- On a dinmin dinmin jusqu’à fatigué.	We made too much efforts.
33- En Zouglou gbê est mieux que dra.	In Zouglou truth is better than troubles.
34- Go là est trop kpôclé.	This woman is a bitch.
35- kpakpatoya va te dja.	If you are too talkative will be into trouble.

Personal Construction

Besides, Nouchi favored the emergence of a new kind of RAP music called “RAP Abidjanais”. In fact, the forerunners of this popular kind of RAP music are ‘Nash, Garba 50 and

Billy Billy'. Thanks to Nouchi, these artists are well- known everywhere in Africa and in some countries of the world. The success of their different productions corroborates the great interest people attach to this language.

Table X: Nouchi sentences from RAP Music

Nouchi sentences from RAP Music	Meanings
36- Je suis la go krakra du djassa.	I am the courageous woman of the city.
37- Baramôgô, il faut grigra, il faut graya	Hardworker, you need to manage and suffer
38- Djo, il faut graya pour te soutra	My Brother, you need to manage to succeed
39- Je te coumant, ce n'est pas doux dèh	I tell you that it is not interesting
40- Mon môgô, ne nous parle pas de djêh dèh	My friend, don't talk us about money
41- Tous les jours, c'est moux ce n'est pas doux dèh	Every day, it is hard , it is not at all interesting
42- La vie est bizzare quand tu es moisi	life is difficult when you have no money

Personal Construction

Furthermore, in addition to RAP music, Nouchi's language appears as the foremost language used in the 'Coupé Décalé' music. Coupé Décalé music style has played a meaningful role for Nouchi words promotion and discovery all over the world. In fact, thanks to 'Coupé décalé', some famous singers like Doug Saga, Dj Arafat, have been revealed to the world. Many Nouchi words like: "Attalakou, Travaillement, Farofaro, Sagacité, kpakpato, kôrô, douahou déh, yêrê, bobaraba baramôgo du ghetto, gbonhi, gbangban, chérie coco, dégba, enjaillé, bravoutchê, zamou ..." have been revealed to the country and the world.

In a nutshell, this importance of Nouchi at musical level and many other domains like internet, newspaper, TV, radio, political, make that Nouchi language is well-known all over the world and appears as a significant criterion for identifying an Ivorian identity abroad.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have tried to analyze the way Nouchi language is spread everywhere and considered as Ivorian linguistic identity abroad. Our investigation has enabled us to

discover that Nouchi language is a specific French language spoken by Ivorian people and contains Ivorian local languages and specific linguistic features different from standard French. Our research findings have attested that Nouchi is considered today as Ivorian identity abroad because this language has been well-popularized and promoted all over the world at politics, internet, Media (Radio, TV and Newspapers) and music level.

The tentative outcome of this study may eventually contribute to understand why Nouchi language is regarded by the other French speakers as Ivorian linguistic identity abroad. With the hope that this study aiming at understanding Nouchi language emergence in the world may serve as an invaluable source of reference for further investigation about Nouchi.

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