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# Contrastive Analysis of the French-Gbari Segmental Phonologies

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## Abstract

The structure of a learner's first language affects his acquisition of a second one, especially a foreign one like French. This paper presents a segmental contact between French and Gbari languages, with a view to empirically ascertain their points of convergence and divergence, using the Lado's Contrastive Analysis model. It bridges the gap created by lack/inadequacy of academic validation in the French-Gbari segmental contact, hinging on secondary sources of data as well as on quantitative and qualitative analyses of data. Given the 68%-24% segmental difference ratio (SDR) French has over Gbari, such as /y/, /œ/, /ø/, /ʁ/, /ɲ/, /ɔ̃/, /œ̃/, /ɑ̃/, /ə/, /ɥ/, /ɛ/, /ɛ̃/, etc., coupled with the predictable phonological processes such as (de)nasalisation, palatalization, assimilation, delabialisation etc., the Gbari French-Learner (GFL) may have to relentlessly study and enthusiastically double his efforts so as to overcome the seemingly insurmountable challenges. The paper ends by recommending that second language teachers should engage in instant one-on-one approach in correcting phonetic flaws with students/learners.

**Keywords:** French-Gbari Phonologies, Second Language Acquisition, Segmental Analysis, Phonological Processes, Contrastive Analysis.

## Introduction

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) which implies both theory and methodology, states that the structure of the learners' L1 affects the acquisition/learning of their L2 in the sense that whenever there are similarities, the L2 learning is facilitated and whenever there are differences, the learning process is difficult. Formulated in Robert Lado's *Linguistics across Cultures* (1957), Contrastive Analysis (CA) provides a comprehensive theoretical treatment and suggests a systematic set of technical procedures for the contrastive study of languages: describing the languages (using structuralist linguistics), comparing them, and predicting learning difficulties. CA, along with behaviouralism and structuralism, exerted a profound effect on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) curriculum design and language teacher education, and provided the theoretical pillars of the audio-lingual method. Robert Lado (1915-1995) was an American linguist with parents who were Spanish immigrants and who relocated to Spain before he had the chance to learn English. At 21, he returned to the US and began to learn English as an adult. This afforded him the opportunity to develop

understanding of and sensitivity to the challenges confronting immigrants and speakers of other languages learning English (French in this case) as a second (or foreign) language.

**Statement of the Problem**

A teacher once had a challenge with his Gbari French-Learner (GFL, henceforth) who had issues with his French pronunciation and wanted to get a research work to help him identify areas of difference/divergence but no research came in handy as little or no attention has been paid to a contrastive study of the French-Gbari segmental phonologies. This paper therefore, presents a segmental analysis of French and Gbari languages in the area of phonology with a view to empirically validating and ascertaining their areas of similarities and differences, so as to bring to the fore research of this nature to those in need of it.

**Research Questions**

This paper tends to address the following questions:

i. What segmental similarities and differences are there between French and Gbari consonant sounds?
ii. What are the areas of convergence and divergence in the French-Gbari vocalic inventories?
iii. What possible/predictable phonological processes could the French-Gbari segmental contact trigger?

**Research Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this paper is to bridge the gap created by lack/inadequacy of empirical/academic validation in the French-Gbari segmental contact. This aim is embedded in the following objectives which seek to:

i. Elucidate the areas of similarities and differences between French and Gbari consonant sounds;
ii. Explain the points of convergence and divergence in the French-Gbari vocalic inventories; and
iii. Suggest possible or predictable phonological processes this contact may trigger.

## Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on secondary sources of data collection, as well as on quantitative and qualitative analyses. While the quantitative analysis delves on percentages, the qualitative analysis captures the theoretical framework of Lado's Contrastive Analysis of description of languages, analysis of data and prediction of possible challenges. Consonants are theoretically analysed based on their manner of articulation (plosives, fricatives, affricates etc) while vowels are based on their tongue position (front, central and back).

**Conceptual Literature Review**

Conceptual review of literature for this section includes contact linguistics, foreign language acquisition, mother-tongue interference, contrastive analysis vs error analysis, and the Gbari people and language.

**Contact Linguistics**

Contact Linguistics is the study of language contact. Language contact occurs when speakers of two or more languages/varieties interact with and influence each other. Language contact can occur at language borders between adstratum languages or as a result of migration with an intrusive language acting as either a superstratum or a sunstratum. In some cases, when speakers of different languages interact, a new contact language may be created such as a pidgin, creole or mixed language (Hickey R., 2010; Thomason & Kaufman, 1988).

**Foreign Language Acquisition**

Foreign language acquisition refers, according to sciencedirect.com, to the process of learning a language that is not native to an individual, typically through formal education or leisure activities, with the aim of either achieving educational goals or enhancing communication skills in a globalised world. The world has become small with the technological inventions. As a result, foreign language acquisition becomes paramount to be able to navigate through the fast digitalised world.

**Mother-Tongue Interference**

Onah & Onwuegbuchunam (2023) posits that language learners often produce errors of syntax and pronunciation thought to result from the influence of their mother tongue (L1), pronouncing certain sounds incorrectly or with difficulty and confusing items of vocabulary known as false friends (false cognates). French contains a number of sounds and sound distinctions not present in some other languages (Ade-Ojo, 2012) such as Gbari which a target language in this paper. Speakers' languages without these sounds may have problems both with hearing and pronouncing them.

**Contrastive Analysis vs Error Analysis**

Sangotade (2014) posits that these are main approaches for the studying and overcoming of interference. The empirical juxtaposition of languages is one of the most rational approaches for improvement in foreign language teaching. This juxtaposition occurs on the levels of system (as in this paper), norm and usage. Speech errors fall under the category of language production, and types are exchange errors, perseveration, anticipation, shift, substitution, blends, additions and deletions (Caroll, 1986; Sangotade, 2014).

**The Gbari People and Language**

With an estimated population of twelve million spread in four States (Niger, Kaduna, Nasarawa and the FCT) and located in thirty Local Government Areas, the Gbari or Gbagyi people are an ethnic group found predominantly in Central Nigeria/the Middle-Belt. It is also the name of the language with two dialects. It is one of the most populated ethnic groups in the Middle-Belt and indigenous in the FCT. The Osu (king) is the highest tier of authority in a Gbari settlement and assisted by a group of elders. The language is part of the Kwa sub-division of the Niger-Congo language family, specifically the Benue-Congo sub-family (Chigudu, 2008; Thomas-Emeagwal, 1989; and Dada, 2022).

## Review of Related Works

Various studies have been churned out as regards French and African languages such as Edo, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Efik, Ibibio, Twi, Swahili etc and even English, a European language. in an attempt to identify areas of difficulty for the L1 learner of French as put forth by Dada (2022) where she corroborates with James (1980) and Chesterman (1998) that contrastive analysis comprises two major processes such as description and comparison. According to them, languages' potential difficulties for learners are predicted from the differences and the extent to which the languages are alike are evenly seen from their similarities.

In his work titled *Contrastive Analysis of French and Hausa Segmental Phonologies,* Mohammed (2008), not only highlights areas of consonantal and vocalic differences between the languages, but also compares their phonological processes such as assimilation, palatalization, deletion, nasalisation etc, making use of the Generative Phonology. He reveals that Hausa has 33 consonant sounds and eight vowel sounds, as opposed to French 21 consonants and 16 vowels (Omage, 2022). In addition, he attests that there are 17 consonants present in Hausa but absent in French. These consonants, mostly implosives, are /ɓ, ɸ, ts, ɗ, ƙ, h, Φj, ƙw, ƙj, ɣ, ʔ, kw, gw, ć, kj, gj and ʔj/ and they pose as segmental constraints to the native French learner of Hausa, since Hausa, as seen above, has a consonantal inventory that is greater than that of French. Fifteen consonant phonemes feature in both languages and they are: /b, m, t, d, l, r, h, z, ʃ, ʒ (ʤ), j, k, w and s/. Considering the vowel phonemes in Hausa, he postulates that all vowel phonemes in Hausa are absent in French. These vowels are: /e:, a:, ʊ:, o:, revealing that Hausa long and tense vowels are short and tense in French. He highlights the fact that the Native Hausa Learner of French (NHLF) has the tendency to lengthen the French vowels in his realisations.

On the flip side, he points out that out the 19 consonant phonemes that exist in French, there are three absent in Hausa, namely: /p, f and v/. The absence of these in the NHLF's phonemic inventory may result in some segmental constraints, leading to substitution which he may substitute with the closest substitute like /p and f/ for /Φ/ and /v/ for /ɓ/. The phoneme /ŋ/ is not featured in Hausa but due to the influence of English, the NHLF may reflect an orthographic realisation *gn* whereby the *g* and *n* combine to give the phoneme /ŋ/

in French. He concludes that because of these substitutions, the NHLF ends up interfering with meanings such as:

a. [fo] (faux) "wrong" > [Φo:] > [po] (pot) "pot/jug"
b. [fu] (fou) "mad" > [Φu:] > [pu] (pou) 'louse'

As for vocalic phonemes, he discovers these French vowels /y, i, o, ʊ, e, œ, ɛ and ə/ are absent in Hausa, resulting also in segmental constraints but do not necessarily impede meaning.

Furthermore, contrastive analyses were carried out among Igala (Unubi, 2019), Tiv (Nwabudike et al, 2015), Jukun (Tsojon & Aji, 2014) speakers of English. Since English and French are members of the Indo-European language family, one can deduce areas of convergence and divergence with more attention paid to the latter.

**Data Presentation**

The data for this study were retrieved from secondary sources, precisely journals by earlier researchers and are presented first in charts, then in tables in order to describe the language, following the CA model.

**The French Consonant Chart**

There are 21 consonant sounds in the French segmental inventory, as shown in the chart below:

| | | Labial | Labio-dental | Alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Uvular |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Nasal** | | /m/ | | /n/ | /ɲ/ | /ŋ/ | |
| **Plosive** | **Voiceless** | /p/ | | /t/ | | /k/ | |
| | **Voiced** | /b/ | | /d/ | | /g/ | |
| **Fricative** | **Voiceless** | | /f/ | /s/ | /ʃ/ | | |
| | **Voiced** | | /v/ | /z/ | /ʒ/ | | |
| **Approximant** | **Plain** | | | /l/ | /j/ | | /ʁ/ |
| | **Rounded** | | | | /ɥ/ | /w/ | |

Fougeron et al (1993), Grevisse et al (2011), Berns (2013), Asika, (2016), Omage, 2022.

**The French Vowel Chart**

There are 12 pure vowel and four nasal vowel sounds in French, making a total of 16 vowel sounds as shown in the chart below:

| | | Front | | Central | Back |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Unrounded | Rounded | | |
| Close | Oral | /i/ | /y/ | | /u/ |
| Close-mid | | /e/ | /ø/ | /ə/ | /o/ |
| Open-mid | | /ɛ/ (ɛː) | /œ/ | | /ɔ/ |
| | Nasal | /ɛ̃/ | /œ̃/ | | /ɔ̃/ |
| Open | | | | | /ɑ̃/ |
| | Oral | /a/ | | | /ɑ/ |

Fougeron et al (1993), Grevisse et al (2011), Berns (2013), Asika, (2016), Omage (2022)

**The Gbari Consonant Chart**

There are 26 consonant sounds in Gbari and these are given in the chart below:

| | Bilabial | Labio-dental | Alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Labio-velar | Glottal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plosive | /p/ /b/ | | /t/, ts /d/ | /ch/ /j/ | /k/ /g/ | /kp/ /gb/ | |
| Implosive | /ɓ/ | | /ɗ/ | | | | |
| Fricative | | /f/ /v/ | /s/ /z/ | /sh/ /zh/ | | | /h/ |
| Nasal | /m/ | | /n/ | | | | |
| Approx. | | | /l/r/ | /y/ | /w/ | | |

Sourced from Philip & Sheshi (2004), Dada (2022)

**The Gbari Vowel Chart**

Gbari has five vowel sounds and these are given in the chart below:

| | Front | Central | Back |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | /i/ | | /u/ |
| Mid | /e/ | | /o/ |
| Low | | /ɑ/ | |

Sourced from Philip & Sheshi (2004), Dada (2022)

**Table 1:** French and Gbari Comparison of Consonants

| French | Example | Gloss | Gbari | Example | Gloss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| /p/ | père | father | /p/ | Pies | Chicken |
| /b/ | belle | beautiful | /b/ | Bà | To read |
| /f/ | faim | hunger | /f/ | Efà | Day |
| /v/ | vrai | true | /v/ | Vnùvnu | Whirlwind |
| /m/ | mer | sea | /m/ | Ma | To give birth |
| /n/ | nager | To swim | /n/ | Ená | fire |
| /t/ | terre | earth | /t/ | Tu | vomit |
| /d/ | dame | lady | /d/ | Da | To say |
| /s/ | soeur | sister | /s/ | Esugi | tomorrow |
| /z/ | poison | poison | /z/ | Zù | To finish |
| /l/ | lait | milk | /l,r/ | Lá/rá | To take |

**Table 1. Contd**

| French | Example | Gloss | Gbari | Example | Gloss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| /ɲ/ | montagne | mountain | - | - | - |
| /ʃ/ | chèvre | goat | /sh/ | Shies | To sit |
| /ʒ/ | bonjour | Good day | /zh/ | Zhàgbà | pepper |
| /j/ | milliard | billion | /ɣ/ | | |
| /ŋ/ | parking | park | - | - | - |
| /k/ | Sac | bag | /k/ | Kalá | strength |
| /g/ | guerre | war | /g/ | Ga | To scatter |
| /w/ | Oui | yes | /w/ | | |
| /ʁ/ | rendezvous | appointment | /r,l/ | Lá | To take |
| - | - | - | /kp/ | Kpàko | door |
| - | - | - | /gb/ | Gbangba | duck |
| - | - | - | /ɗ/ | ɗari | tamarind |
| - | - | - | /ɓ/ | | |
| - | - | - | /h/ | Ché | To throw |
| - | - | - | /j/ | Jata | pebbles |
| - | - | - | /ts/ | Etsi | yam |

**Table 2:** French and Gbari Vowel Comparison

| French | Example | Gloss | Gbari | Example | Gloss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| /i/ | S**i** | Yes | /i/ | si | To buy |
| /y/ | T**u** | You | - | - | - |
| /e/ | **é**lève | pupil | /e/ | te | To cut |
| /a/ | S**a** | His/her | /a/ | sá | To tear |
| /œ/ | s**œu**r | sister | - | - | - |
| /ø/ | **Eu**rope | Europe | - | - | - |
| /ɑ/ | p**as** | Step | - | - | - |
| /ə/ | p**e**tit | small | - | - | - |
| /ɔ/ | s**o**leil | Sun | - | - | - |
| /o/ | drap**eau** | Flag | /o/ | zo | To finish |
| /u/ | t**ou**jour | always | /u/ | wu | To show |
| /ɛ/ | él**è**ve | pupil | - | - | - |
| /œ̃/ | **un** | a / one | - | - | - |
| ɑ̃ | l**en**t | slow | - | - | - |
| /ɔ̃/ | b**on** | good | - | - | - |
| /ɛ̃/ | f**in** | end | - | - | - |

## Data Analysis

First and foremost, it is pertinent to say that this section explains the analysis of the two languages in line with CA. As earlier mentioned in the French-Hausa analysis, the Gbari consonant inventory is greater than that of French while French vowel inventory, on the other hand, is greater than Gbari's, as shown in Tables 1 and 2 above. In Gbari, there are 26

consonants comprising plosives, implosives, fricatives, nasals and approximants for its manner of articulation, and labials, labio-dentals, alveolars, palatals, velars, labio-velars and the glottal as places of articulation. In addition, the Gbari five-vowel inventory, consisting of front, central and back in the position of the tongue has the features high, mid and low in the height of the tongue with two rounded vowels and three unrounded ones. All vowels in Gbari are short. (Philip and Sheshi, 2004; Dada, 2022). On the contrary, French has 21 consonants with bilabials, labio-dentals, alveolars, palatals, velars, and uvular in the places of articulation; and plosives, fricatives, nasals and approximants as manner of articulation. These are analysed in the sub-sections below:

**Manner of Articulation**

i. **Plosives**

From the sound's charts given, it can be seen that French has six plosives, namely: /p, b, t, d, k and g/ while Gbari possesses eleven /p, b, t, ts, d, ch, j, k, g, kp and gb/. The Gbari implosives /ɓ and ɗ /, according to Dada (2022), can also be described as plosives because of the explosive sound they make at the place of articulation which are the upper and lower lips, and the front of the tongue and the alveolar ridge respectively.

ii. **Fricatives**

The Gbari fricatives are seven, namely: /f, v, s, z, sh, zh and h/. French has six fricatives such as /f, v, s, z, ʃ, ʒ and (x), depending on the environment. Though, the French fricatives /ʃ/, /ʒ/ and Gbari fricatives /sh/ and /zh/ are produced alike, the phonetic symbols are different. So the Gbari French learner will have no difficulty in producing them. The phoneme /h/ that exists in Ghari exists only orthographically in French; it is either aspirated or unaspirated in words, e.g.:

a. Le héros /lə eʁo/ ⟶ Aspirated
b. L'homme /lɔm/ ⟶ Unaspirated

The difference in the two expressions above is the aspiration of the first as seen in the separate pronunciation of the 'le' article and the combination of 'l'' while the similarity is the absence of the phoneme /h/ in the two transcriptions. The GFL may pronounce the letter 'h' in French words while the French Gbari-learner may aspirate the 'h' instead of pronouncing it in Gbari words.

iii. **Affricates**

French does not have affricates but Gbari has and they are part of the Gbari plosives /ch/ and /j/ which are similar to the English /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ respectively.

iv. **Nasals**

French has four nasals /m, n, ɲ and ŋ/ while Gbari has two /m and n/. This means that the French voiced palatal nasal /ɲ/ and the voiced velar nasal /ŋ/ are absent in Gbari, implying that the GFL may encounter difficulties in their realisations. The voiced velar nasal /ŋ/ has found its way into French due to the influence of English in the world, being the number one language in global affairs (Omage, 2022). The influx of English words such as parking, meeting etc. has found a base in French.

v. **Lateral**

Gbari and French share the same lateral /l/, though it does not interchange with the /r/ sound as in Gbari. This interchange may pose a challenge for the Paigo dialect speaker of Gbari.

vi. **Approximants**

The Gbari approximants and laterals are four and are all together and referred to as 'approximants'. They are /l, r, ɣ and w/. In Gbari, /l/ and /r/ are used interchangeably and that explains why both are featured on the same spot in the chart without tampering with meaning, depending on the dialect of the language. For instance, in Paigo dialect, 'you' is pronounced as 'heré' while in Guara dialect, it is 'helé'. The palatal approximant /j/ is represented by the /ɣ/ sound in Gbari. They are pronounced the same way: /j/ for 'yes'; /ɣ/ for 'ya' (to throw) (Dada, 2022).

On the other hand, French has five approximants. The voiced uvular approximant /ʁ/ is the standard one among all the French rhotics. The French rhotic /r/ has different dialectal realisations: the voiceless uvular fricative [x] realised with a voiceless obstruent and at the end of a sentence or in a voiceless environment; the Parisian voiced uvular fricative [R]; the Standard French voiced uvular approximant /ʁ/; the voiced alveolar trill [r]; and the plain alveolar tap [ɾ]. The standard phoneme is produced by raising the back of the tongue towards the uvula (Fougeron et al, 1993; Omage, 2022) and spelt with the letters *r* and *rr* as seen in the examples below:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| dérange | /deʁɑ̃ʒ/ | 'disturb' |
| arrondir | /aʁɔ̃diʁ/ | 'to round off' |

From the consonant chart above, it can be observed that the standard rhotic /ʁ/ navigates between frication (fricative) and approximation (approximant). One fact of incontrovertible stance is that it is not a pure fricative like the Parisian /R/ employed in Sangotade (2014). So, its production does not involve a turbulent and noisy airflow from the lungs. This paper adopts the standard French rhotic /ʁ/ and it is employed here as an approximant. The other French approximants are /j, ɥ and w/. The approximants /ɥ and ʁ/ are absent in Gbari and as a result, the Gbari may encounter challenges speaking Standard French.

**Vowels**

As earlier mentioned, Gbari has just five vowels and are all pure: two front vowels /i/ and /e/; one central vowel /ɑ/; and two back vowels /o/ and /u/. French, on the flip side, has sixteen vowels including twelve pure ones and four nasal ones.

i. **Front Vowels**

The front vowels in French are / i, y, e, ø, ɛ, ɛ̃, œ, œ̃ and a/ while the front vowels in Gbari are /i/ and /e/. Invariably, out of the nine French front vowels, Gbari has just two that are similar as seen above. This means that the remaining seven may pose as a challenge for the Gbari learner of a foreign language such as French.

**ii. Central Vowel**

French and Gbari have just one but different central vowel each. The French central neutral vowel, otherwise known as le schwa /ʃva/ /ə/ is different from the Gbari central unrounded vowel /ɑ/.

**iii. Back Vowels**

There are six back vowels in French, namely: /ɑ, ɑ̃, ɔ, ɔ̃, o and u/ while Gbari has two, namely: /o/ and /u/. It is noticeable that the French back vowel /ɑ/ is Gbari's central vowel. Consequently, the learner may have a challenge in realising it in French since the position of the tongue differs.

**Statistical Representation of French-Gbari Segments**

| | C | V | CV | CD | VD | CVD | %CD | %VD | %CVD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **French** | 21 | 16 | 37 | 05 | 12 | 17 | 11% | 57% | 68% |
| **Gbari** | 26 | 05 | 31 | 09 | 01 | 10 | 19% | 5% | 24% |

*C=consonants, V=vowels, CV=consonants and vowels, CD=consonant difference, VD=vowel difference, CVD=consonant and vowel difference.

## Discussion of Findings

This section explains the findings in the work and the predictable segmental challenges and phonological processes a GFL may encounter, in line with the CA model. Regarding the plosives of both languages, it is discovered that Gbari has all the French plosives in its consonant inventory. As a result, the learner of French as a Foreign Language (FLE, henceforth) will have no difficulty (all things been equal) in pronouncing words like: **p**ère (father), **b**onjour (good morning), a**tt**ends (wait), **d**emain (tomorrow), **qu**and (when) and **g**ateau (cake). In the same vein, the fricatives of both languages are almost alike except that GFL may be tempted to produce the voiceless glottal fricative /h/ in words like héros (hero), heure (hour). As such, instead of producing 'le héros' /lə eʁo/, he produces [lə **h**eʁo] without bearing in mind that /h/ does not appear anywhere in French transcription, even though it could be aspirated. As for the French nasals, the learner may have no problems with /m/ and /n/ since they exist in Gbari, but may have challenges with /ɲ/ and /ŋ/ as they don't exist in Gbari. He may substitute it by dropping the letter 'g' in the grapheme 'gn' and produces just 'n' in words like: 'monta**gn**e' /mɔ̃ta**ɲ**/ (mountain) as [mɔ̃ta**n**]. As for the English voiced velar nasal /ŋ/ borrowed by French and found in words like parki**ng** /paʁki**ŋ**/, meeti**ng** /miti**ŋ**/, the GFL who speaks English fluently will have no problems producing them. Those with challenges may just give a simple alveolar nasal /n/. The Paigo-Gbari French-learner will switch the alveolar lateral /l/ with the alveolar trill /r/ due to the variety of Gbari he speaks and as a result, words like **l**igne /**l**iɲ/ 'line', **l**éger /**l**eʒe/ as [**r**iɲ], [**r**eʒe] respectively, thereby, tampering with meaning. As mentioned earlier, the French uvular approximants/semi-consonant/ʁ/ and the rounded palatal approximant /ɥ/ are both absent in Gbari. The GFL may substitute /ʁ/ with /r/and /ɥ/ with /u/ in the following words: **r**êve /**ʁ**ɛv/ [**r**ɛv] 'dream' and l**u**i /l**ɥ**i/ [l**u**i] 'him/her'.

The vowel findings are a lot more profound because of the large difference in their vocalic inventories. The French front vowels both pure and nasal, such as /y, ø, ɛ, ɛ̃, œ and œ̃/ may pose a lot of challenges for the GFL. Essentially, it may be difficult to pronounce words such as the ones in the table below without making palatalisations and assimilations towards the adjacent sounds:

| FRENCH | UR | GLOSS | SR Possible |
|---|---|---|---|
| b**u**vable | /b**y**vabl/ | Drinkable | [b**u**vabl] or [bj**u**vabl] |
| nev**eu** | /nəv**ø**/ | Nephew | [nəv**o**] |
| S**oeu**r | /s**œ**ʁ/ | Sister | [s**ɛ**r] or [s**ɛ**] |
| parf**um** | /paʁf**œ̃**/ | Perfume | [paf**um**] |

*UR = Underlying Representation (Phonemic representation)
SR = Surface Representation (Phonetic representation)

The words 'buvable' from the table may be pronounced [buvabl or bjuvabl], thereby making it a back vowel or palatalised; 'soeur' may be produced as [sɛ], thereby making it unrounded; 'neveu' may be realised as [nəvo], thereby making it a back counterpart.
The four French nasal vowels /ɛ̃/, /œ̃/, /ɑ̃/ and /ɔ̃/ are completely absent in Gbari. Instances of denasalisation may occur as the learner finds it difficult to produce them as in the words below:

| FRENCH | UR | GLOSS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|
| P**ain** | /p**ɛ̃**/ | 'bread' | [p**ɛn**] |
| **Un** | /**œ̃**/ | 'one/a' | [**ɔn**] |
| **An**ge | /**ɑ̃**ʒ/ | 'angel' | [**ɑn**ʒ] |
| B**on**jour | /bɔ̃ʒuʁ/ | 'good morning' | [bɔ**n**ʒu(r)] |

The cases of denasalisation above are predictable because the GRL may elongate the vowels, thereby breaking the nasality and giving the component sounds as in English. The case of Sangotade (2014) in his thesis is a good example where Ijebu French-learners elongated the nasal vowels, thereby making them lose their nasality.
Some predictable phonological processes during the interaction of the two languages include assimilation, palatalisation, substitution, delabialisation, nasalisation and denasalisation.

## Conclusion

This paper has, according to the model of Contrastive Analysis, described, analysed and predicted possible areas where a Gbari French-Learner might have challenges in acquiring French as a second/foreign language. With the 68%-24% segmental difference ratio French has over Gbari, coupled with the predictable phonological processes engendered by the French-Gbari contact, the challenges to be encountered will be relatively high for the GFL.

However, with persistent study and relentless enthusiasm, opportunities to overcome the challenges are not far-fetched. Teachers of second language acquisition such as French are enjoined to avail themselves of this study in order to adopt a methodology (such as a one-on one contact, minimal pairs drill etc.) that best soothes the teaching of French to a Gbari learner.

**Recommendations**

This paper focuses on the segmental differences between French and Gbari, and the resultant phonological processes, with a view to predicting the level of difficulty a learner may encounter. However, this triggers other areas for future researches on French-Gbari segmental studies such as investigating the impact of these phonological differences on fluency and comprehension.

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