

Research Article

# Representations of Moore in the City of Ouagadougou

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## Abstract

The capital, Ouagadougou, is an economic hub and therefore a major attraction for several ethnic groups whose members come there to seek employment and to live. Ouagadougou is home to all language communities. She rubs shoulders with natives who speak Moore, which is the majority language. But more and more with schooling, the Moore language no longer enjoys the same consideration as it once did. Moore would be in a situation of linguistic insecurity. Our work is part of urban sociolinguistics as advocated by CALVET. As a methodology, we used documentary research and data collection based on a questionnaire, interviews and observations. We arrived at the following results: Moore is strongly influenced by French; the competence of educated Moorephone speakers is declining in favor of French; the Moore has no socio-economic advantage; he finds himself in a situation of diglossia with French, which is an international language and the language of social advancement. Our study shows that the Moore language is devalued in the city of Ouagadougou. For Moore speakers, Moore is limited in relation to their expectations. French has the advantage of being international and as an official language it solves the problem of mutual understanding in the city of Ouagadougou.

## Keywords

Representation, Subtractive Bilingualism, Diglossia, Acculturation, Linguistic Insecurity

## 1. Introduction

There is a wide range of literature on the notion of 'representation'. CANUT, quoted by CALVET [1], describes this phenomenon as 'linguistic imaginary', which she defines as follows: 'it is the set of subjective evaluative norms characterising subjects' representations of languages and language practices that can be identified through epilinguistic discourse'. According to DUBOIS 'the term epilinguistics describes the value judgements that speakers make about the language they use and about other languages' [2]. As for CALVET quoted by YAMEOGO [3]

'representations are defined as what speakers say and think about the languages they speak and those spoken by others'. These definitions refer to the relationship between speakers and their languages and the other languages present in a given environment. CANUT's definition is better suited to the situation of Moore spoken in Ouagadougou, as it is not limited to judgements about languages, but also takes into account judgements about the use of languages. This will enable us to determine the judgements that Moore speakers make about the Moore language and French in

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Ouagadougou. The aim of this article is to show that judgements about the Moore language have changed, and that it is important to suggest ways of ensuring that it does not lose its status as a lingua franca in the city of Ouagadougou to the detriment of French. With schooling, Moore is strongly influenced by French and devalued in terms of the representations that Moore-speakers have of Moore. In order to identify these representations, we formulated a number of questions. The main question is as follows: What judgements do Moorephone speakers make about Moore and the French language? Secondary questions include: (i) What do they think about their language practice? (ii) What are the sociolinguistic implications of these judgements? The answers to these questions lead us to postulate some hypotheses. The main hypothesis postulates that the Moore would be in a situation of linguistic insecurity. The secondary hypotheses can be summarised as follows: (i) Moore is strongly influenced by French. (ii) There is a diglossia between Moore and French in the city of Ouagadougou. The main objective is to demonstrate that Moore is in a situation of linguistic insecurity. The secondary objectives of the study are: (i) Moore is strongly influenced by French. (ii) there is a diglossia between Moore and French. The expected results are The linguistic insecurity of Moore is demonstrated. The influence of French on Moore is determined. The existence of Moore-French diglossia is determined.

## 2. Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

Our study is based on the theoretical framework advocated by CALVET [1] for approaching urban sociolinguistics. In the approach advocated by CALVET, the city is the place where several ethnic groups and several languages meet. The city therefore encourages contact between languages. For CALVET [1]:

*“Urban sociolinguistics seeks to understand the city through languages. He notes that the city is a place of linguistic mixing and unification in the sense that the need for exchange and communication forces the different speakers to unite around a single language, namely the lingua franca. This unification gives rise to a linguistic dynamic. Linguistic conflict ensues because each language wants to assert itself and enjoy social prestige”.*

Language contact is at the origin of sociolinguistic facts: bilingualism and plurilingualism, diglossia, codic alternation, interference and borrowing. Our methodology consists of documentary research and data collection. For data collection, we used a questionnaire and participant observation. Our questionnaire was designed taking into account the objectives of our research. The sample consisted of thirty (30) people, twenty-six (26) of whom were speakers of Moore and four (4) speakers of other languages of various

statuses: civil servants, students, housewives and workers in the informal sector. The surveys were carried out in the city of Ouagadougou. The survey points were distributed as follows:

1. A new district: Karpala;
2. An old neighbourhood: Bilbaoolgo;
3. Undeveloped areas: Yamtenga and Dicofé;
4. Student groups in Zogona.

They were carried out between June and July 2021. Our questionnaire enabled us to determine the different representations of Moorephone speakers, which were also confirmed by participant observation through note-taking.

## 3. Presentation of the Results

In the representations, we are going to talk about the place of Mooré in the city of Ouagadougou, the competence of the speakers, the advantages offered by the Mooré language and French in the city of Ouagadougou.

### 3.1. Mooré is Strongly Influenced by French.

What do Mooré speakers think about the relationship between the city and the use of Mooré? This part concerned questions 22-26. Question 24: Do you think that the linguistic vitality of Mooré is diminishing in the city of Ouagadougou? All the respondents think that the linguistic vitality of Mooré is declining in the city of Ouagadougou. In their opinion, Mooré is losing ground in the city as a result of modernity. If the Mooré language is the vehicle of the Moaaga culture, it is clear that in Ouagadougou its field of expression is diminishing.

With modernisation, French has the advantage of designating new realities. This is why we notice the large number of borrowings, because these are realities that are foreign to the Mooré language. Thus, with modernity, the Mooré language suffers from a dependence on the French language. These new realities are referred to by neologisms that are not known or adopted by Mooré speakers. It's obvious that we can't live without modernity, but we also need to preserve our culture to avoid becoming acculturated. Given this situation, it is clear that Mooré no longer enjoys the same importance as it once did. The image of the Mooré language has deteriorated in the situation of contact with French that our country is experiencing, particularly in the city of Ouagadougou.

### 3.2. The Competence of Mooré Speakers is Declining in Favour of French

Through questions 8 and 9, we tried to establish a self-assessment of Moorephone speakers.

Question 8: Do you sometimes use French words when you express yourself in Mooré?

Question 9: If so, do you think that these words do not

exist in Mooré? Or do you look for these words in Mooré in vain? The estimated 57.14% of responses reveal, on the one hand, incompetence in Mooré and, on the other hand, 42.85% of responses reflect a need for rapid and comprehensible communication. This leads us to think of urban speech, because it is done consciously and in a way that is easy to understand.

The respondents all acknowledged that Mooré is strongly influenced by French. When speaking Mooré, there is excessive use of French terms in the form of interference, borrowing or codic alternation.

For E3: “the Mooré language is losing its authenticity and has fewer followers”.

The reasons put forward can be summed up as the alternation between Mooré and French. All our respondents said that it was difficult to express themselves in Mooré without alternating with French words. Mooré is therefore a language that is very strongly influenced by French, to the extent that Mooré-speakers find this normal.

### 3.3. Mooré has no Socio-economic Advantage

The relationship between Mooré speakers and the Mooré language questions 15-19. Question 19: Are there any advantages linked to mastery of the Mooré language? If so, please name them. 54% of respondents said that mastering Mooré facilitates communication in the market and with the elderly, 18% of respondents thought that it enabled them to get a job as an interpreter or Mooré teacher, 13% thought that it enabled them to understand Mooré culture (understand stories) and 15% thought that there were no advantages.

Many of our respondents felt that Mooré is a language that conveys Mooré culture, and a language that facilitates communication. The percentage of those who think that Mooré can enable them to get a job is mixed. Some even think that Mooré has no advantage. We can understand this situation with the answers to question 21.

Question 21: Between Mooré and French, which language do you think is more important? Justify your answer.

*Table 1. Most important language between Mooré and French.*

	Students		Servants		Informal sector workers	Civil Housewives
	Mooré	Other ethnics	Mooré	Other ethnics		
additional languages	6,89%		6,89%			
French	27,58%	6,89%	20,68%	3,44%	24,13%	3,44%

Source: survey conducted by Charles Wendlamita ILBOUDO from June 2015 to July 2016 in Ouagadougou.

We note that even native speakers of Mooré think that French is the most important language. They put forward reasons that reflect the limitations of the Mooré language in meeting their needs. They point out that Mooré is a language with no socio-economic advantages. French, on the other hand, meets their expectations, which include the need for openness, to have a job and to communicate with people from the outside.

E7: In my opinion, I think that French enables us to keep abreast of everything that's going on in the world, but Mooré remains the language of the land.

E30: French, because Mooré is only spoken in Benin, but French is spoken in French-speaking Africa.

E1: French, because nowadays we can communicate easily on a national and international level.

E3: French is more important insofar as our academic and even professional success depends on it, as recruitment texts are administered in this language.

E13: French is used to look for jobs, in administrative offices, to find out things and get information.

E8: French is more important because it is an international language.

E12: French, because you learn French at school. You also need French to look for work.

#### 2.1.2. Representations of the French language

Representations of the French language were expressed in questions 20-21. Question 20: Are there any advantages to mastering the French language? If so, name them.

E4: yes, being able to communicate in administrative places or in other countries.

E8: social success (sign of social success), job opportunities; political ambitions.

E19: to have a job, to express yourself well with government officials.

E20: yes, it opens you up to the world and makes it easier to communicate with everyone.

E14: Yes, in offices, at the market and outside Burkina, I can use it in countries where French is spoken.

E3: it's the language used to teach at school, so it's necessary to master it; it's also the language of the administration.

From these answers we can say that for Moore speakers, French has socio-economic advantages such as having a job, integrating the French-speaking community, being a medium

for understanding others and being understood, and being the language of education.

To question 21: between French and Mooré, which language is more important?

For the majority of respondents, French is the most important language (see [Table 1](#)).

## 4. Discussion

Analysis of the representations enables us to determine the role accorded to Mooré and French and the sociolinguistic implications of this situation.

### 4.1. Moore as a Language of Integration

Through the representations of Moore, we can say that it plays the role of a language of integration. Many of the people we interviewed feel that Moore is a language that conveys Moaaga culture, and a language that facilitates communication. To use the terminology of BAKER quoted by BRODAL [3] the motivations of Moore speakers' attitudes towards the Moore language are of an "integrative" nature. For Baker, quoted by (op.cit.), 'integrative attitudes are motivated by social and associative factors and are more concerned with identification and adhesion'. Since Moore is the majority language in the city of Ouagadougou, it is the language of intercomprehension for speakers of different ethnic groups who have not attended school. The percentage of those who think that Moore can help them find a job is mixed. This leads some to think that the moore has no advantage. It is therefore easy to understand why many Moore speakers want to learn French.

### 4.2. French: A Language of Openness

French has the advantage of being a language spoken in many countries. With trade and emigration, the population of Ouagadougou prefers to learn French. This gives them the advantage of hoping to open up to the outside world in order to increase their turnover or seek well-being. As the school is also an institution inherited from colonisation, its diplomas will be more recognised if they are awarded in the language of the colonists, as SENGHOR emphasised, as illustrated by NAPON [4]. Nowadays, openness is a necessity. With globalisation, the world has become a global village. This situation only accentuates the use and learning of French.

### 4.3. French as a Language with Socio-economic Advantages

We can say that Mooré is devalued in the sense that it has 'no socio-economic advantages'. In fact, French is the language that enables people to get a job. The job opportunities for people who express themselves well in Mooré are very limited compared to those offered by French.

This is why we increasingly understand the desire of literate people for bilingual education: Mooré-French.

With so many observations, the field of expression of Mooré is shrinking as the number of its speakers decreases. What's more, the civilisation of the city is reducing the scope for expression of the Mooré language, as the realities are increasingly alien to this language. Alongside French, Mooré offers fewer opportunities for social success.

No matter what your background or activity, you are obliged from time to time to express yourself in French, even if it is only approximate. It is imperative for Mooré speakers to have a basic knowledge of French in order to understand communications, which are increasingly influenced by French, if they want their business to prosper.

### 4.4. Acculturation

According to HAMERS and BLANC [5] 'acculturation is the state of an individual or a group that has lost all or part of its culture'. Acculturation manifests itself in the city through the abandonment of traditional realities, if not their denigration. Certain traditional practices are disappearing in favour of French culture. This confirms the position of certain authors. For NAPON [4] 'it should also be added that the fashion effect plays a decisive role in young people's decision to use French. According to them, anyone who does not speak French cannot evolve in today's society. Speaking French is synonymous with modernity and belonging to the country's ruling class. Those who spoke only the national languages were called 'archaic', 'villagers' and 'illiterate'.

This is why HOUIS [6] shows that: 'bilingualism is the manifestation, in terms of language use, of a cultural contact. It is therefore legitimate to consider it in relation to the notion of acculturation, all the more so as linguistic pluralism often goes hand in hand with cultural pluralism' According to our respondents, modernity rhymes with the French language. They want to belong to the French-speaking community. What's more, we're seeing the disappearance of so-called botanical first names. People with these names are the victims of ridicule.

However, these names could reveal a great deal of information, including circumstances of birth

So- tiisi: child born on the way.

The nature of the maternity Raoogo and Poko for twins.

This is where the diglossic relationship between Mooré and French comes into play. According to GARDY and LAFONT quoted by BOYER [7] 'diglossic functioning refers to a system of linguistic and extralinguistic values in which everything relating to the dominated language is both devalued and overvalued'.

Here, Mooré is seen as the language that fails to convey the realities of the city, and French tends to be appropriated by Mooré speakers.

This is why NINYOLES quoted by BOYER [7] points out that: 'This guilt-ridden situation, this feeling of shame, of

self-denigration is nothing more than an identification with the dominant sociolinguistic group'. However, the appropriation of the French language is merely the abandonment of the Moaaga culture to the detriment of French culture. For as NAPON [8] points out: 'speaking French is one way or another of appropriating the cultural values of this language, because no learning is innocent. So to appropriate the language of a community is to internalise the socio-cultural values of that community'.

#### 4.5. Linguistic Insecurity

Through usage and representations, we can say that Mooré is under threat. The skills of speakers are diminishing in favour of French. The environments par excellence for the use of Mooré are increasingly giving way to the use of French. The threat can be seen in the use of French terms as if they belonged to the Mooré language. Far from being a purist, we do not rule out the possibility that this could be a process of language dynamics. This situation could lead to a fusion between Mooré and French to produce an urban language. In any case, there is a threat to Mooré. According to BATIANA and DIARRA [9] linguistic insecurity is 'the state in which any speaker finds himself who, consciously or unconsciously, is not sure of his mastery of a language and who is consequently inhabited by a feeling of fear, confusion and doubt'. This definition gives us an idea of the situation of speakers of Mooré.

Through the various ways in which the Mooré language is used, it is clear that Mooré speakers are in a situation of linguistic insecurity. For the Mooré spoken in Ouagadougou, we have a lot of interference and alternation of codes where we find French terms often used without any phonetic change except for the addition of Mooré nominal or verbal morphemes.

This is why MACKEY [10] points out that 'there is no doubt that bilingualism acts on at least one of the languages and eventually modifies or eliminates it'. According to BAYLON [11] 'at the terminal stage of language decline, words borrowed from the dominant language are treated as quotations; they are poorly integrated into the phonological system and not at all into the morphological system; moreover, they are treated as normal words of the dominated language. These borrowings, which are not integrated at all, do not enrich the dominated language but simply replace native words.

This situation can be seen in the use of Mooré as a language. We think we speak Mooré but we express ourselves more in French, as Bernard KABORE [12] describes this way of expressing ourselves as 'franmooré', which is a mixture of French and Mooré. This way of expressing oneself may reflect linguistic incompetence. French terms (interférences) are used as part of the Mooré lexicon with the addition of verbal or nominal suffixes. Through the procedures we have listed, it is clear that Mooré

is in a situation of insecurity, because whether it be borrowings or alternations, the Mooré speaker often has the possibility of finding their correspondence, which often exists in his language. These expressions are often well-known terms in the language. This is why KAFANDO [13] describes certain borrowings as 'facultative'.

Some realities even designated in the Mooré language undergo a spontaneous translation to be better understood. We have the example of the Savane FM program "sãoore" where newspapers are read in the Mooré language. In order to be better understood, the use of neologisms is always accompanied by the translation of the type nasaar dāmb sēn bond "what is said in French" because even translated into Mooré we are not sure of being understood especially by young speakers. In addition, with code switching, we produce messages that we claimed to be in Mooré for wide distribution but which do not achieve their goal because they remain incomprehensible to a majority. These messages in our opinion should be the subject of a translation for non-schooled speakers. This is a fact that further explains the enthusiasm of Mooré speakers for the use of French. Indeed, this situation is growing so much that it is normal to understand French in addition to the Mooré language. These observations lead us to say that Mooré speakers, especially those in school, understand French better than Mooré. Nowadays, asking a Mooré speaker to express themselves in Mooré without alternating with French is asking the impossible, as evidenced by the responses to our survey where the respondents all state that one cannot express oneself in Mooré without resorting to code switching. On the other hand, it does not occur to a Mooré speaker in school to want to express themselves in French using Mooré terms. Even if this happens, these uses are significant. They do not often reflect linguistic incompetence. This is how certain terms have come to be used in French. We have among others:

-the pUg-pUusem: "the engagement"

/woman/greeting/

-the zu- pōndo "the funeral"

/head/shaved/

-the yi-kēere "ceremony that allows the king to enter the royal court"

/house/return/

In the case of the pUg-pUusem, it benefits from special consideration to the point that nowadays it has undergone a process of signing. We hear the P.P.S.

According to SORE [14] "the complexity of certain vehicular languages forces new speakers to resort to a simplified form. In other words, they will use the said language as they see fit without any respect for linguistic norms." Mooré is at an impasse: agree to open up and it goes towards a merger with French or close itself off and it goes towards certain death in the city of Ouagadougou. Each language adapts according to the sociolinguistic configurations of the moment and Mooré is not left out. The

problem in the case of Mooré is that this adaptation is done without support from the competent structures to allow Mooré to translate the new realities without defying its standards.

Thus, more and more, we see that it is easier for a schooled Moaaga to express himself in French than in Mooré. Indeed, in his words in Mooré we note a lot of alternations and linguistic interferences to the point that his words may not be understood by those who have a relatively low level. This situation is growing to the point that we can say that it is easier to ask Mooréphone speakers to express themselves in French than in Mooré. In the exchanges, even if they are in Mooré, they exclude certain individuals who would have a relatively low level of French. Language practices reflect the desire of Mooréphone speakers to belong to the French-speaking community. Nowadays, Mooréphone speakers want to express themselves in French because in Ouagadougou, those who do not express themselves in French exclude themselves in communications and this reflects a certain adaptation with regard to the sociolinguistic situation where French is used as a vehicular language in the city of Ouagadougou.

According to CALVET [1] "there is linguistic insecurity when speakers consider their way of speaking as not very flattering and another more prestigious model comes to mind, but they do not practice it". This definition emphasizes the representations that speakers may have about their language. In the context of our study, Moore-speaking speakers aspire to speak French, which is the language of social advancement. This is why some parents do not find it necessary to correct their children when they make mistakes or use too many French terms. This is how BAYLON [11] shows that: "young speakers of dominated languages are not sensitive to such "corruption" (speaking of influence) and older speakers abandon any idea of correcting them. This reflects a change in attitudes towards the language: the language that is dominated, declining, is not considered worthy of being transmitted correctly [...]" This constitutes a threat to the Mooré language when we know that the survival of one depends on linguistic transmission to children. If parents have difficulty expressing themselves correctly, what will it be like for the children? This situation is a consequence of the lack of socio-economic advantage of the Mooré language. The question of NAPON [6] is an illustration of this "how can we value it if it does not provide socio-economic advantage for learners?" This is why adults go to evening classes and literate people prefer to be literate in both Mooré and French languages. Here Mooré and French are in a situation of diglossia.

#### 4.6. Diglossia

DUBOIS [2] defines diglossia as "a bilingualism in which one of the two languages is of inferior socio-political status or the ability of an individual to fluently practice a language

other than his mother tongue. It is a situation of bilingualism where Mooré is supplanted by French because it is devalued in the sense that the latter has no "socio-economic advantage" as highlighted by NAPON [8] alongside French which is the language of social promotion. This is a situation that exposes the Mooré/French diglossia in the city of Ouagadougou despite being the language of the environment and spoken by the majority of Ouagalais. The attitudes of Mooré speakers show that the French language can allow them to have a job and to be well placed socially. This then explains the desire of Mooréphone speakers to learn and express themselves in French. To use the terminology of BAKER cited by BRODAL [3], the motivations for Mooréphones' attitudes towards French are of an "instrumental nature". According to BAKER cited by BRODAL [3] "if an attitude is of an instrumental orientation, it reflects pragmatic and utilitarian motives and is generally individualistic and self-oriented". The desire to have a job or become an important man through French are examples. French compensates for what it does not find in the Mooré language. Thus, the Mooré language allows integration and French plays the role of a cohesive language. French is considered the cohesive language in light of the responses on the importance of the French language and its systematic use in administrative circles. According to our respondents, French allows access to state institutions, to services in said structures and to have work. As an official language, it guarantees equal opportunities for academic success, to have work, to participate in the political life of one's locality and of the country in general. Then, it is the language that is unanimous, which allows to minimize the risk of communitarian or ethnic conflict. Thus, with French no ethnic group is favored over another. Finally, French is perceived as the language of social advancement. It is the language that allows one to have work consequently, to have money and to be well regarded in society. At the same time, French is the language that values its speaker, hence the strong appropriation of it by migrants. Which is not the case for Moore and the ethnic language of migrants. But can we talk about cohesion with a language understood by a minority?

#### 4.7. Proposal of Solutions

The introduction of our national languages in the education system is the condition for a harmonious development of our societies in the process of democracy and empowerment. In order to promote national languages and different cultures, we suggest to the government to establish a reliable policy for the promotion of national languages. This is imperative because in one way or another we learn the culture of the other through his language and we abandon our own. It is necessary to establish an education system where the three majority languages will be languages of instruction of choice in view of the diversity of the

population alongside French. With the dynamics of these languages, the appropriation of the majority languages remains necessary. The education system must result in maintenance. Maintenance according to MACKEY [10] "is what often happens when the two languages are widely spoken or are subject by the constitution to legal provisions that force schools to put the two languages on an equal footing. Maintenance models recognize the individual's right to keep his or her language of origin alongside the language of the majority or the State and the majority is expected to respect this right". This model allows the learner to "keep his or her identity and integrate into another culture" according to GFELLER quoted by NIKIEMA [15]. This model results in additive bilingualism where learners also use the majority language and the French language even if each ethnic group feels the need to keep its identity, this could be a short-term solution. Languages convey our traditions, our cultures, our values, our histories, etc., losing them would be a serious mistake. As NAPON pointed out, "African leaders must also understand that national unity in African countries is maintained by the high rate of bilingualism and the emergence of vehicular languages and not by French as they claim." [16] Then this could create bridges between those who are educated and the literate. Thus we will be able to promote our cultural and literary heritage: We have literate people who produce good documents in languages and this could increase the number of readers.

## 5. Conclusion

Our study focused on the representations of Mooré in the city of Ouagadougou. It emerges from our study that the Mooré language is devalued in the city of Ouagadougou. It is used in non-formal communication situations. It is in a situation of diglossia with French, which is an international language and the language of social promotion. This diglossia is in favor of the French language, so much so that it dangerously influences the Mooré language. This influence is reinforced by the increasingly devaluing representations of the Mooré language. For Mooré speakers, Mooré is limited compared to their expectations. French has the advantage of being the official language of Burkina Faso, which makes it a solution to the mutual understanding of all Burkinabe. It emerges that Mooré speakers in the city of Ouagadougou are in a situation of linguistic insecurity and a very increased acculturation. This study has allowed us to state with certainty that the Mooré language and Moaaga culture must be promoted in the city of Ouagadougou. But this is insufficient because this situation affects all languages through modernity and schooling conveyed by the French language. The example of the city of Ouagadougou is one example among many others where the domination of the French language is unchallenged. It is imperative to introduce national languages into the education system to preserve national languages and the different cultures that

constitute the foundations for the development of our country.

## Abbreviations

INSS	Institut des Sciences des Sociétés
E.	Enquêteur
P.P.S	Pvg-pvusem

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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