



A sociolinguistic survey of the Ede language communities of Benin and Togo Volume 6 Kura language area

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OF
BENIN AND TOGO

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Abstract

The Kura¹ language of northwestern Benin is part of the larger Ede language continuum. The Ede languages are spoken in the southern part of West Africa stretching from western Nigeria across Benin to the eastern part of central Togo. Among the Ede varieties, two have thus far undergone language development on a larger scale: Yoruba both in Nigeria and Benin, and Ife in Togo. A survey of the Kura communities was conducted to assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Yoruba and Ife could extend to the Kura communities and to determine the nature and extent of SIL's possible involvement among these communities.

Through the administration of community and individual interviews, as well as the elicitation of word and phrase lists, the survey researchers collected data concerning: tested and reported levels of dialect intercomprehension; language vitality; language attitudes toward both written and oral forms of Kura, Yoruba and Ife; reported proficiency and attitudes regarding French; and literacy levels.

Overall, the results show 'mixed' levels of comprehension for the oral form of standard modern Yoruba whereas comprehension of more literate and/or antiquated registers of Yoruba appears to be 'inadequate'. Comprehension of Ife also appears to be 'inadequate'. There are no indications of language shift, and attitudes toward Kura development appear to be positive. Language attitudes toward Yoruba and Ife also seem to be positive although literacy is apparently more highly valued in Yoruba than in Ife.

1. Introduction

This paper reports on a sociolinguistic survey conducted among the Kura speech communities of northwestern Benin (Atakora province). The Kura speech variety belongs to the Ede language continuum (Defoid language group) which is situated in the southeastern part of West Africa, in southwestern Nigeria, central Benin, and in the eastern part of central Togo.

Among the Ede varieties, two have thus far undergone language development on a larger scale: Yoruba both in Nigeria and Benin, and Ife in Togo. To assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Yoruba and Ife could extend to the remaining Ede communities, or whether additional language-based development programs in some of the

¹ In general, all language names are spelled using the English alphabet. For a complete listing of alternative spellings see Volume 1, Appendix B.

remaining communities would be beneficial and to determine the nature and extent of SIL's possible involvement among these communities, a sociolinguistic study of the Ede communities of Benin and Togo was launched in the early 1990s.

The sociolinguistics survey reported here is part of this larger study and was carried out in two stages in March 1992 and July 1997 by various researchers of CENALA (Centre National de Linguistique Appliquée) and the Togo-Benin branch of SIL International.

In the following sections, background information on the Kura area will be presented (Section 2), followed by a presentation of the research questions (Section 3), and a description of the applied methodology (Section 4). In Section 5, the results from the survey will be discussed. The report closes with conclusions (Section 6), a set of appendices and a list of references.²

2. Background information

This section presents the language situation, population, history of migration, non-formal education efforts and religious situation of the Kura communities. Some of the data presented here were gathered during interviews with various community leaders.³

2.1 Language situation

The taxonomic classification of the Kura language, its relationship to other varieties, and the area in which it is spoken are discussed in the following sections.

2.1.1 Taxonomy and naming

Neither Capo (1989:280), the language map of Benin by CENALA (1990) nor the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996:168) mention Kura as a distinct Ede variety. Instead they list the Kura speech communities as part of the Nago language area of the Atakora province of northwestern Benin. Capo (1989:281) gives the following classification for Nago:⁴

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, (New) Benue-Congo, Defoid, Yoruboid, Edekiri:

- Ede, Southwest Ede, Nago

Alternative names and spellings are:

- Nagó (Capo 1989:280)
- Ede-Nago (CENALA 1990)
- Nagots, Nagot, Ede Nago (Grimes 1996:168)

No dialects of Nago are listed either by Capo (1989) or in the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996).

² The authors wish to express their gratitude to D. H. Hatfield and B. J. Henson of SIL Togo-Benin for the editing of this report.

³ More general background information on the Ede language continuum and its communities can be found in Volume 1, Section 1.

⁴ Capo's (1989) classification is based on Akinkugbe's (1978) and Williamson's (1989) work.

The name “Nago,” as employed by Capo (1989) and the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996), denotes the Ede speech varieties of three disjointed areas of Benin: one in the Ouémé province in southeastern Benin and two in the Atakora province of northwestern Benin. Regarding the Atakora province, one set of Nago speech communities is located in and around Manigri,⁵ extending into Togo and including the communities in and around Kambolé (Volume 7). The second set of Nago communities is located further north around Alédjo-Koura and is the focus of the current study.

Even though the communities around Alédjo-Koura are included in Capo’s (1989:280) and the *Ethnologue*’s (Grimes 1996) listings of Nago, interviewed community leaders and individuals from the communities around Alédjo-Koura stated that the local name for their speech variety is “Kura.”⁶ In addition, lexical differences between Kura and Nago as spoken in and around Manigri and Kambolé, variations in reported and estimated intercomprehension, as well as the assertion of local populations around Alédjo-Koura that both speech varieties are different, indicate that the communities around Alédjo-Koura and those around Manigri and Kambolé are better viewed as two distinct speech communities than as one larger community with “Kura” being the proposed designation for the Alédjo-Koura communities which are the focus of the current study.⁷

The communities around Manigri and Kambolé are dealt with in a separate report (Volume 7). In order to distinguish these Nago communities from those of southeastern Benin, Capo (1997, personal communication) suggests the following designation: “Northern Nago” or “Nago (Northern).” However, when referring to these Nago communities throughout this report the language name will not include, for the most part, the specification “northern,” except in order to distinguish this speech variety from that of the Ouémé province.

The Nago communities of southeastern Benin were investigated during a separate survey (see Volume 8) with “Southern Nago” or “Nago (Southern)” being employed to distinguish them from the northern varieties of the Atakora province.

2.1.2 Geographical location and neighboring languages

Kura is spoken in the sous-préfectures of Bassila, Djougou and Ouaké in the Atakora province. As regards the *Atlas Sociolinguistique du Bénin* (CNL du Bénin 1983:59), Kura is not mentioned as a distinct speech variety, but the following Kura-speaking communities are listed under Nago: the rural communities of Alédjo-Koura in the sous-préfecture of Bassila and the rural communities of Pélébina in the sous-préfecture of Djougou.

Alédjo-Koura is located 45 km northwest of Bassila, approximately 15 km west of Route Nationale Inter-Etats (RNIE) 3 along a secondary road. The rural communities of Alédjo-Koura where Kura was found are Boutou and Partago (northeast and southeast of Alédjo-Koura respectively), and in an interview the community elders of Partago reported that Kaouté

⁵ All town names are spelled according to the *Carte Générale* for Benin and Togo (IGN Lomé 1991, IGN Benin 1992) or the 1992 Benin Census Data (Ministère du Plan 1994b).

⁶ According to the interviewed elders of Alédjo-Koura, the name “Kura” is a Malenke word meaning “stranger,” applied to the incoming Yoruba speakers by the resident population, their language Malenke having since disappeared from the region.

⁷ See ‘*Language name and intercomprehension*’ (Section 5.1.1.1) and ‘*Lexical similarity*’ (Section 5.1.2) for details.

(northeast of Alédjo-Koura) is also a Kura-speaking village, whereas Alédjo-Koura is reportedly multilingual (Kura with Tem⁸), as is the village of Bodi in the rural community of Pénessoulou (east of Alédjo-Koura; Kura with Anii).

Among the rural communities of Pélébina (around 60 km north of Bassila along RNIE 3), located in the sous-préfecture of Djougou, Kura was observed to be spoken in Yarakéou (west of Pélébina). According to the elders of Partago and Yarakéou, Kpaou (also west of Pélébina) is another Kura-speaking village, whereas reportedly Kura, Anii and Pila⁹ are spoken in Bougou (south of Pélébina). Exclusive use of Kura was also reported for Kamkalo and Katoulanga, west of Yarakéou, but the exact location and status of these places was not verified.

In addition, Kura was also found to be spoken in the village of Awotébi,¹⁰ and reported for Mami, both in the sous-préfecture of Ouaké, east of Sèmèrè, in the rural communities of Sèmèrè. Mami is reportedly primarily Kura-speaking, however there are also some Foodo and Dendi speakers present.¹¹

The Kura people of Alédjo-Koura and Pélébina have as their neighbors the Pila and Foodo to the north, the Kabiye and Dendi to the northwest and the Tem to the southwest. To the south, southeast and east, the Kura communities are bordered by the Anii language area which separates the communities of Alédjo-Koura and Pélébina from the Nago communities of Manigri. A small pocket of Lama speakers is also found to the east.

According to Capo (1989:286), standard Yoruba is one of the lingua francas for the whole Ede continuum, there being scarcely any community that is not exposed to standard Yoruba, “even without mutual intelligibility.” In the case of multilingual villages, no specific inquiries as to the kind of multilingualism were made, so that the situation in reportedly multilingual villages could range all the way from the use of several languages in different domains by the same people to monolingual subpopulations.

2.2 Population size

During the 1992 Benin Census, population data were elicited both by ethnic group¹² as well as by political community. However, the Census data do not list Kura as a distinct Ede variety. Instead Nago (Northern and Southern) is listed with a total population of 348,563 (168,955 males, 179,608 females) (Ministère du Plan 1994a:47).

⁸ According to local elders, Alédjo-Koura used to be a purely Kura-speaking village, but since the inhabitants, being princes, were necessarily exogamous, their Tem wives raised their children in Tem. Around 15 years of age, young men had to learn Kura in order to function in the larger Kura society, but their informal language usually remained Tem. (The local name for Tem is “Kotokoli.”)

⁹ The local name for Pila is “Yom.”

¹⁰ In the 1992 Benin Census data (Ministère du Plan 1994b:25) Mami is listed as a rural community of Sèmèrè I, whereas Awotébi is not listed. Awotébi is sometimes spelled as “Awotobi,” and is not to be confused with the Awotobi southeast of Sèmèrè.

¹¹ The *Atlas Sociolinguistique* (CNL du Bénin 1983) refers to Boutou as Butu, to Djougou as Zugu, to Kaouté as Kawute, to Kpaou as Kpowu, to Pélébina as Kpérébina and to Yarakéou as Yarakewu.

¹² It is noted here, that during the census, individuals were asked to which ethnic group they belong and not which language they speak as their first language. Thus, interviewees identified with their father’s ethnic group, even though they might not speak his language nor live in the language area.

An estimate of the Kura population can be obtained by combining the information from the 1992 Benin Census (Ministère du Plan 1994b) and that of the *Atlas Sociolinguistique du Bénin* (CNL du Bénin 1983:59). In Table 1, the communities in the Atakora province where Kura is spoken, as indicated by the elders of nearby villages or the *Atlas Sociolinguistique*, are listed with population figures from the census added. The resulting total of 15,532 includes speakers of other languages from villages where Kura is not the only language. However, it does not include speakers in villages that were not mentioned by any informants, or that could not be traced in the Census reports. (For further details, refer to Appendix A for a map of the surveyed area.)

Table 1: Population figures for the Kura communities

Population	15,532
Sous-préfecture of Bassila:	
Urban communities of Alédjo-Koura	
Alédjo-Koura ^a	4,936
Boutou	1,004
Kaouté	968
Partago	1,836
Urban communities of Pénessoulou	
Bodi ^a	1,996
Sous-préfecture of Djougou:	
Rural communities of Bougou:	
Bougou	2,214
Kpaou	861
Rural communities of Pélébina	
Yarakéou	1,025
Sous-préfecture of Ouaké:	
Rural communities of Sèmèrè I	
Awotébi	– not listed –
Mami ^a	692

a. (Reportedly) linguistically mixed population.

b. Assuming 1,000 inhabitants for villages without population figures, allowing for some population growth and rounding to the nearest 5,000, which seems reasonable given the origin of the figures.

These figures lead to a total rounded population figure of 20,000 for the Kura communities.

2.3 History of migration

According to the elders of Alédjo-Koura, the Kura population originally came from Ile-Ife in Nigeria (Oyo State), the town where the Yoruba kingdom and language started. Being stirred up because of war, they wandered through Ilesha, Nikki and Ndali, finally to settle in the Djougou area because of the dense, barely inhabited forest they found there. The first settlement was in Mami (“I sit down”), so called because the chief settled there after the long trek. Two sons

continued, separated at some point, and founded the two Alédjos (Kadara in Togo, located in the Tem language area, and Koura in Benin).¹³

2.4 Non-formal education

The following information was obtained during the survey of the Northern Nago communities of the Bassila sous-préfecture through interviews with the literacy coordinator in Bassila, J. I. Gomon, and two literacy workers in Manigri. According to these informants, regional literacy efforts, organized by the sous-préfecture, exist for Yoruba but not for Nago.¹⁴ (See Durieux et al. 1999.)

In 1978, the Yoruba literacy program¹⁵ was started in the Bassila sous-préfecture. By May 1997, 327 people (150 men and 177 women) had taken part in the literacy classes, spread over 14 villages. In 1996, 75% of the students passed the final exams. For 1997/98, three literacy classes were organized, one in Partago near Alédjo-Koura and two in the Nago area, in Manigri-Ikani and Manigri-Oké, with the total number of students consisting of 47 men and 43 women. The literacy classes are held during dry season, i.e. January through March. The language of instruction is Nago, but writing is done with the use of the Yoruba alphabet.

Since 1995, there have also been post-literacy classes, so-called “Centres de lecture,” however none of them are in the Kura area. In 1996/97, two classes were organized, one in Manigri-Ikani and one in Manigri-Oké, meeting once a month with enrollment totaling six men and 30 women. As materials for these classes, the literacy workers have written or translated some texts of general interest, such as the “Guide de l’administration” (Ali 1996). Essentially the Yoruba orthography is used, with some Nago adaptations.

In the Kura area, village elders in Partago reported that literacy classes in the local vernacular are held in their village, with some 20 (all male) students per year. According to the local elders, these literacy classes are a village-level initiative without any outside support, but they may in actual fact be the classes previously referred to by Gomon. However, no further non-formal education interviews were conducted which would clarify this information.

In addition, a man in Yarakéou identifying himself as a local literacy worker told the survey team that he had been sent to Partago by the elders of Yarakéou in 1990 in order to follow the literacy classes there. Upon his return, he taught 12 people everything he had learned himself, and it is hoped that classes will be taught in Yarakéou on a more regular basis.

¹³ According to Cornevin (1981:57), Yoruboid people, referred to as “Nyantroukou,” migrated to the Alédjo region at the end of the 18th or at the beginning of the 19th century, bringing about a cultural assimilation of the original inhabitants of Alédjo with the immigrants.

“Les Nyantroukou (encore appelés Okou-Okou) bien étudiés par Person habitent dans le cercle de Djougou la région d’Alédjo-Koura. Des clans Yorouba seraient venus à la fin du XVIIIe ou au début du XIXe siècle de la région septentrionale de l’habitat Yorouba. Ils auraient imposé leur langue à d’autres clans venus dans cette région.”

¹⁴ Gomon did not mention Kura but referred to the local Ede variety of the Alédjo-Koura region as Nago.

¹⁵ The issue of Yoruba versus Nago literacy is obscured by the fact that Gomon, an L1 Anii speaker, did not recognize the difference between the two. Regarding the two literacy workers, both Nago speakers, they tended to refer to “Yoruba” and “Nago” interchangeably. Accordingly, activities presented as Yoruba literacy here may in fact be Nago literacy and vice versa.

2.5 Religious situation

The Kura people are Muslim as indicated by the elders of the Kura communities around Alédjo-Koura. No Christians other than civil servants were known, and no churches are known to exist. The fact that 100% of the sample subjects for the current survey reported being Muslims agrees with this.

3. Research questions

The purpose of this survey was twofold: (1) to assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Yoruba and Ife could extend to the Kura communities, or whether an additional language-based development program in Kura would be beneficial, and (2) to gather data that would help determine the nature and extent of SIL's possible involvement among these communities.

For the current study, the evaluation of a need for separate literature was to be based on criteria established by Marmor (1997). More specifically, the evaluation of literature development needs was to be based on the factors of dialect intercomprehension, language vitality, and language attitudes with emphasis given to the following topics:¹⁶

1. Dialect intercomprehension
 - What is the existing language situation regarding: language name, geographical boundaries of the Kura speech variety, existence of dialects of Kura, degree of internal comprehension within the Kura speech community?
 - What is the degree of intercomprehension between the Kura and Northern Nago communities?
 - What is the degree of lexical similarity between Kura and both Yoruba and Ife?
 - What are the Yoruba and Ife comprehension levels throughout the Kura communities?¹⁷
2. Language vitality
 - What are the language use patterns in various social domains, both public and private?
 - Is the pattern of language use stable, or is language shift occurring or impending?

¹⁶ Answers to these research questions, as far as they can be given, are presented in Section 5.

¹⁷ Marmor (1997:2f) presents the following guidelines by which to draw conclusions from comprehension testing results, along with the suggested type of SIL involvement in language development efforts (see also Volume 1, Section 3):

- a) High intercomprehension is defined by an overall test average of “over 90% by all segments of the population” (under 45 years of age). In this case, it is assumed that there is no need for separate literature.
- b) Mixed intercomprehension is defined by a situation in which “no segment of the population scores below 80%, but some segments score below 90%.” In this case the need for separate literature depends upon language attitudes and/or the possibility of a second dialect acquisition program.
- c) Low intercomprehension is defined as an “overall average below 70%.” In this case, there is a need for separate literature, or if attitudes permit, a strong second dialect acquisition program.

3. Language attitudes

- What are attitudes toward Kura and its development, with special attention given to language development work already in progress?
- What are attitudes toward the oral and written forms of both Yoruba and Ife?

There were some additional questions, most of which are directly related to the priority and strategy criteria outlined above and which provide updated information for the area. These questions are:

- What is the size of the group?
- Which infrastructures already exist?
- What is the education situation and literacy rate in the area?
- What is the religious situation?

Although bilingualism was not of major concern for this survey, some data were collected in order to provide SIL Togo-Benin administration with relevant and updated information about the level of reported proficiency and attitudes regarding French.

4. Methodology

In the following sections various aspects of the applied methodology will be discussed: survey approach, techniques, implementation, analysis, and terminology and presentation.¹⁸

4.1 Survey approach

In view of the information given by Capo (1989) and the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996) that the Kura communities belong to the Nago speech community, it was planned to investigate the communities around Manigri, Kambolé and Alédjo-Koura during the same survey. However, due to logistical problems experienced by the researchers, the communities around Manigri and Kambolé were surveyed first, in May 1997 (see Volume 7), and the Alédjo-Koura communities were surveyed later, in July 1997.

Given that the Alédjo-Koura communities were assumed to be a one-speech community with the Manigri and Kambolé communities, it was further assumed that the Manigri RTT practice test the Home Town Test (HTT)¹⁹ would be usable in the Kura area—an assumption which proved to be correct. However, after the Kura field trip, the analysis of the gathered data showed lexical differences with respect to the Northern Nago communities, variations in reported and estimated intercomprehension, an assertion by the local population that Kura is distinct from Nago, and variations in tested comprehension of Yoruba and Ife, which indicate that both communities would in fact be better viewed as two separate speech communities. Therefore it was decided to deal with each community in a separate report. (See also Volume 7.)

¹⁸ See Volume 1, Section 4 for a general description of the methodology as applied for the larger Ede language continuum survey.

¹⁹ The Home Town Test is a narrative in the subjects' L1 used to expose them to the mechanics of the testing procedure. This is done so that errors resulting from a misunderstanding of the testing procedure can be eliminated.

4.2 Techniques

Given the constraints imposed by time, costs, and the local situation, the following approaches were chosen in order to arrive at answers to the research questions previously mentioned.

Information on the existent language situation and intercomprehension between the Kura and Northern Nago communities would be gathered through:

- Direct questioning during community interviews;
- Interviewing a Beninese linguist, L1 speaker of an Ede variety;²⁰
- Lexical distance to be computed from a comparison of standardized wordlists.

In order to assess the potential understanding of materials written in standard Yoruba or Ife, several methods could each address different aspects of this question:

- Lexical distance as measured from standardized wordlists;
- Self-assessed active and passive proficiency, both direct and indirect (e.g. understanding of radio programming in the other language) obtained through individual interviews (reported proficiency);
- Comprehension to be measured rather directly with the aid of taped narratives;
- Literacy to be assessed through interviews with literacy workers and individuals.

Language vitality also has several aspects, requiring separate assessment:

- Domain restrictions to be deduced from answers to language choice questions addressed to individuals and village elders;
- Intergenerational shift to be inquired into through individual questions on the language proficiency and language choice of children, and on the subjective valuation of Kura use by children.

Regarding language attitudes:

- Interviews with individuals and village elders would explore attitudes toward literacy in Kura, Yoruba and Ife;
- Individuals were to be asked, after having heard a story in Yoruba on tape, whether they thought the language variety well-spoken.

Comprehension of and attitudes toward French would only summarily be looked into:

- Individuals would be asked about their own and their children's French abilities, and their attitudes toward oral proficiency.

Combining these approaches led to the following tests:

- Standardized word and phrase lists collected in Yoruba, Ife, and in two Kura and Northern Nago villages, respectively;²¹

²⁰ The Ede variety in question is Ica which is spoken in the sous-préfecture of Bantè, Atakora province (see Volume 1).

²¹ No results from phrase list analysis are included in this report. A complete listing of elicited phrases is presented in Volume 1, Appendix O.

- Community questionnaires with questions looking into: existent language situation, intercomprehension, language choice, and attitudes toward literacy in Kura, Yoruba and Ife;
- Non-formal education questionnaires with questions investigating: the spread of literacy work in the region, both for pre-literate people and those literate in other languages, the languages taught and the languages used for instruction;
- Recorded Text Testing (RTT) assessing comprehension levels of both Yoruba and Ife. Personal narratives both originally in Yoruba and Ife were recorded, as well as two Bible passages translated into Yoruba: Acts 10:1–23 from the revised 1987 New Testament translation (Bible Society of Nigeria 1987) and Luke 19:11–27 from the 1960 Bible translation (Bible Society of Nigeria 1960). A questionnaire was administered alongside the test inquiring into the subjects' comprehension of the tested texts and their general comprehension of the tested variety, as well as the subjects' reading and writing abilities and attitudes toward literacy;
- Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaires (ISQs) with questions examining: language proficiency and language choices of subjects, their children and children in general; literacy; and attitudes towards use and development of Kura, Yoruba, Ife and French;
- Interview with a Beninese linguist, L1 speaker of an Ede variety, to investigate intercomprehension, based on taped samples from the Kura and Northern Nago language areas.

4.3 Implementation

The survey was conducted in two stages:

1. In March 1992, K. D. Odoun of CENALA elicited a word and phrase list in Alédjo-Koura. (Igué et al. 1993)
2. In July 1997, J. A. Durieux and E. I. K. Durieux-Boon (both of SIL) conducted the second stage of the survey and visited the Alédjo-Koura area. This stage consisted of double checking the wordlist from Alédjo-Koura, administering RTTs and ISQs, as well as interviewing community leaders. In addition, in May 1997, an informal interview had been conducted with the literacy coordinator and two literacy workers for the sous-préfecture of Bassila, during the third stage of the Northern Nago survey (see Volume 7).

In the following sections, more specific information regarding the applied methodology for the second stage is given concerning survey locations, the description of the sample interviewed and procedures.

4.3.1 Survey locations

An attempt was made to choose a representative sample of the Kura communities. It was assumed that subjects from more accessible or larger villages/towns might have a higher proficiency in Yoruba due to more contact with L1 speakers of Yoruba. Therefore, both more accessible or larger villages, as well as more remote or smaller villages, were selected in order to

compare the gathered data across locations. Thus, the survey focused on two larger communities, each with a smaller satellite settlement. The locations visited were:

- Partago: with the smaller neighboring village of Boutou
- Yarakéou: with the smaller neighboring village of Awotébi

Wordlists and community questionnaires were administered in Awotébi and in Partago whereas ISQs and RTTs were administered in all of the communities visited with the exception that no RTT candidates were found in Awotébi. The Home Town Test (HTT) for RTT testing had been taken in Manigri during the survey of the Northern Nago communities (Volume 7), based on the correct assumption that it would be usable among the Kura communities as well (see '*Language name and intercomprehension*,' Section 5.1.1.1).

An informal interview was conducted with a literacy worker in Yarakéou. In addition, informal interviews with the literacy coordinator for the sous-préfecture of Bassila and two literacy workers from Manigri had been conducted during the survey of the Northern Nago communities (Volume 7).

4.3.2 Subject selection

Community interviews were taken from the gathered village elders as a group, and consensus answers were recorded rather than individual responses, whereas ISQs and RTTs were administered individually, and individual answers were recorded.

No effort was undertaken to obtain random samples for the RTTs and ISQs, but stratification with respect to location, gender and age was a major aim. Secondly, inclusion of subjects of various education levels, religions and occupations was endeavored by asking the village elders to try to provide candidates with different backgrounds in these respects. As a result, sample proportions by location, gender, age, education level, religious affiliation and occupation do not necessarily correspond to like ratios of the populations sampled.

The remainder of this section provides more detailed information as to the make-up of the survey samples.

4.3.2.1 Geographical distribution, gender and age

Sample stratification was planned to provide six individuals for each of the eight subsamples defined by:

- test type (RTT or ISQ);
- gender;
- age (younger – between 15-25 years of age; older – between 30–45 years of age).

Likewise, there would be six individuals for each of the subsamples defined by:

- test type (RTT or ISQ);
- test location (four as listed in '*Survey locations*,' Section 4.3.1).

This goal was not fully met, due to logistical problems encountered in Awotébi, where only four people were found for ISQ interviews, and none for RTT testing.

The resulting sample distribution figures are given in Table 2. In all, 40 subjects from four villages were interviewed, of which 18 took an RTT and 22 an ISQ.

Table 2: Sample size by locations, test types, genders and ages

	Partago	Boutou	Yarakéou	Awotébi	TOTAL
RTT					
MY	1	2	2	0	5
MO	2	1	1	0	4
FY	2	1	1	0	4
FO	1	2	2	0	5
ALL	6	6	6	0	18
ISQ					
MY	2	1	1	2	6
MO	1	2	2	0	5
FY	1	2	2	2	6
FO	2	1	1	2	5
ALL	6	6	6	4	22
RTT & ISQ					
MY	3	3	3	2	11
MO	3	3	3	0	9
FY	3	3	3	1	10
FO	3	3	3	1	10
ALL	12	12	12	4	40

[M = male, F = female, Y = younger (15-25 years of age), O = older (30-45 years of age)]

As especially women tended to not know their ages, it is important to note that inclusion in an age category was done on the basis of reported data, which the researchers checked to the best of their abilities. In incidental cases, people may have been wrongly included in or excluded from a given age stratum.

4.3.2.2 Language contact factors

It is likely that travel through or residence in Yoruba- or Ife-speaking areas may influence the level of proficiency in these languages. Thus, subjects were asked about their travel and residence patterns, partly to acquire insight into the extent of such travel and residence, but mainly to screen out subjects with extensive exposure to either language.

Overall, there appears to be little contact with Yoruba or Ife speakers through travel. Only 3/40 subjects (8%) reported travel to Yoruba-speaking areas (e.g. Nigeria or Porto-Novo) and 2/40 subjects (5%) reported travel to Ife-speaking areas (e.g. Atakpamé). Regarding residence, the

subject criteria excluded possible subjects who had lived for longer than one year in a Yoruba or Ife language area. Therefore, given the low number of subjects (<5) reporting travel to Yoruba- or Ife-speaking areas and further given that subjects who had lived for longer than one year in a Yoruba or Ife language area were excluded, results will not be analyzed across travel or residence patterns.

4.3.2.3 Indirect factors

Other factors that can have a considerable influence on sociolinguistic behavior are education level, occupation and religion. Since these factors may have a correlation with linguistic ability or attitudes, whether through differences in exposure or correlation with natural aptitudes, they were investigated as well.

Regarding education levels, two-thirds of the subjects²² (12/40 – 30%) reported some level of education with significantly more men than women (12/20 – 60% vs 0/20 – 0%) reporting some level of education whereas there is no difference across ages between younger and older subjects (6/21 – 29% vs 6/19 – 32%). The factor of education is included in the following analysis.

The majority of the subjects reported traditional occupations. Of the men, 17/19 were farmers (89%). Among the women, 9/20 were market sellers (45%), 7/20 were home-makers (35%) and 3/20 farmers (15%). These traditional occupations, together with “no job” (one subject), cover 95% (37/39) of the subjects.

As to religion, all subjects were Muslim (40/40).

4.3.3 Procedures

For all interviews, whenever necessary, responses were translated into French by one of the three assisting interpreters. As previously mentioned in ‘Survey approach’ (Section 4.1) it was thought that the Kura and Northern Nago communities were one speech community. Therefore, one of the Nago interpreters who had assisted the researchers during the third stage of the Nago survey was asked to join the researchers during the investigation of the communities around Alédjo-Koura: interpreter A.²³ In addition, a second interpreter from the Alédjo-Koura area was to be selected by recommendation from local people. However, the first person asked to recommend someone recommended himself (interpreter B), and on the last day sent interpreter C to give his excuses and take his place.

Table 3: Interview interpreters

Interpreters	# RTT Subjects	# ISQ Subjects
A	7	6
B	7	12
C	4	4

²² 7/18 RTT subjects (39%); 5/22 ISQ subjects (23%).

²³ Also referred to as Interpreter A in the Northern Nago survey report (Volume 7).

No interpreter training was given for community or individual interview translation. Regarding the interpretation during RTT testing, interpreter A had been involved in the preparation for the RTT testing (including the production and pre-testing of the HTT and the insertion of Nago questions into the Yoruba and Ife stories) during the third stage of the Nago survey and, therefore, acquired some understanding of the nature of RTT testing. The training of interpreter B consisted of two parts: first the procedure was explained to him, and subsequently, he watched interpreter A translating during an HTT administration. Because of his unexpected appearance, there was no possibility to train interpreter C. However, he was instructed to strictly translate what the respondents said.

With regard to the administration of individual questionnaires, it should be noted that some of the questions were omitted if during the course of the interview they were deemed not applicable to a particular subject. This will account for some of the results being based on numbers less than the total number of subjects.

Before the commencement of the third stage of the survey, the survey team visited the sous-préfets, as well as the traditional chiefs in the area. The purpose of these visits was to inform them of the work before entering the language area.

4.4 Analysis

In the following sections, variations between interpreters and general analysis techniques are discussed.

4.4.1 Variations between interpreters

The analysis of the RTT results shows an unexpectedly high difference in the scores as obtained through the two main interpreters (A and B, see Table 3).²⁴ For all RTTs except the HTT, subjects tested with the help of interpreter A scored markedly higher than those tested through the mediation of interpreter B, to the extent that for one test, where A's subjects achieved a mean score of 73%, B's obtained straight zeroes.²⁵ There are several indications that results obtained through interpreter A could be more valid than those obtained through B.²⁶

- Interpreter A was better instructed and more experienced than interpreter B and was chosen for his merits rather than self-appointed. Of the two interpreters for the Northern Nago survey, he was the one asked to come and assist in the Kura area as well because his understanding and performance were subjectively considered to be better.

²⁴ As researchers and interpreters were teamed up, it is also possible to attribute this difference to the researchers in question. However, the more experienced of the researchers was teamed up with interpreter B, whose subjects had lower scores. Also, results this researcher obtained during the Northern Nago survey (see Volume 7) are not significantly different from results obtained by other researchers there. The researcher paired with interpreter A had no previous survey experience.

If one attributes the differences in results to the researchers rather than the interpreters, one should accept the results obtained through interpreter B as normative, for these reasons. It remains hard to see, though, how the inexperience of the researcher could have led to higher scores.

²⁵ Full RTT scores are given in Appendix C.1 in 'RTT results: Raw scores'.

²⁶ The small sample of four subjects tested with interpreter C renders a statistical comparison between the RTT results obtained with his interpretation and those obtained with interpreters A and B impossible.

- Interpreter A took time to put the subjects at ease, both before the RTTs and after missed questions. Likewise, he was always ready to re-explain the procedures or to repeat questions in order to make sure the subject understood they were meant for him or her.
- Results obtained through interpreter A during the Nago survey do not significantly differ from those obtained through the second interpreter there (see Volume 7).
- It was clear that interpreter A was not systematically providing answers to subjects or reporting answers they had not given. Given the nature and set-up of the RTTs, it is hard to conceive how an interpreter could have any other influence leading to unjustifiably high scores. On the other hand, it is very easy to imagine influences that lead to lower scores than are warranted by the actual proficiency of a subject.
- Whereas interpreter A had no specific status, was a stranger in the Kura area, and worked with the male researcher, interpreter B was among his own people, was the secretary of the Alédjo-Koura mayor and seemed to attach great importance to his status,²⁷ yet was used as a subordinate to the female researcher. He seemed to think in very definite gender roles, as evident from his consistently translating “told father and mother” as “told father” in one of the RTT answers, and when this was discovered, defending himself by stating that reporting to the mother made no difference once the father had been told.²⁸

4.4.2 General analysis techniques

All data from the RTTs and ISQs were analyzed without any efforts to compensate for the lack of randomness in the samples.

Statistical significance of differences between RTT scores for different subsamples was consistently established through the Mann-Whitney U test as described by Bergman (1990:14f), and threshold levels of 95% and 98% were applied.²⁹ As measure for the average, the arithmetic mean was used.

For ordinal questions,³⁰ mode and median were used as measures for the average, and the results were combined so that “la plupart” and “le tout” became “adequate” comprehension and the remaining ones “inadequate.”

²⁷ The researcher working with interpreter B did not notice specific signs of intimidation in the subjects.

²⁸ As far as could be checked, apart from this instance, interpreter B did not consistently misreport answers given.

²⁹ It is noted that the tables with critical U-values as provided by Bergman (1990:16f) are limited to subgroups of 20 subjects. Durieux (1997, personal communication) of SIL Africa Area, and South (1997, personal communication), a statistician and member of Wycliffe-Associates UK, extended these tables for larger subgroups, based on their own calculations. Durieux (1998) incorporated these tables into “Survey Statistics,” a small spreadsheet application intended for the statistical analysis of survey data, including the Mann-Whitney U test.

³⁰ All ordinal questions were related to the level of speaking or understanding of a language or text and used a scale of five, with descriptions “le tout,” “la plupart,” “un peu,” “très peu,” “rien” (all, most, a little, very little, nothing).

4.5 Terminology and presentation

Terminology:

- The “vernacular” of a person or group refers to the speech variety of the home village of the person or group.
- A “social group” is a subsample defined by gender and age, i.e. younger men, older men, younger women or older women.
- “Adequate proficiency” denotes proficiency that was self-assessed as “la plupart” or “le tout.”
- The term “significance” refers to statistical rather than substantive significance.
- Whenever a difference is described as “significant” without qualification, >98% statistical significance is meant. A difference described as “not significant” refers to <95% statistical significance. “Marginally significant” refers to a statistical significance between 95% and 98%.
- Whenever the words “average” or “mean” are used without qualification, the arithmetic mean is meant.
- Whenever subsamples across interpreters, i.e. interpreters A and B, are compared they will be referred to as “interpreter A” and “interpreter B” without specifically stating that in actual fact the data refer to the subjects tested or interviewed with each interpreter.

Table presentations:

- A table of raw RTT results can be found in Appendix C.1.
- Totals over strata in tables are sample totals, not population totals.
- Marginal significance is indicated in tables as 95%< – <98%.

5. Results

In the following sections the results from community and individual interviews are presented according to the following topics: dialect intercomprehension, language vitality, language attitudes, bilingualism and attitudes regarding French, and literacy.

5.1 Dialect intercomprehension

With regard to dialect intercomprehension, three factors were examined: (1) the existent language situation, (2) the degree of lexical similarity between Kura and both Yoruba and Ife as well as Northern Nago, and (3) the level of comprehension of both Yoruba and Ife throughout the Kura communities.

5.1.1 Existent language situation

The existent language situation was investigated through reported data regarding language name and intercomprehension and the Kura dialect situation.

5.1.1.1 *Language name and intercomprehension*

Linguistic reference materials such as Capo's classification of Defoid languages (1989) or the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996) use Nago to refer to both the Ede speech communities of Alédjo-Koura and the Ede speech communities located in and around Manigri, including the communities in and around Kambolé in Togo (Volume 7). (See also 'Taxonomy and naming,' Section 2.1.1)

However, interviewed local community leaders and individuals of both the Alédjo-Koura communities and the communities in and around Manigri and Kambolé asserted that both speech varieties are different.

While referring to the speech form spoken around Manigri as "Nago," the communities of Alédjo-Koura gave "Kura" as the common name for their own speech form even though "Nago" and "Ede" or "Ide" were also mentioned.

Community elders from Manigri and Kambolé also made a distinction between their own speech form and that of the Alédjo-Koura communities. They insisted that Nago and Kura are different on the basis of vocabulary items, reporting that Kura uses Tem words. (See Volume 7.)

Aguidi (1997, personal communication), a Beninese linguist,³¹ agreed that there are differences between Kura and Nago. After listening to samples on tape (Kura wordlist tape from Partago; Nago HTT from Manigri) he was immediately able to correctly determine the varieties. According to him, there are three types of differences:

- The Kura variety has assimilated quite a number of loan words from neighboring languages.
- A few affixes are different, although this should not impede mutual understanding.
- There are some minor differences in pronunciation, just allowing one to tell the varieties apart.

Regarding intercomprehension, interviewed community elders in Manigri stated that Kura is not well understood by the Nago people, all social groups included, whereas the elders in Kambolé claimed that they understand Kura very well. However, when asked more specifically, they thought that only older adults would understand Kura well.

Aguidi (1997, personal communication) agreed with this statement, surmising that Nago would be better understood in the Kura region than vice versa, due to the loan words in the latter variety. This was confirmed by the fact that, on the one hand, apart from one or two more technical words,³² the HTT recorded in Manigri was well understood in the Kura region, while on the other hand, the Manigri interpreter who accompanied the researchers during the Kura survey reported incidental problems in understanding the Kura people, and as mentioned above, the Manigri elders stated that Kura is at times hard for them to understand.

In summarizing, the data gathered during community and individual interviews indicate the distinctness of both speech varieties as well as variations in reported and estimated intercomprehension between the two varieties. These findings, together with the lexical

³¹ Aguidi, an L1 Ica speaker (see Footnote 20), has a master's degree in linguistics from the Université Nationale du Bénin (Département d'Etudes Linguistiques et de Tradition Orale).

³² The words for sand and rubber were different in the two varieties.

differences between both varieties, the latter to be shown in Section 5.1.2, ‘Lexical similarity’, indicate that the Alédjo-Koura communities and those of Manigri and Kambolé are better viewed as two distinct speech communities than as one larger community with “Kura” being suggested as the designation for the Alédjo-Koura communities and “Northern Nago” being the designation for the Manigri and Kambolé communities.

5.1.1.2 *Dialect situation*

Neither Capo (1989:280) nor the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996:168), while listing Kura as being part of the Nago language area, mention specific dialects within Nago and therefore within Kura. (See also ‘Taxonomy and naming,’ Section 2.1.1.)

This information was confirmed during interviews with local community leaders. They reported that the Kura language is considered the same throughout the whole language area, insisting that not the smallest difference in pronunciation exists between the various Kura villages and therefore there is complete mutual understanding.

5.1.2 Lexical similarity

Kura wordlists were elicited in Awotébi and Partago and compared to a Yoruba wordlist elicited in Porto-Novo, an Ife wordlist from Tchetti, and Northern Nago wordlists elicited in Manigri and in Kambolé (Volume 7). In addition, Southern Nago wordlists from Kétou and Pobè (Volume 8) were added to the lexical similarity matrixes given that both Capo (1989:280) and the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996:168) include the Southern Nago communities in their listing of Nago. The lists were analyzed according to prescribed methodology³³ in order to determine the degree of lexical similarity between these varieties.

Table 4 shows the percent and variance³⁴ matrices. The percent matrix reports the number of pairs of lexically similar items as a percentage of the basic vocabulary, while the variance matrix shows the range of error for each count (Wimbish 1989:59; JAARS 1994).³⁵

³³ See Volume 1, Section 4.1.3 for details on the procedures.

³⁴ The title “variance matrix” is in common usage, even though it does list estimated ranges of error rather than variances for each of the values in the percent matrix.

³⁵ For this computation, morphemes that are apparently affixed to the form used in another variety are ignored if they occur always in the same position. Including all morphemes in the analysis results in an overall lower degree of lexical similarity, as shown in Table 9 in ‘Lexical similarity between Ede varieties’ (Appendix B). (See Volume 1, Appendix K for further details regarding the criteria applied for similarity groupings, Appendix L for a complete listing of elicited data sorted by gloss, and Appendix M for computed percent and variance matrices for lexical similarity for all elicited Ede wordlists.)

Table 4: Lexical similarity between Ede varieties

Percent matrix										Variance matrix									
Yoruba (Porto-Novu)										Yoruba (Porto-Novu)									
73 Ife (Tchetti)										5.7 Ife (Tchetti)									
71 78 N. Nago (Kambolé)										6.4 5.8 N. Nago (Kambolé)									
69 69 90 N. Nago (Manigri)										6.5 6.5 4.6 N. Nago (Manigri)									
62	65	70	68	Kura (Awotébi)						6.3	6.2	6.5	6.6	Kura (Awotébi)					
65	65	66	64	93 Kura (Partago)						6.1	6.2	6.7	6.8	3.3 Kura (Partago)					
87	70	68	69	60	61	S. Nago (Kétou)				4.7	6.5	7.2	7.1	6.9	6.9	S. Nago (Kétou)			
82	71	65	66	60	59	87 S. Nago (Pobè)				5.4	6.4	7.3	7.3	6.9	6.9	5.2 S. Nago (Pobè)			

The results of the wordlist analysis show that the degree of lexical similarity between Kura and both Yoruba and Ife is rather low with percentages of 68–71% at the upper confidence limit³⁶ of the calculations between Kura and Yoruba and of 70–72% between Kura and Ife. Between Kura and Northern Nago, percentages are slightly higher between 71–77%, whereas they are considerably lower between Kura and Southern Nago with percentages of 66–68%.

Interpretation of these results follows the guidelines given in “Language Assessment Criteria” (International Language Assessment Conference 1990:2):³⁷

[When the wordlist analysis results] indicate a lexical similarity between two speech forms of less than about 70% (at the upper confidence limit of the calculation), this generally indicates that these are different languages. ... If the similarity is more than 70%, dialect intelligibility testing is needed to determine how well people can understand the other speech form.

According to these guidelines, the results of the wordlist analysis are somewhat ambiguous and do not clearly indicate whether Kura and both Yoruba and Ife may indeed be different languages or not. However, as stated in the guidelines, lexical criteria do not suffice to draw conclusions as to whether the two speech forms are different languages. Therefore, comprehension testing was needed in order to determine how well the Kura people are able to understand Yoruba and Ife.

Likewise as far as Kura and Northern Nago are concerned, the results are somewhat ambiguous. However, given the main focus of the current study (i.e. to determine whether the Kura people can adequately understand materials written in standard Yoruba and Ife), dialect intelligibility testing to determine how well the Kura and Northern Nago people can understand each other was not deemed necessary. Instead, the investigation of reported intercomprehension between both varieties was deemed sufficient, indicating that the speech communities in question regard themselves as distinct (see also ‘*Language name and intercomprehension*,’ Section 5.1.1.1).

Regarding Kura and Southern Nago, the results indicate that these varieties are different languages, as far as the degree of lexical similarity between them is concerned. Given the focus of the current study though, no further investigation was pursued as to the relationship between both speech forms.

³⁶ Upper confidence limit = percentage + range of error (variance).

³⁷ These criteria were “approved for general use as administrative guidelines by the Area Directors and Vice Presidents” of SIL based on a statement adopted by participants of the International Language Assessment Conference in Horsleys Green, England in 1989. (International Language Assessment Conference 1990:1)

5.1.3 Tested comprehension

Comprehension of Yoruba and Ife was tested with RTT-testing, the most direct tool used during this survey to measure comprehension. To ascertain the level of understanding, not only of spoken standard Yoruba and Ife, but also of different registers of Yoruba as used in two Bible translations, two measures of assessment were used: subjects were tested by RTT and afterwards asked directly about their comprehension.

The following sections refer to the comprehension results as well as to the answers to the accompanying questionnaire regarding the subject's own assessment of comprehension and the subject's expectation of understanding for the various social groups within the village. The following results show the percentages of correct responses to the comprehension questions inserted in the recorded texts.³⁸ The overall number of RTT subjects is 18 for the four texts.

5.1.3.1 Yoruba Narrative

Table 5: RTT scores for Yoruba narrative

Town	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
Boutou	6	92	82- 100	8.46	
Partago	6	73	55- 91	14.37	
Yarakéou	6	81	0- 100	39.88	
TOTAL	18	82	0- 100	24.87	
SoGrp	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
MY	5	87	73- 95	9.85	
MO	4	57	0- 91	40.91	
FY	4	89	73- 100	12.03	
FO	5	92	59- 100	18.30	
TOTAL	18	82	0- 100	24.87	
Int	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
Int-A	7	90	55- 100	16.33	<95%
Int-B	7	70	0- 100	34.20	

[SoGrp = social group; Int = interpreter; n = number of subjects; %corr = % of correct answers; STD = Standard Deviation weighted in percentage to the n-1]

The mean test score for the narrative is 82% indicating moderate levels of comprehension, with four subjects scoring <80% (three of them male). The standard deviation of 24.87 is high, indicating a high degree of variation of comprehension levels across subjects: the range is 0-100%.

³⁸ Full RTT scores are given in Appendix C.1 in 'RTT results: Raw scores'.

The data show a considerable difference in comprehension scores across interpreters with an average score of 70% for the sample tested with interpreter B as opposed to the average score of 90% for those subjects tested with interpreter A.³⁹ For the latter, the results show that both the younger and older females obtained average scores of over 90% (94% and 100%, respectively) whereas the older males obtained an average score of 70%. It is noted though that only two male subjects, both of them older, were tested with interpreter A, obtaining scores of 55% and 91%.⁴⁰

Even though the difference in obtained scores is considerable there is no significant correlation between RTT scores and interpreters. Neither is there a significant correlation between RTT scores and genders, ages or education. Thus, no conclusion as to the presence of external factors can be drawn, such as about inherent versus acquired intelligibility. However, as regards location, subjects from Boutou scored marginally significantly higher than subjects from Partago.⁴¹

Following the RTT, subjects were asked to identify the origin of the narrator of the story. All but one subject (17/18 – 94%) correctly identified the narrator as a Yoruba speaker with most people though (14/16 – 88%) not being able to give any specific location. The remaining subject (1/18) thought the narrator was a Nago speaker. When asked whether the narrator spoke Yoruba well, 8/18 subjects (44%) answered affirmatively whereas the same number of subjects did not feel able to pass any judgment. Interestingly, 7/8 subjects answering affirmatively were interviewed with interpreter A, whereas 7/8 subjects not passing any judgment were interviewed with interpreter B.

Subjects were also asked whether they understood “le tout” (all), “la plupart” (most), “un peu” (a little), “très peu” (very little), or “rien” (nothing) of the narrative. The overall mode is “la plupart.” However, mode and median differ across interpreters. For interpreter A mode and median are “la plupart,” whereas for interpreter B mode and median are “rien” with a strong positive correlation between scores and self-assessment for each subsample.

Regarding the question whether the various social groups in the village would understand the story, opinions were evenly divided as regards the anticipated comprehension of the younger generation: the same number of subjects expected comprehension and non-comprehension for the younger males (both 7/18 – 39%) and the younger females (both 7/16 – 44%). Regarding the older generation a slightly lower percentage of subjects assumed comprehension versus non-comprehension both for the older males (6/16 – 38% vs 8/16 – 50%) and the older females (5/17 – 29% vs 10/17 – 59%). The remaining two subjects assumed the various social groups would understand “un peu” (a little) and “pas tout” (not everything).

³⁹ Due to the small sample of four subjects tested with interpreter C, RTT results obtained with his interpretation are excluded from the statistical comparison across interpreters.

⁴⁰ No younger males were tested with interpreter A.

RTT results across social groups obtained with interpreter A are given in Appendix C.3 in ‘RTT results for interpreter A’.

⁴¹ Yoruba narrative: Average scores across locations, genders, ages and education are as follows:

– Boutou versus Partago:	92% vs 73%,	STD: 8.46 vs 14.37,	Sign.: 95%< – <98%;
– Boutou versus Yarakéou:	92% vs 81%,	STD: 8.46 vs 39.88,	Sign.: <95%;
– Partago versus Yarakéou:	73% vs 81%,	STD: 14.37 vs 39.88,	Sign.: <95%;
– men versus women:	74% vs 90%,	STD: 30.56 vs 14.98,	Sign.: <95%;
– young versus old:	88% vs 76%,	STD: 10.16 vs 33.69,	Sign.: <95%;
– educated versus uneducated subjects:	74% vs 87%,	STD: 33.68 vs 17.23,	Sign.: <95%.

5.1.3.2 Yoruba New Testament : 1987 translation

Table 6: RTT scores for Yoruba – Acts 10:1–23

Town	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
Boutou	6	50	27- 73	19.07	
Partago	6	39	0- 91	43.00	
Yarakéou	6	39	0- 100	46.51	
TOTAL	18	42	0- 100	36.30	<95%

SoGrp	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
MY	5	23	0- 68	28.02	
MO	4	44	0- 73	33.68	
FY	4	61	0- 95	43.99	
FO	5	45	0- 100	40.66	
TOTAL	18	42	0- 100	36.30	

Int	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
Int-A	7	80	59- 100	15.49	>98%
Int-B	7	5	0- 18	8.87	

The passage chosen from the 1987 Yoruba New Testament is Acts 10:1–23. The mean score of 42% is very low, indicating very low levels of comprehension with 15/18 subjects (83%) scoring <80%.

While the data indicate no significant correlation between RTT scores and locations, genders, ages or education,⁴² there is a significant correlation between RTT scores and interpreters with a significantly higher average score for interpreter A versus interpreter B. Subjects tested with interpreter A obtained an overall average score of 80%, with average scores of 82% and 86% for the younger and older females respectively whereas the older males obtained an average score of 70%.⁴³

The high degree of variation of comprehension levels across subjects (the range being 0-100%) results in an overall high standard deviation of 36.60. Due to the constantly low scores for interpreter B, his standard deviation is moderate (8.87) while it is considerably higher for interpreter A (15.49). This rather high standard deviation for interpreter A may indicate the effects of acquired understanding, which would mean that inherent understanding is lower. However, the researchers noticed that the religious vocabulary of the passage, especially the

⁴² Yoruba – Acts 10:1–23: Average scores across genders, ages and education are as follows:

- men versus women: 32% vs 53%, STD: 30.78 vs 40.28, Sign.: <95%;
- young versus old: 40% vs 45%, STD: 39.15 vs 35.39, Sign.: <95%;
- educated versus uneducated subjects: 32% vs 49%, STD: 29.57 vs 39.82, Sign.: <95%.

⁴³ RTT results across social groups obtained with interpreter A are given in Appendix C.3 in ‘RTT results for interpreter A’.

words “angel” and “vision,” made the story harder to understand for several of the (all Muslim) subjects. If this observation is valid, it probably had both a decreasing effect on the mean scores, and an increasing one on the standard deviations, in which case the expected scores for other texts of this register, without such terms, would be higher.

After having listened to the Bible passage, subjects were again asked whether they understood “le tout” (all), “la plupart” (most), “un peu” (a little), “très peu” (very little), or “rien” (nothing) of the text. The mode is “rien” and the median lies between “un peu” and “rien.” In particular, only 2/18 subjects (11%) estimated their understanding as adequate. Overall, the majority of subjects assessed their comprehension correctly; however, those obtaining scores >90% appear to have underestimated their comprehension while two subjects with rather low scores apparently overestimated their comprehension.⁴⁴

5.1.3.3 Yoruba Bible: 1960 translation

Table 7: RTT scores for Yoruba – Luke 19:11–17

Town	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
Boutou	6	42	0- 95	31.18	
Partago	6	32	0- 73	35.68	
Yarakéou	6	31	0- 95	48.14	
TOTAL	18	35	0- 95	37.02	<95%

SoGrp	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
MY	5	15	0- 45	20.93	
MO	4	30	0- 68	34.91	
FY	4	51	0- 91	39.86	
FO	5	47	0- 95	47.74	
TOTAL	18	35	0- 95	37.02	

Int	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
Int-A	7	73	41- 95	22.02	>98%
Int-B	7	0	0	0.00	

The passage chosen from the 1960 Yoruba Bible is Luke 19:11–17. The mean score of 35% is very low, indicating non-comprehension with 15/18 subjects (83%) scoring <80%. At the same time the standard deviation of 37.02 is very high indicating a high degree of variation of comprehension levels across subjects: the range is 0–95%.

⁴⁴ Tested versus reported comprehension: 100% – “most;” 95% – “a little;” 91% – “a little;” 68% – “most;” 18% – “un peu.”

While the data indicate no significant correlation between RTT scores and locations, genders, ages or education,⁴⁵ there is again a significant correlation between RTT scores and interpreters with a significantly higher average score for interpreter A versus interpreter B. Subjects tested with interpreter A obtained an overall average score of 73%, with an average score of 95% for the older females whereas the younger females obtained an average score of 68% and the older males one of 59%.⁴⁶

When asked whether they understood “le tout” (all), “la plupart” (most), “un peu” (a little), “très peu” (very little), or “rien” (nothing) of the text, the mode is “rien” and the median “très peu.” In particular, only 3/18 subjects (17%) estimated their understanding as adequate. Overall, self-assessed and measured understanding of the text appear to correlate positively.⁴⁷

5.1.3.4 *Ife narrative*

Table 8: RTT scores for Ife narrative

Town	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
Boutou	6	33	0- 92	38.41	
Partago	6	51	17- 83	27.97	
Yarakéou	6	46	0- 96	44.02	
TOTAL	18	43	0- 96	36.05	<95%

SoGrp	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
MY	5	19	0- 71	30.84	
MO	4	39	0- 83	40.74	
FY	4	69	42- 88	19.98	
FO	5	51	17- 96	39.46	
TOTAL	18	43	0- 96	36.05	

Int	n	%corr	Range	STD	Sign.
Int-A	7	81	63- 96	12.47	>98%
Int-B	7	25	0- 71	24.88	

⁴⁵ Yoruba – Luke 19:11–17: Average scores across genders, ages and education are as follows:

- men versus women: 21% vs 49%, STD: 27.18 vs 41.71, Sign.: <95%;
- young versus old: 31% vs 39%, STD: 34.45 vs 41.04, Sign.: <95%;
- educated versus uneducated subjects: 18% vs 46%, STD: 22.94 vs 40.75, Sign.: <95%.

⁴⁶ RTT results across social groups obtained with interpreter A are given in Appendix C.3 in ‘RTT results for interpreter A’.

⁴⁷ Self-assessed and measured understanding of the text do not appear to correlate positively for only two subjects. Tested versus reported comprehension: 95% – “a little;” 50% – “most.”

The mean test score for the narrative of 43% is low, indicating low levels of comprehension with 14/18 subjects (78%) scoring <80% whereas only 2/18 subjects obtained scores >90% (92% and 96%), both tested with interpreter A.

At the same time, the standard variation of 36.05 is high, indicating a high degree of variation of comprehension levels across subjects (the range is 0-96%), with the standard deviation being markedly higher for interpreter B versus interpreter A (24.88 vs 12.47).

The average score of 81% for interpreter A is significantly higher than the average score of 25% for interpreter B. Regarding interpreter A, the older females obtained an average score of 94% whereas the average score for the younger females is 78% and for the older males 73%.⁴⁸

The data indicate no significant correlation between RTT scores and locations, ages or education; however, across genders, women obtained marginally significantly higher scores than men.⁴⁹

The overall high standard deviation, and still rather high standard deviation for interpreter A, may indicate that a few subjects have some acquired understanding, which would mean that inherent understanding is lower. The fact that the region does not touch an Ife-speaking region supports this hypothesis. Further support comes from the fact that, to the question regarding the origin of the narrator of the story, only 4/16 subjects (25%) gave a correct identification, whereas half of the subjects (8/16 – 50%) did not know the origin of the narrator, 3/18 (17%) mentioning the Yoruba language area and 1/18 (6%) giving Bassila as origin. The low number of subjects giving a correct identification may again be the result of infrequent contact with the Ife. However, when asked if Ife speakers pass through their area, 10/17 subjects (59%) answered affirmatively, whereas 7/17 subjects (41%) answered negatively, and 3/17 said they pass sometimes (or rarely).⁵⁰

After the test, subjects were also asked whether they understood “le tout” (all), “la plupart” (most), “un peu” (a little), “très peu” (very little), or “rien” (nothing) of the text. Mode and median are “rien.” However, 12% (2/17) of the subjects estimated their understanding as adequate. Overall, the majority of subjects assessed their comprehension correctly. However, both subjects obtaining scores >90% appear to have underestimated their comprehension while one subject with a rather low score apparently overestimated his comprehension.⁵¹

Regarding the question whether the various social groups in the village would understand the story, 11/17 subjects (65%) expected non-comprehension for the younger generation and 12/17 (71%) for the older generation, whereas only a minority of subjects anticipated understanding: 4/17 (24%) for the younger generation and 3/17 (18%) for the older generation. The remaining 2/17 subjects (12%) thought the various social groups would understand “a little” (“un peu”).

⁴⁸ RTT results across social groups obtained with interpreter A are given in Appendix C.3 in ‘RTT results for interpreter A’.

⁴⁹ Ife Narrative: Average scores across genders, ages and education are as follows:

– men versus women:	28% vs 59%,	STD: 34.67 vs 31.90,	Sign.: 95%< –
– young versus old:	41% vs 45%,	STD: 36.17 vs 37.99,	Sign.: <95%;
– educated versus uneducated subjects:	27% vs 54%,	STD: 35.67 vs 33.67,	Sign.: <95%.

⁵⁰ Among the three subjects, one said “rarely,” one “sometimes,” and one that “it happens that they pass.”

⁵¹ Tested versus reported comprehension: 96% – “a little;” 92% – “a little;” 63% – “all.”

5.1.4 Reported proficiency

Both ISQ and RTT subjects were asked proficiency questions regarding Yoruba and Ife, and in this section, sample populations include both, unless otherwise indicated.

Interpretation of reported proficiency figures requires some care, as the variable measured is a mix of not only dialect intercomprehension and acquired intelligibility, but also of language attitudes and notions about what in effect constitutes the language under consideration. This may explain why there is at times a considerable difference between answers obtained from ISQ subjects (who were asked proficiency questions out of context, and so were left to their own ideas about what constituted Yoruba or Ife) and RTT subjects, who were asked about their proficiency right after having been tested for comprehension on a narrative in the language variety in question.⁵²

5.1.4.1 Yoruba

For passive proficiency, the questions covered direct understanding, as well as comprehension of Yoruba radio emissions. Regarding subjects' abilities to speak Yoruba, the only input was direct questioning.

1. Passive proficiency

Subjects were questioned about their understanding in general, and afterwards about their complete understanding, of Yoruba. Only 7/38 subjects (18%) reported the ability to understand Yoruba⁵³ and only 3/38 (8%) claimed total comprehension. There are no significant differences across locations, social groups, education, interpreters or test types.

Only a few people interviewed (4/12 – 19%) indicated listening to Yoruba radio emissions, with only one of them claiming total comprehension. Among those who listen three do so daily and one once a week.

When asked about the age at which children are able to understand Yoruba, 9/20 subjects (45%) gave ages of 8–13 years, while 4/20 (20%) thought that children would have to be at least 15 years of age (three subjects) or would have to travel to Nigeria (one subject) in order to understand Yoruba. The remaining 6/20 subjects (30%) could not give any precise age.

2. Active proficiency

When asked about their Yoruba speaking abilities, only 4/38 subjects (11%) reported general proficiency, with only one of them (1/38 – 3%) claiming complete active command. Again, there is no significant difference across locations, social groups, education, interpreters or test types.

⁵² Detailed results as regards reported proficiency are given in Appendix D in 'Reported data: Details'.

⁵³ The figures given here include four subjects who reported ability to understand "un peu" (a little).

5.1.4.2 *Ife*

Only direct questioning was used to assess passive and active proficiency.

1. Passive proficiency

Ife comprehension was reported by 4/38 subjects (11%). In order to qualify these results, subjects were also asked how well they understand Ife, on a scale comprising “le tout” (all), “la plupart” (most), “un peu” (a little), “très peu” (very little), and “rien” (nothing). On this more discerning scale, only 1/38 subjects (3%) estimated his understanding as adequate, whereas 4/38 subjects (11%) reported understanding a little and 3/38 subjects (8%) understand very little. The vast majority of subjects (30/38 – 79%) do not understand anything.

There are no significant differences across locations, social groups, education, interpreters or test types, neither for general nor for adequate comprehension of Ife.

Only 3/20 of the ISQ subjects interviewed (15%) indicated listening to Ife radio emissions, although none of them claimed total comprehension. However, one of them indicated that he understands Ife radio emissions better than Yoruba ones.

When ISQ subjects were asked about the age at which children are able to understand Ife, 7/19 subjects (37%) gave ages of 10–13 years, while 4/19 (21%) thought that children would have to be older in order to understand Ife (15 years of age: two subjects; 20 years of age: one subject; “would have to be a bit grown up:” one subject). The remaining 8/19 subjects (42%) could not give any precise age.

2. Active proficiency

None of the interviewed subjects (0/39) reported the ability to speak Ife. Likewise, none of the subjects reported ever speaking Ife to Ife speakers.

5.2 Language vitality

For this survey, the main indicator for language vitality is language choice. Not only the results for ISQ and RTT questions are reported here, but also the data provided by interviewed village elders. All data in this section are reported.

5.2.1 Language choice in private and local domains

For in-village domains, essentially everybody uses Kura.

All subjects use Kura with their parents (40/40), children (15/15), friends, neighbors, elders, at work or on the farm, and at the local market (22/22 each). With their spouses, all but one of the married subjects (14/15 – 93%) speak the vernacular, the remaining subject speaking Logba with her L1 Logba husband. In addition to Kura, one younger male uses French at home, and one older male reported use of French with his friends.

When subjects were asked which language local children use when playing, all subjects (22/22) agreed that the children use Kura with each other.

Concerning language use by the youth, interviewed subjects were asked how well, in their opinion, the youth speak Kura. Most ISQ subjects (19/22 – 86%) thought that the young people speak Kura “comme il faut” (as they should). The remaining three subjects, all of them older, stated that the language of the younger generation is marked by a “bad” grammar, a different accent or marked by the fact that the young people speak like those of the Manigri area.⁵⁴

On the more formal level, according to village elders, Kura is also the language of choice for announcements, rites of passage, family and village judgments and councils of the elders.

5.2.2 Language choice in public domains

Kura is also reportedly used almost exclusively by respondents outside their own villages. In the offices of the sous-préfecture, all subjects (20/20) speak Kura, and at the regional market, all but one subject (20/21 – 95%) use the vernacular, while the remaining subject uses French.

According to village elders, Kura is also the language of choice during meetings of the traditional council, possibly with translations for speakers of other languages.

5.2.3 Language choice with speakers of other Ede varieties

The interviewed subjects reported almost exclusive use of Kura with speakers of other Ede varieties:

To Yoruba speakers, all but one ISQ subject (17/18 – 94%) continue speaking their vernacular with two of them needing an interpreter in order to communicate; the remaining subject reported use of French.

Both ISQ and RTT subjects were asked about their language choice with Ife speakers. All subjects (28/28) speak Kura to them, with two of them needing an interpreter in order to communicate.

With speakers of other Ede varieties none of the RTT subjects (0/12) would ever use Yoruba.

Regarding language use by local children, subjects were not asked about language choices in play with Yoruba- or Ife-speaking children, because according to the informants, this situation does not occur in practice.

5.3 Language attitudes

Attitudes toward the use of oral and written forms of Kura, Yoruba and Ife were explored through interviews, both with community elders and with individuals (ISQs).

⁵⁴ Manigri lies in the Northern Nago area.

5.3.1 Attitudes toward Kura and its development

All ISQ and RTT subjects were asked if they thought it would be a “good thing” for the Kura people if they could read and write in Kura. All but one (38/39 – 97%) responded affirmatively, giving reasons such as it is their first language and that literacy in Kura would encourage language and economic development. The remaining subject assumed that people would not be interested in Kura literacy. Subjects were also asked if they themselves wanted to become literate in their language. Almost all subjects (38/40 – 95%) responded affirmatively, some giving as a reason the fact that it is their own language, others explaining that it would enhance communication or provide better opportunities in life. The negative responses came from two 15-year olds from Boutou, one stating that she does not know anything about literacy, and the other expressing a lack of interest.

In regard to the choice of a potential reference dialect, wherever asked, the local elders stated that Kura as spoken in their village should be chosen for written purposes explaining that Kura is spoken best in their village. However, as was mentioned in ‘*Dialect situation*’ (Section 5.1.1.2), the Kura language is considered to be the same throughout the whole language area with no variation in pronunciation from village to village. The elders from Partago stated further that the Kura communities and the communities around Manigri should use their own, separate, language varieties for written purposes.

To probe more indirectly with regard to the choice of a reference dialect, all subjects were asked where the best place is to learn their language. All but two subjects (38/40 – 95%) named their own village, seven subjects from Boutou giving one or more other locations as an alternative. The remaining two subjects, both young men, did not include their own village, with one of them, a man from Yarakéou, naming Partago while the second one, a man from Partago, gave Manigri as the location of choice.⁵⁴

The literacy coordinator from Bassila, J. I. Gomon, and two of his literacy workers related that one literacy class in Nago⁵⁵ was taught in Partago (near Alédjo-Koura). Regarding future goals for the on-going literacy program in the Bassila sous-préfecture, Gomon did not mention any plans with regard to Kura, but listed several with regard to Nago. His first objective is to produce primers, books and stories in Nago, and secondly, he hopes to produce written materials in Nago for the on-going post-literacy classes in the sous-préfecture. However, at the time of the second stage of the survey in July 1997, there have been no on-going post-literacy classes in the Kura area.⁵⁶ (See ‘Non-formal education,’ Section 2.4, for details about on-going activities.)

5.3.2 Attitudes toward the use of Yoruba and Ife

During individual interviews, subjects were asked to express their attitudes towards the ability to understand and speak Yoruba and Ife.

The vast majority of subjects (18/22 – 82%) saw Yoruba proficiency as positive, mainly for communication reasons. Three subjects (3/22 – 17%) responded negatively, explaining that Yoruba is not their language, that proficiency in Yoruba is not necessary and that proficiency in

⁵⁵ As was pointed out in Footnote 15, Section 2.4, it is not clear whether Gomon and the two literacy workers, when referring to Nago, meant the local vernacular or Yoruba.

⁵⁶ Also see Volume 7.

Yoruba would be disadvantageous for the Kura language. The remaining subject felt unable to answer the question.

Regarding Ife, the vast majority of subjects (28/37 – 78%) regarded proficiency as positive, again mainly for communication reasons.⁵⁷ Those who did not (9/37 – 22%) considered the Ife language area too remote, or expressed the feeling that Ife is a different language from their own.

When subjects were asked if they would like to be literate in Yoruba or Ife, more than two-thirds responded affirmatively in regard to Yoruba (28/40 – 70%), mainly for communication and economic reasons. Concerning Ife, half of the subjects responded affirmatively, again mainly for communication reasons. Those subjects who responded negatively stated that these Ede varieties are not their language or that they do not speak either of these varieties well.

All subjects were also presented with a hypothetical situation in which they had the exclusive choice between Yoruba or Ife literacy classes. More than half of the subjects (23/39 – 59%) stated they would choose Yoruba versus 13/39 subjects (33%) who preferred Ife literacy classes. The remaining three subjects would choose neither.

When community elders were asked whether they would prefer Yoruba or Ife for literacy, the elders in Partago⁵⁸ near Alédjo-Koura indicated that the choice was for Ife, based on their perception that Ife was linguistically closer to Kura. Yoruba would be acceptable if used as the medium to teach Kura literacy.

5.4 Bilingualism and attitudes regarding French

Although the investigation of bilingualism or attitudes regarding French was not a primary concern of this survey, the individual sociolinguistic questionnaire contained some questions concerning this language.⁵⁹

Passive proficiency was reported by 3/20 subjects (15%), whereas 4/11 subjects (18%)⁶⁰ claimed active proficiency, all of them males. French abilities appear to be strongly linked to education with significantly higher percentages of educated versus uneducated subjects claiming active French abilities.⁶¹ There are no significant differences across social groups or interpreters.

Subjects with children were also asked about the French abilities of their children. Of 12 subjects who reported having children, half (6/12 – 50%) reported passive and active proficiency for their children,⁶² explaining that they learned it in school, with ages given centering around 10 years of age. These data parallel the findings previously mentioned indicating that proficiency in French is coupled with education.

In addition, all but two older subjects (18/20 – 90%) professed positive attitudes regarding the ability to speak and understand French, the majority stressing its usefulness (for communication,

⁵⁷ There are no significant differences in responses across genders, ages or test types.

⁵⁸ In Awotébi and Yarakéou this issue was not raised.

⁵⁹ Detailed results regarding reported proficiency are given in Appendix D in ‘Reported data: Details’.

⁶⁰ The figures given here include one subject who reported the ability to speak “un peu” (a little).

⁶¹ Due to the low number of educated subjects interviewed regarding their passive French abilities (4 subjects), data are not analyzed across education.

⁶² The figures given here include one subject who reported for her child the ability to speak “un peu.”

work, travel or self-development), and a minority indicating that it is an international language. Of the two subjects professing negative attitudes, one explained that French proficiency was not necessary while the other one stated that proficiency in French would disadvantage the Kura language.

Spread of French proficiency could eventually in the long term lead to French making an inroad into domains currently reserved for Kura. However, with the data gathered it is not possible to make an accurate guess as to the spread of knowledge of French in the area. Language use data (see ‘Language choice in private and local domains,’ Section 5.2.1) seem to show that such a shift is not to be expected during the lifetime of the generation currently growing up.

5.5 Literacy

As information regarding literacy programs was already provided in ‘Non-formal education’ (Section 2.4), this section will mainly consider reported literacy levels of individuals interviewed. Both ISQ and RTT subjects were asked if they are able to read and write in Kura, Yoruba, Ife and/or French.⁶³

5.5.1 Kura

All subjects were asked whether they had ever tried to write their vernacular. Only 4/40 subjects (10%) responded affirmatively, with three of them⁶⁴ also reporting reading and writing abilities in French while none of them reported abilities to read or write in Yoruba. There is no significant difference across social groups or education.

5.5.2 Yoruba and Ife

None of the subjects reported being literate in Yoruba or Ife (ability to read: 0/39; ability to write: 0/38), among them one younger male from Yarakéou who had reportedly attended a Yoruba literacy class. None of the remaining 38 subjects had ever enrolled in a Yoruba literacy class. Neither had any of the subjects ever enrolled in an Ife literacy class. However, given the geographical distance from the Ife language area this is only to be expected.

5.5.3 French

Literacy in French appears to be somewhat more widely spread with 8/39 subjects (21%) reporting reading abilities and 7/39 subjects (18%) claiming writing abilities.⁶⁵

Reading and writing abilities in French are strongly linked to education with significantly higher percentages of educated versus uneducated subjects claiming to be literate in French. Across social groups, the incidence of reported reading skills among men is marginally significantly

⁶³ Detailed results regarding literacy are given in Appendix D in ‘Reported data: Details’.

⁶⁴ The remaining subject was not asked regarding his reading and writing abilities in French.

⁶⁵ The figures given here include three subjects who reported ability to read “un peu” (a little) and one subject who reported ability to write “un peu,” but exclude one subject who reported only being able to write his name.

higher than among women, whereas otherwise there are no significant differences across social groups.

Common reading materials are novels, letters and newspapers, while writing is mostly restricted to letters and notes.

6. Interpretation and conclusions

The purpose of this survey was to assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Yoruba and Ife could extend to the Kura communities, or whether an additional language-based development program in Kura would be beneficial, and to gather data that would help determine the nature and extent of SIL's possible involvement among these communities. The following areas were investigated:

1. Level of dialect intercomprehension;
2. Language vitality of Idaca;
3. Language attitudes toward Kura, Yoruba and Ife.

In addition, there are the peripheral factors for which data were gathered during the survey: reported proficiency and attitudes regarding French, as well as education and literacy levels. Results for these factors have been previously presented and will not be discussed in further detail.

6.1 Dialect intercomprehension

With regard to dialect intercomprehension, three factors were examined: (1) the existent language situation, (2) the degree of lexical similarity between Kura and both Yoruba and Ife as well as Northern Nago, and (3) the level of comprehension of both Yoruba and Ife throughout the Kura communities.

6.1.1 Existent language situation

Neither Capo (1989) nor the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996:168) list Kura and Nago as two distinct speech forms but rather as one: Nago. However, the analysis of wordlists elicited in both areas does not clearly indicate that both varieties are indeed the same language. In addition, informants from the Kura area stated that the Nago variety is quite distinct from their own variety spoken in and around Alédjo-Koura which they view as a homogeneous language with complete mutual understanding across the different Kura communities.

Community elders from Manigri and Kambolé agreed that Nago and Kura are different on the basis of vocabulary items, reporting that Kura uses Tem words. A Beninese linguist inferred though that based on dialect differences, Nago would be better understood in the Kura region than vice versa, due to the loan words in the latter variety. This conclusion agrees with other observations and reports and the fact that the Home Town Test prepared in Manigri was successfully used throughout the Kura area, i.e. it was well understood by Kura speakers, and that the Manigri interpreter, who accompanied the researchers during the Kura survey, reported incidental problems in understanding the Kura people.

These findings, i.e. assertion of the distinctness of both speech varieties, variations in reported and estimated intercomprehension as well as lexical differences between both varieties, indicate that the Alédjo-Koura communities and those of Manigri and Kambolé are better viewed as two distinct speech communities than as one larger community with “Kura” being suggested as the designation for the Alédjo-Koura communities and “Northern Nago” being the designation for the Manigri and Kambolé communities.

6.1.2 Lexical similarity

The second factor to be considered is the degree of lexical similarity between Kura and both Yoruba and Ife. The results show a lexical similarity of 68–71% at the upper confidence limit⁶⁶ between Kura and Yoruba and of 70–72% between Kura and Ife. These findings are, according to previously established guidelines for wordlist analysis, somewhat ambiguous and do not clearly indicate whether Kura and both Yoruba and Ife may be different languages or not. Moreover, these findings suggest that high comprehension of both Yoruba and Ife may be improbable.

6.1.3 Comprehension of Yoruba and Ife

The third factor concerns the level of comprehension of both Yoruba and Ife throughout the Kura communities.

1. Comprehension of Yoruba

The RTT results are uniformly low (Yoruba narrative – 82%; Bible passage in modern Yoruba – 42%; Bible passage from the 1960 translation – 35%). Applying Marmor’s (1997:2f) above-mentioned guidelines⁶⁷ by which to draw conclusions from comprehension testing results, comprehension of the Yoruba narrative can be defined as between ‘mixed’ and ‘inadequate’ given the overall average score of 82% with one segment scoring below 80%, whereas it would be ‘inadequate’ regarding the tested Bible passages. Therefore it appears that Yoruba would not be a good choice for written materials.

However, the results indicate a correlation between RTT scores and interpreters with the correlation being significant for both tested Bible passages. Whereas the RTT results obtained with interpreter B indicate ‘inadequate’ comprehension across the three tested texts, including the narrative, the results show a pattern of higher average scores for those subjects having been tested with interpreter A.⁶⁸ As has already been noted in ‘Variations between interpreters’ (Section 4.4.1) the results for interpreter A appear to be more valid than those for interpreter B. Given interpreter A’s extensive previous experience and more than adequate performance during the Northern Nago survey, it can be assumed that his results are valid, although not necessarily representative given the low number of seven subjects.

⁶⁶ Upper confidence limit = percentage + range of error (variance).

⁶⁷ For more details, see Footnote 17 in Section 3.

⁶⁸ Due to the small sample of four subjects tested with interpreter C, RTT results obtained with his interpretation are excluded from the statistical comparison across interpreters.

For those tested with interpreter A, comprehension of the narrative appears to be ‘mixed’. The overall average score is 90%, with a STD of 16.33, indicating a rather high degree of variation of comprehension levels across subjects. This variation, however, appears to be primarily due to the score of one older male subject whose score was 55%. Regarding the Bible passage in modern Yoruba, comprehension levels for subjects tested with interpreter A appear to be on the line between ‘mixed’ and ‘inadequate’ given the overall average score of 80% with the two segments of women scoring between 80–90% and the one segment of older men scoring below 80%. Comprehension of the tested Bible passage from the 1960 translation is even lower and appears to be ‘inadequate’ given the overall average score of 73% with two population segments scoring below 80%; however, it should be noted that the segment of older women scored over 90%. In this context it is noted that the 1960 translation is, according to B. Elegbe (1993, personal communication), former member of Alliance Biblique au Bénin (Bible Society of Benin) in Cotonou, marked by a rather antiquated register of language which probably had the effect of lowering the mean score.

Concerning reported proficiency in Yoruba only 18% of the subjects claimed to understand Yoruba to some degree and only 8% claimed full understanding of Yoruba.

Regarding the level of literacy among the survey sample, only one subject (1/39) had ever enrolled in a Yoruba literacy class and none claimed any reading or writing abilities in Yoruba.

In summary, tested comprehension for the Yoruba narrative appears to be ‘mixed’, while reported proficiency and the Yoruba literacy rate appears to be rather low. In order to determine whether members of the Kura speech communities would adequately understand materials written in standard Yoruba, other factors, such as language attitudes and institutional support for Yoruba literacy, would need to be taken into consideration.

2. Comprehension of Ife

The RTT results for the Ife narrative are rather low (43%). Applying comprehension levels as defined by Marmor (1997), comprehension of the Ife narrative can be defined as ‘inadequate’.

Again, the results indicate a significant correlation between RTT scores and interpreters, with results obtained with interpreter B indicating ‘inadequate’ comprehension. For interpreter A the average score of 81% indicates ‘mixed’ comprehension, with two of the three segments scoring below 80% while the segment of older women scored over 90%. Therefore, comprehension should be on the line between ‘mixed’ and ‘inadequate’.

Concerning reported proficiency in Ife only 11% of the subjects claimed to understand Ife to some degree and only 3% claiming adequate comprehension.

Regarding the level of literacy among the survey sample, none claimed any reading or writing abilities in Ife.

In summary, comprehension of Ife appears to be on the line between ‘mixed’ and ‘inadequate’. These findings seem to be paralleled by the rate of reported proficiency, the low Ife literacy rate and the low degree of lexical similarity. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Kura speech communities would not adequately understand materials written in Ife.

6.2 Language vitality

Based on reported data gathered during community and individual interviews, it appears that Kura has a firm basis. It is the default variety in most situations, in private, local and public, including formal and ritual, domains, as well as in contact with speakers of other Ede varieties. In general, no generational shift was noticed by ISQ subjects with the reported data indicating that Kura is the preferred language of children and the youth.

These data must, of course, be seen in their elicitation contexts. Individual interviews were essentially only conducted in monolingual villages, where a stronger basis for Kura can be expected than in multilingual ones. There are, however, no indications or reasons to expect a possible loss of Kura in multilingual villages to spread to the currently monolingual ones in the near future, unless they also become multilingual.

Therefore, the Kura language seems highly viable.

6.3 Language attitudes

Overall, the attitudes of the Kura communities toward their language and its development appear to be positive. Almost all subjects interviewed would want to learn to read and write in Kura, with the main reasons being that it is their language and that literacy in Kura would enhance communication and their economic situation. As reference dialect and ideal location for language learning, in most cases their own village and its variety were proposed. However, at the same time the Kura language is considered to be homogeneous throughout the whole language area. The elders from Partago stated further that the Kura communities and those communities around Manigri should use their own, separate, language varieties for written purposes.

What little language change subjects perceived was considered negative, and non-change positive.

Across the language area, the vast majority of subjects regarded Yoruba and Ife proficiency as positive. Regarding literacy in Yoruba and/or Ife, more than two-thirds of the subjects would like to be able to read and write in Yoruba (70%) whereas only half would like to do so in Ife (50%).

When presented with the choice between Yoruba and Ife classes, more than half would choose Yoruba (59%) while only one-third would choose Ife (33%) with the remaining subjects choosing neither. Community elders in Partago⁶⁹ near Alédjo-Koura chose Ife, explaining that it is closer to their language, whereas Yoruba would be acceptable if used as the medium to teach Kura literacy.

It would follow that attitudes toward Kura are highly ‘open and positive’ and those toward Yoruba and Ife are generally ‘open and positive’ as well, for practical reasons. Interviewed individuals would apparently value literacy in Yoruba more highly than in Ife, whereas community elders in one surveyed community chose Ife rather than Yoruba based on their perception that Ife is linguistically closer to Kura. The overall positive reported attitudes towards Yoruba must be seen against the fact that coordinated Yoruba literacy activities are apparently

⁶⁹ In Awotébi and Yarakéou this issue was not raised.

very limited and that virtually none of the subjects were literate in Yoruba or had ever enrolled in a Yoruba literacy class.

6.4 Conclusions

To restate the final conclusions, the results with regard to dialect intercomprehension indicate that the Kura speech communities would not adequately understand materials written in Ife.

With regard to comprehension of Yoruba, the results further indicate ‘mixed’ comprehension of the Yoruba narrative for interpreter A with his results being considered valid, if not necessarily representative. Regarding more literate and/or antiquated registers of standard Yoruba, the gathered data indicate that the Kura communities would probably not be able to make adequate use of existing literature. Likewise, tested Ife comprehension suggests that the Kura speech communities would not adequately understand materials written in Ife.

At the same time, reported attitudes toward Yoruba seem to be ‘open and positive’ and thus seem to be a very positive factor toward Yoruba language standardization. These findings together with the ‘mixed’ comprehension results suggest that the Kura communities could benefit from literature and literacy efforts in Yoruba if there was enough institutional support promoting Yoruba literacy in the Kura language area. In this case, it would appear that there is no need for SIL to pursue a language development program in Kura.

These conclusions correspond to the objectives of the national literacy strategy for Benin, which chose Yoruba, but not Kura, as one of six national languages for non-formal adult education. However, due to positive attitudes toward Kura language development, it would also be possible for the community to undertake development on its own should they desire to do so.

Appendices

Appendix A. Map of Kura language area

The following map is based on the information given by chiefs and elders in the Kura language area.

Figure 1: Kura language area (based on Microsoft Corporation 2002)



a. The area of the map as shown is approximately 46 km by 46 km.

Appendix B. Lexical similarity

For this computation, morphemes that are apparently affixed to the form used in another variety are included in the analysis.⁷⁰

Table 9: Lexical similarity between Ede varieties

Percent matrix					Variance matrix				
Yoruba (Porto-Novo)					Yoruba (Porto-Novo)				
62 Ife (Tchetti)					6.3 Ife (Tchetti)				
63 69 N. Nago (Kambolé)					6.8 6.5 N. Nago (Kambolé)				
61 60 80 N. Nago (Manigri)					6.9 6.9 6.1 N. Nago (Manigri)				
48	52	54	54	Kura (Awotébi)	6.5	6.5	7.0	7.0	Kura (Awotébi)
52	54	54	53	87 Kura (Partago)	6.4	6.4	7.0	7.0	4.3 Kura (Partago)
80	60	62	61	49 52 S. Nago (Kétou)	5.6	6.9	7.5	7.5	7.1 7.0 S. Nago (Kétou)
77	61	56	57	48 48 79 S. Nago (Pobè)	5.9	6.9	7.6	7.6	7.0 7.0 6.3 S. Nago (Pobè)

a.

⁷⁰ See Volume 1, Appendix K for further details regarding the criteria applied for similarity groupings, Appendix L for a complete listing of elicited data sorted by gloss and Appendix M for computed percent and variance matrixes for lexical similarity for all elicited Ede wordlists.

Appendix C. Tested comprehension

C.1. RTT results: Raw scores

#	Loc	SoGrp	Profession	E	YN%	YA%	YL%	IFE%	Int	Res
1	Partago	MO	professor	+	91	73	50	83	B	2
2	Partago	FY	home-maker		86	91	73	79	B	2
3	Partago	MY			55	68	68	63	B	2
4	Partago	MO	farmer	+	73	0	0	25	C	1
5	Partago	FY	merchant		59	0	0	17	C	1
6	Partago	FO	no job		73	0	0	42	C	1
7	Yarakéou	FY	merchant		100	95	91	88	B	2
8	Yarakéou	MY	farmer	+	95	18	0	71	C	1
9	Yarakéou	MY	farmer	+	0	0	0	0	C	1
10	Yarakéou	FO	home-maker		100	100	95	96	B	2
11	Yarakéou	MO	farmer		91	0	0	0	C	1
12	Yarakéou	FY	home-maker		100	18	0	21	C	1
13	Boutou	FO	merchant		100	73	95	92	B	2
14	Boutou	MO	farmer	+	95	27	27	0	D	1
15	Boutou	FY	merchant		95	59	41	67	B	2
16	Boutou	MY	farmer	+	82	36	0	8	D	1
17	Boutou	FO	farmer		100	36	45	29	D	1
18	Boutou	MO	farmer	+	82	68	45	0	D	1

Explanation of the column headings:

#:	Sequence number of the RTT subject
Loc:	Village of the subject
SoGrp:	Social group of the subject, i.e. gender (M/F) and age (Y/O)
E:	Education (+ = some school education)
YN%:	RTT scores – Yoruba narrative
YA%:	RTT scores – Acts 10:1–23 (1987 translation passage)
YL%:	RTT scores – Luke 19:11–17 (1960 translation passage)
IFE%:	RTT scores – Ife narrative
Int:	Interpreter (see Table 3, Section 4.3.3)
Res:	Researcher

C.2. RTT results across interpreters

	Narrative		Bible Passage: Acts 10:1–23		Bible Passage: Luke 19:11–17	
	Average	STD	Average	STD	Average	STD
Interpreter A	90%	16.33	80%	15.49	70%	22.02
Interpreter B	70%	34.20	5%	8.87	0%	0.00
Significance	<95%		>98%		>98%	

C.3. RTT results for interpreter A

In the following, RTT results as obtained with interpreter A are presented across social groups.⁷¹

C.3.1 Yoruba narrative

SoGrp	n	%corr	STD
MO	2	73	25.71
FY	3	94	6.94
FO	2	100	0.00
TOTAL	7	90	16.33

C.3.2. 1987 translation passage: Acts 10:1–23

SoGrp	n	%corr	STD
MO	2	70	3.21
FY	3	82	19.81
FO	2	86	19.28
TOTAL	7	80	15.49

C.3.3. 1960 translation passage: Luke 19:11–17

SoGrp	n	%corr	STD
MO	2	59	12.86
FY	3	68	25.31
FO	2	95	0.00
TOTAL	7	73	22.02

C.3.4. Ife narrative

SoGrp	n	%corr	STD
MO	2	73	14.73
FY	3	78	10.49
FO	2	94	2.95
TOTAL	7	81	12.47

⁷¹ No younger males were tested with interpreter A.

Appendix D. Reported data: Details

D.1. Proficiency

D.1.1. Yoruba proficiency⁷²

1. Locations

	GenCmp: ⁷³	HghCmp: ⁷⁴	GenPrf: ⁷⁵	HghPrf: ⁷⁶
Awotébi:	1/ 4 – 25%	0/ 3 – 0%	1/ 4 – 25%	0/ 4 – 0%
Boutou:	3/11 – 27%	0/11 – 0%	1/11 – 9%	0/11 – 0%
Partago:	1/11 – 9%	0/ 8 – 0%	0/11 – 0%	0/10 – 0%
Yarakéou:	2/12 – 17%	3/12 – 25%	2/12 – 17%	1/12 – 8%

2. Social groups

a) Gender: Male versus female subjects

GenCmp: 3/18 – 17% vs 4/20 – 20%

HghCmp: 1/17 – 6% vs 2/17 – 12%

GenPrf: 1/19 – 5% vs 3/20 – 15%

HghPrf: 1/18 – 6% vs 0/19 – 0%

b) Age: Younger versus older subjects

GenCmp: 3/20 – 15% vs 4/18 – 22%

HghCmp: 2/18 – 11% vs 1/16 – 6%

GenPrf: 1/21 – 5% vs 3/18 – 17%

HghPrf: 1/19 – 5% vs 0/18 – 0%

3. Education: Educated versus uneducated subjects

GenCmp: 1/11 – 9% vs 6/27 – 22%

HghCmp: 0/11 – 0% vs 3/23 – 13%

GenPrf: 0/12 – 0% vs 4/27 – 15%

HghPrf: 0/11 – 0% vs 1/26 – 4%

4. Test types: RTT versus ISQ subjects

GenCmp: 3/17 – 18% vs 4/21 – 19%

HghCmp: 2/14 – 14% vs 1/20 – 5%

GenPrf: 2/17 – 12% vs 2/22 – 9%

HghPrf: 0/16 – 0% vs 1/21 – 5%

⁷² Unless marked there are no significant differences across the data.

⁷³ General understanding ability.

⁷⁴ Ability to always understand everything when the subject hears Yoruba people speaking.

⁷⁵ General speaking ability.

⁷⁶ Ability to always say everything the subject wants to say in Yoruba.

5. Interpreters: Interpreter A versus interpreter B versus interpreter C

GenCmp: 4/11 – 36% vs 2/19 – 11% vs 1/8 – 13%

HghCmp: 2/8 – 25% vs 1/18 – 6% vs 0/8 – 0%

GenPrf: 2/12 – 17% vs 2/19 – 11% vs 0/8 – 0%

HghPrf: 0/10 – 0% vs 1/19 – 5% vs 0/8 – 0%

D.1.2. Ife proficiency

1. Locations

	GenCmp:	AdqCmp: ⁷⁷
Awotébi:	0/4 – 0%	0/4 – 0%
Boutou:	1/11 – 9%	0/12 – 0%
Partago:	2/12 – 17%	1/11 – 9%
Yarakéou:	1/11 – 9%	0/11 – 0%

2. Social groups

a) Gender: Male versus female subjects

GenCmp: 1/19 – 5% vs 3/19 – 16%

AdqCmp: 1/19 – 5% vs 0/19 – 0%

b) Age: Younger versus older subjects

GenCmp: 1/19 – 5% vs 3/19 – 16%

AdqCmp: 0/20 – 0% vs 1/18 – 6%

3. Education: Educated versus uneducated subjects

GenCmp: 1/11 – 9% vs 3/27 – 11%

AdqCmp: 1/12 – 8% vs 0/26 – 0%

4. Test types: RTT versus ISQ subjects

GenCmp: 4/17 – 24% vs 0/21 – 0%

AdqCmp: 1/16 – 6% vs 0/22 – 0%

5. Interpreters: Interpreter A versus interpreter B versus interpreter C

GenCmp: 4/11 – 36% vs 0/19 – 0% vs 0/8 – 0%

AdqCmp: 1/11 – 9% vs 0/19 – 0% vs 0/8 – 0%

⁷⁷ Adequate comprehension: “la plupart” (most) or “le tout” (all).

D.1.3. French proficiency

1. Social Groups

a) Gender: Male versus female subjects

GenCmp: 3/9 – 33% vs 0/11 – 0%
 GenPrf: 4/11 – 36% vs 0/11 – 0%

b) Age: Younger versus older subjects

GenCmp: 1/11 – 9% vs 2/9 – 22%
 GenPrf: 2/12 – 17% vs 2/10 – 20%

2. Education: Educated versus uneducated subjects

GenCmp: 3/4 – % 75 vs 0/16 – 0%
 GenPrf: 4/5 – % 80 vs 0/17 – 0%

1. Interpreters: Interpreter A versus interpreter B versus interpreter C

GenCmp: 0/4 – 0% vs 3/12 – 25% vs 0/4 – 0%
 GenPrf: 1/6 – 17% vs 3/12 – 25% vs 0/4 – 0%

D.2. Literacy

D.2.1. Kura

1. Social groups

Gender: Male versus female subjects

Writing: 4/20 – 20% vs 0/20 – 0%

Age: Younger versus older subjects

Writing: 2/21 – 10% vs 2/19 – 11%

2. Education: Educated versus uneducated subjects

Writing: 3/12 – 25% vs 1/28 – 4%

D.2.2. Yoruba

Reading: 0/39 – 0%

Writing: 0/38 – 0%

D.2.3. *Ife*

Reading: 0/39 – 0%

Writing: 0/38 – 0%

D.2.4. *French*

1. Social Groups

a) Gender: Male versus female subjects

Reading: 8/19 – 42% vs 0/20 – 0%

Writing: 7/19 – 37% vs 0/20 – 0%

Sign.: 95%< – <98%

b) Age: Younger versus older subjects

Reading: 4/21 – 19% vs 4/18 – 22%

Writing: 3/21 – 14% vs 4/18 – 22%

2. Education: Educated versus uneducated subjects

Reading: 8/12 – 67% vs 0/27 – 0%

Sign.: <98%

Writing: 7/12 – 59% vs 0/27 – 0%

Sign.: <98%

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