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ASSESSING L1 COMPETENCE DECLINE AMONG YORUBA-ENGLISH BILINGUAL UNDERGRADUATES AT USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO

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Abstract: This study sets out to investigate the extent of lack of competence in Yoruba among Yoruba-English bilingual undergraduates at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. A mixed-methods approach was adopted for interpretations to be drawn based on the combined strengths of both datasets (i.e., quantitative and qualitative data). 123 participants, 76 males, and 47 females, completed the questionnaires, while interviews were conducted with 11 participants, 8 males and 3 females, to validate their self-assessment and gain a deeper understanding of their language abilities through open-ended questions and direct observations. Quantitative data analysis involved frequency and percentage calculations, with subsequent interpretation and discussion. Qualitative analysis entailed transcribing the interviews, interpreting the responses, and discussing the findings. Both quantitative and qualitative results were compared, and the extent to which they confirmed each other was established. Findings show that a substantial number of participants exhibited a moderate ability in their L1. Although both the current and the earlier studies point towards the decline in Yoruba competence among the young generation, particularly compared to the older generation, the current study delves deeper into participants' competence levels through various tasks like speaking, translating, and interpreting idioms. The coverage of areas such as numeracy, days of the week, and months of the year is unique to this study as they have not been previously explored.
Keywords: *language competence; Yoruba; English; bilingual undergraduates; language endangerment*

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a vehicle for communication (Khammari, 2023; Kemertelidze & Kacharava, 2015; Nasution, 2022) and a repository of culture and identity (AlShammari, 2018). In Nigeria, the coexistence of numerous languages has created a context where bi/multilingualism is common (Hadejia, 2022; Tanyi & Okune, 2020; Ovu & Anyanwu, 2019), with English often playing a significant role due to its status as an official language (Mishina & Iskandar, 2019), and a lingua franca. However, the dominant use of English has brought about an influence that negatively impacts the linguistic competence of many Yoruba youths who are bilingual in English. Erton (2017) notes that competence is perhaps one of the most debated terms in the history of linguistics. It can be understood as a subconscious schema existing within individuals' minds—an underlying organizational pattern, a conceptual framework enabling individuals to perform daily actions. The notion of competence began with Chomsky's work: Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (1965), where he draws a distinction between the knowledge of a language and the actual use of that language (Laabidi et al, 2023). Competence in a language extends to all aspects of that language. In other words, it is not merely about basic vocabulary and grammar; it encompasses a comprehensive understanding of various linguistic elements that contribute to effective communication and cultural identity. In Yoruba, like other languages of the world, numbers, days, and months, have their own expressions. Their knowledge, including lexicons and idiomatic expressions, are all vital components of language competence as they are crucial parts that constitute a language. The consequences of lacking or losing competence in these areas are far-reaching. In practical terms, a deficiency in the counting system of a language, months of the year, and days of the week can hinder effective communication, especially when an interlocutor uses these words in conversation, and the one who is

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spoken to only guesses what they mean or does not understand at all. Additionally, a reduced vocabulary restricts one's ability to express complex ideas and understand others, while a lack of idiomatic knowledge can impede culturally and contextually rich expressions. This study will provide insights into the extent of lack of competence in Yoruba among Yoruba-English bilingual undergraduates at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, and compare its findings with previous studies conducted on the phenomenon in different contexts to detect any variations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The contemporary Yoruba society values literacy and takes pride in being associated with the language in which it is practiced. Fabunmi and Salawu (2005) state that a high level of literacy in English should not lead to the decline of indigenous languages like Yoruba. Focusing on the attitudes of the elite, they note that English has become a status symbol, which contributes to the ongoing discouragement of its usage in many elite households. This trend is attributed to the belief that speaking Yoruba might signify lower social standing. Traditional Yoruba greetings are replaced by simpler ones like "Hi/Hello" as elite families are no longer familiar with them. This attitude is then passed down to their children, resulting in a detachment from their language.

Traditional Yoruba market transaction vocabulary is now being replaced by English loanwords, and there is a significant increase in code-switching and code-mixing among the populace (Fabunmi & Salawu, 2005). Oluwaseun (2018) confirms Fabunmi and Salawu's observations. The researcher investigates the impact of Yoruba-English code-mixing on the Yoruba language by administering questionnaires to Yoruba-English bilinguals from the University of Ilorin and concludes that Yoruba-English code-mixing has led to the loss of several Yoruba lexical items among native speakers, often stemming from limited competence in the first language. It is important, however, to note that code-mixing and code-switching as products of language contact are common practices in multilingual environments and have been reported in various studies as a sign of language competence. For example, Aldalbahy (2022) finds that code-switching is not a sign of language incompetence among Saudi female students, but rather a tool that the majority of participants preferred while speaking with bilinguals. Similarly, Yow et al, (2017) report that code-switching does not indicate linguistic incompetence among Mandarin bilingual children, but rather a strong indication of linguistic competence. Code-mixing specifically, as claimed by Fabunmi and Salawu and reported by Oluwaseun has diluted the purity of Yoruba which is evident in the gradual decline of the competence of Yoruba-English bilingual youths. In a similar study, it has been noted that early signs of language loss can be noticeable in the form of borrowings, as language erosion sometimes manifests through the infusion of words from a dominant language as in the case of Pollapese, an indigenous language of the people of Pollap Island, located in Chuuk State, whose speakers pepper their conversation with English or Lagoon Chuukese words, even when there is an available Pollapese term (Guérin & Yourupi, 2017). Also, in Vanuatu, where the Mavea language is at risk of vanishing given that of the mere 30 remaining Mavea speakers, only a couple of elders had a robust knowledge of the fairly complex native counting system (Guérin & Yourupi, 2017).

It is often difficult for multilingual mato to maintain a conversation in one language (Amamah et al, 2021). However, a language speaker's linguistic knowledge remains insufficient if they cannot fluently count or understand the manipulations in the numeral system of their language, or know the indispensable and everyday vocabulary in it. Some lexicons in Yoruba are currently undergoing erosion, as discovered by Adeniyi and Olaogun (2020). In their study, they found reduced lexical resources among the young generation of Yoruba speakers.

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Out of the 94 words tested, 21 (22.3%) are reported as obsolete, 41 (43.6%) are reported as obsolescent, and only 32 (34%) are reported to be in active use among the participants.

Idioms and proverbs in Yoruba are also disappearing, and this illustrates the endangered state of this aspect of the language (Oyinloye, 2016). The study conducts a survey among 100 Yoruba native speakers from the younger generation aged 15 to 30 in various states. Unfortunately, only half of the selected sample could provide five idioms and proverbs each out of the minimum of ten required. Some did not produce any, while others incorrectly provided modified versions of the originals with incorrect meanings. Many respondents cited a lack of exposure to Yoruba in their upbringing, as English was spoken at home. Others acknowledged the use of Yoruba at home but reported a lack of idiom usage by their parents as the reason for their lack of knowledge.

The Notion of Competence

Theories of competence hold significant relevance in the context of second language learning. These encompass three types of competencies: linguistic competence, communicative competence, and interactional competence. They have played a pivotal role in teaching, learning, and testing in the realm of second language acquisition (Abdulrahman & Abu-Ayyash, 2019). Language testing involves evaluating someone's knowledge in using a language (Hossain & Ahmed, 2015). Although the need for formal language testing is more prominent in L2 contexts to assess the learner's progress, language evaluation can be carried out on L1; albeit the reasons and methods may differ in that the acquisition of L1 is "a subconscious process" (Ar-Rabbi, 2015).

In 1965, Chomsky put forth the concept of linguistic competence, describing it as the capacity of native speakers to construct properly structured sentences. However, Chomsky's definition of linguistic competence was subject to questioning due to its constraints (Abdulrahman & Abu-Ayyash, 2019), particularly in the context where communication extends beyond the mere knowledge of creating well-structured sentences (Abdulrahman & Abu-Ayyash, 2019). This led to the development of the theory of communicative competence by Hymes (1972). Communicative competence encompasses not only knowledge of language forms and structures but also the use of language in real social situations (Whyte, 2019). Expanding on the concept of communicative competence, interactional competence explicates a range of abilities for employing language to accomplish social interactions. This includes the ability to discern when, how, and with whom to participate in conversational activities. It also entails a grasp of linguistic resources, pragmatic skills, and the communicative roles pertinent to specific discursive practices (Kecskes et al, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is language endangerment. A language is in danger when it is less used. A gradual decline in the competence of speakers of a particular language marks the onset of the language's journey toward death. When the death occurs, the identity of the language speakers will be lost. Sallabank (2010) states that we should be worried about language endangerment:

> Until recently this was seen as a natural cycle. But the growing number of linguistic varieties no longer being learned by children, coupled with a tendency for speakers to shift to languages of wider communication (especially varieties of English), means that unless the myriad inventive ways in which humans express themselves are documented now, future generation may not be aware of them (Sallabank 2010).

Yoruba, a member of the Niger-Congo language family, is a rich and culturally significant language, that faces the risk of endangerment due to the ever-increasing dominant use of English among the young

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generation of its speakers, especially the youths. Language endangerment theory recognizes that various factors play a role in this phenomenon, part of which is language attitude (See Fabunmi & Salawu, 2005).

METHOD

Mixed methods were adopted for a comprehensive understanding of the extent of lack of competence in Yoruba among Yoruba-English bilingual undergraduates at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. "Mixed-methods is an approach to research in the social, behavioral, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems" (Creswell, 2015). 123 participants, 76 males, and 47 females, completed the questionnaires, while interviews were conducted with 11 participants, 8 males and 3 females, to validate their self-assessment and gain a deeper understanding of their language abilities through open-ended questions and direct observations. The questionnaires collected participants' demographic information and prompted them to self-assess their competence in Yoruba. The questionnaires covered various areas such as Yoruba counting system, months of the year, days of the week, idioms' meanings and usage, and translation of specific Yoruba words into English; and were distributed on campus and in hostels and supervised with instructions to answer honestly and not to seek answers online. Interviews were conducted immediately with those who volunteered, audio-recorded, and noted. Quantitative data analysis involved frequency and percentage calculations, with subsequent interpretation and discussion. Qualitative analysis entailed transcribing the interviews, interpreting the responses, and discussing the findings. Both quantitative and qualitative results were compared, and the extent to which they confirmed each other was established. Given that ethical consideration is important in a study like this, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in this study. Participants were told about the purpose of the research, and their rights to withdraw from the study in case they wanted to.

RESULTS

This section is divided into two: questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaires

The participants rated their self-perceived competence in Yoruba and specified the duration (in minutes) for which they could speak the language without employing any words from English. 52% of the total participants rated their competence as moderate, 22.8% as high, 15.4% as low, 7.3% as very high, and 2.4% as very low. 39% of the participants indicated that they could communicate in Yoruba without employing any English words for between 1-5 minutes, 21.1% indicated less than a minute, 20.3% indicated more than 15 minutes, 14.6% indicated 6-15 minutes, while 4.9% indicated 'not at all.' The distribution of participants' self-rated competence and duration for which participants could speak Yoruba without employing any English words are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1. *Distribution of participants' self-rated competence in Yoruba*

Self-rated competence	Frequency	Percentage
Very low	3	2.4%
Low	19	15.4%
Moderate	64	52%
High	28	22.8%
Very high	9	7.3%

Table 2. *Distribution of duration (in minutes) for which participants could communicate in Yoruba without employing any words from English*

Duration	Frequency	Percentage
Not at all	6	4.9%
Less than a minute	26	21.1%
1-5 minutes	48	39%

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6-15 minutes	18	14.6%
More than 15 minutes	25	20.3%

Yoruba Numerals

The participants were given six numbers (67, 110, 260, 380, 440, and 500) to write in Yoruba. The selection of these numbers aimed to assess participants' proficiency in numerical expressions within the Yoruba language across values commonly encountered in daily life. These basic numbers constitute fundamental numerical expressions within Yoruba, forming the foundation of their linguistic competence. The term "basic" here refers to the foundational numerals within the Yoruba language that are essential for communication and everyday interactions. Also, choosing numbers such as 67, 110, 260, 380, and 440 instead of their rounded counterparts (e.g., 60, 100, 200, 300, and 400) aimed to evaluate their ability to handle numerical expressions requiring additional linguistic and cognitive processing. These selections included instances where the Yoruba counting system diverges from straightforward counting by tens or hundreds. Although the Yoruba numerical system is arithmetically complex, the chosen numbers were basic numbers that anyone for whom Yoruba is an L1 arguably should know and use in communication rather than English expressions.

The participants employed three forms: Standard Form (SF), Nonstandard Form (NSF), and Mixed Form (MF). Of 21.1% of the participants who used SF, only 6.5% wrote the six numbers given correctly in Yoruba. 16.3% of the participants used NSF; 19.5% used (MF), while those who scored zero and those who did not attempt the task amounted to 43.1%. Although complex for its arithmetical involvements, Yoruba numbers have a way of saying them. Some participants communicated the numbers in ways that did not conform to the set of rules or patterns of the Yoruba counting system, albeit they were discernible. For example, 80 in the SF of Yoruba counting system is *ogun merin* '20 in four places' but realized as *ogorin.* For one to arrive at 70, one must subtract 10 from 80. This requires the prefix *{aadin-}* which means 'to decrease by 10.' Thus, 70 will be *aadorin*, with the addition of the prefix bringing about a change to the root word (i.e., *ogorin*) and the elimination of *"in*" at the final position of the prefix itself. For the participants to write 67 which was one of the numbers given to them in Yoruba, they needed to subtract *eta* '3' from 70 which gives *etadinlaadorin*

i.e., (eta + din + ni → la + aadorin)
3 + decrease{-s} + from + 70

Within the NSF used by some of the participants are four variations. In the first variation, the participants employed the conjunction *ati* 'and' to join two numbers. Consequently, for instance, they wrote *ogota ati meje* for 67.

(ogota + ati + meje)
60 + and + 7

The second variation is similar to the first except with the verb *le (increase)* used within two numbers. Hence, 67 was written as *Bogota le meje*

(ogota + le + meje)
60 + increase {-s} (by) + 7

In the third variation, the initial two numbers answered corresponded to the initial two numbers in the first variation where the participants used the conjunction *ati* between two numbers. The first two numbers in the fourth variation, however, corresponded to what the participants used in the initial two numbers in the second variation where the verb *le* was used between two numbers. While the initial two numbers of the third and the fourth variations were similar to the first and the second in terms of the elements used between numbers (i.e., *ati* and *le*), the participants, in the third and fourth variations, used the SF for 200, 300, and 400

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before using either *ati* or *le* to join any number that came after each. For example, 260 was expressed as:

igba ati (le) ogota
200 and (increase '-s' 'by') 60

(200 and 60) or (200 increases by 60)

which was different from what was expressed in 1 and 2. i.e.,

Ogorun meji ati (le) ogota
100 2 and increase {-s} (by) 60

(100 in two places and 60) or (100 in two places increases by 60)

Participants who used the conjunction *ati* were using a structure typical of English given that any number greater than a hundred in English is expressed with the use of the conjunction 'and' with translates *ati* in Yoruba.

In the third and the fourth variations, the last number given which was 500 was expressed as *apo meji abo*, by two participants. *Apo meji abo* is a term used for 500 naira in Yoruba. It is safe to argue that 500 which was expressed the way money of that figure is expressed in Yoruba could have resulted from the fact that the participants who expressed it that way took the position that 500 in English bears resemblance to the currency of that figure, and that the same is, or should be, true of Yoruba. The participant's performance in each form is shown in Table 3. The total distribution of participants based on the forms used, including those who scored zero and those who did not attempt the task is shown in Table 4; and variations within NSF is ogata shown in Table 5.

Table 3. *Participants' performance in Yoruba numerals.*

Forms	Frequency	Percentage
SF	26	21.1%
NSF	20	16.3%
MF	24	19.5%
Zero and no attempt	53	43.1%

Table 4. *Total distribution of participants based on the forms used, including those who scored zero and those who did not attempt the task.*

Standard Form (SF)		
Number of numerals answered correctly	Frequency	Percentage
6	8	6.5%
5	1	0.8%
4	3	2.4%
3	3	2.4%
2	5	4.1%
1	6	4.9%
	26	21.1%
Nonstandard Form (NSF)		
Number of numerals answered correctly	Frequency	Percentage
6	2	1.6%
5	-	-
4	3	2.4%
3	5	4.1%
2	4	3.3%
1	6	4.9%
	20	16.3%
Mixed Form (MF)		
Number of numerals answered correctly	Frequency	Percentage
6	6	4.9%
5	3	2.4%
4	6	4.9%
3	5	4.1%
2	1	0.8%
1	3	2.4%
	24	19.5%
Zero and no attempt	53	43.1%

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Table 5. *Variations within NSF*

	Variation 1
67	Ogota ati meje
110	Ogorun ati mewa
260	Ogorun meji ati ogota
380	Ogorun meta ati ogorin
440	Ogorun marun ati ogoji
500	Ogorun marun-un
	Variation 2
67	Ogota le meje
110	Ogorun le mewa
260	Ogorun meji le ogota
380	Ogorun meta le ogorin
440	Ogorun marun le ogoji
500	Ogorun marun-un
	Variation 3
67	-
110	-
260	Igba ati ogota
380	Oodunrun ati ogorin
440	Irinwo ati ogoji
500	*Apo meji abo
	Variation 4
67	-
110	-
260	Igba le ogota
380	Oodunrun le ogorin
440	Irinwo le ogoji
500	*Apo meji abo

Yoruba Days of the Week

The days given to the respondents to write in Yoruba were Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. These days were chosen as they represent a diverse set of weekdays commonly used in everyday conversations. 61.8% of the participants answered all five days of the week given correctly. 10.6% got 4, 8.1% got 3, 5.7% got 2, and 4.9% got 1, while the percentage of those who answered it all wrong and those who did not attempt was 8.9%. 5 participants incorrectly wrote *ojo isinmi* which translates 'resting day' for Sunday and one person wrote *ojo jimo* for Friday. *Jimo* is a Yoruba word borrowed and adapted from the Arabic word *Jum'ah* 'Friday' and popularly used among the Yoruba people. Despite its widely usage, *Eti* remains the actual or original word for Friday in Yoruba while *jimo* is just an alternative that cannot replace the actual word. *Ojo isinmi* which five participants wrote for Sunday is a way some people sometimes refer to Sunday which depicts how they perceive the day. That is, a day dedicated to resting. Both *ojo jimo* and *ojo isinmi* are nonstandard usage or forms.

Table 6. *Participants' performance in Yoruba days of the week*

Number of weeks answered correctly	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
5	76	61.8%
4	13	10.6%
3	10	8.1%
2	7	5.7%
1	6	4.9%
Zero and no attempt	11	8.9%

Yoruba Months of the Year

The participants employed SF and NSF in Yoruba months of the year given: February, May, July, October, and November. The given months were selected to cover different seasons and intervals within the year. The participants who used NSF expressed the months by beginning them with *osu* 'month' and then adding the number in which a particular month falls in its category. For instance, January which was expressed as *Ṣẹrẹ* in the SF was expressed by some of the participants as *Osu Kini* 'first month.' 22.8% of 61.8% of participants answered the five months given correctly using SF. A total of 8.1% of the participants used NSF, while 30.1% either got zero or did not attempt the task. The table seven below shows their performance:

Table 7. *Participants' performance in Yoruba months of the year*

Standard Form (SF)		
Number of months answered correctly	Frequency	Percentage
5	28	22.8%
4	15	12.2%
3	18	14.6%
2	9	7.3%

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1	6	4.9%
	76	61.8%
Nonstandard Form (NSF)		
5	8	6.5%
4	1	0.8%
2	1	0.8%
	10	8.1%
Zero and no attempt	37	30.1%

Yoruba Idioms

The respondents were tasked to provide the interpretations and usage of the four Yoruba idioms given to them in Yoruba. The choice of idioms was made with careful consideration of their frequency of usage in the daily lives of Yoruba speakers. These idioms were selected based on their commonality and relevance in Yoruba culture and communication. They are widely known and used idioms that the participants would have encountered in various contexts, thereby reducing the likelihood of skewed results. Only 11.4% of the participants interpreted the four idioms correctly, 8.9% answered three, 7.3% answered two, 10.6% answered 1, and 61.8% represented those who scored zero and those who did not attempt the task.

Table 8. *Participants' performance in Yoruba idioms*

Number of idioms answered correctly	Frequency	Percentage
4	14	11.4%
3	11	8.9%
2	9	7.3%
1	13	10.6%
Zero and no attempt	76	61.8%

Word Translation

Ten Yoruba words which encompass a range of vocabulary encountered in daily life were given to the participants to translate into English. The words were curated to encompass a range of vocabulary encountered in daily life. The words included *isaasun* 'pot', *garawa* 'bucket', *iseleru* 'spring water', *irewesi okan* 'depression', *orisun* 'source', *safihan* 'show or demonstrate', *alapa* 'dilapidated', *itaniji* 'enlightenment', *amuye* 'characteristic', *ipolongo* 'jingle'. The participants' performance clearly shows that they were not familiar with many of the words. Only 0.8% of the participants translated the ten words correctly. The highest percentages, 22.8%, and 28.5%, correctly translated six and five respectively, while the participants who scored zero and those who did not attempt the task amounted to 8.1%.

Table 9. *Participants' performance in word translation.*

Number of words translated correctly	Frequency	Percentage
10	1	0.8%
9	2	1.6%
8	2	1.6%
7	13	10.6%
6	28	22.8%
5	35	28.5%
4	17	13.8%
3	7	5.7%
2	6	4.9%
1	2	1.6%
Zero and no attempt	10	8.1%

Interviews

In this section, results from the qualitative part of the study will be discussed. As stated earlier, 11 participants (8 males and 3 females) were interviewed, and these participants were among the 123 individuals who completed the questionnaires.

Many participants struggled to speak Yoruba without the use of English words, even those who claimed in the questionnaires that they could speak the language for extended periods. Most participants were cautious and struggled to maintain a conversation in pure Yoruba. Only one person communicated spontaneously in Yoruba without the intrusion of any English words. One participant who claimed in the questionnaire to speak Yoruba for more than 15 minutes, spoke Yoruba for only five minutes during the interview. Also, five

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participants who variously indicated in the questionnaires that they could speak Yoruba for 5 minutes, and more than 15 minutes, used English words in less than two minutes after the interview commenced and continued to use them however hard they tried to stop it. Four participants, who also variously claimed the ability to speak Yoruba for 5 and 15 minutes without using English words in the questionnaires, used English words less than a minute before the interview started. Most participants spoke cautiously and at an extremely slow pace, carefully choosing each word.

Yoruba numerals were very difficult for some of the participants. Only one participant answered four correctly out of the six numbers given, and one person answered three correctly even though they adopted an MF. Two participants answered one correctly each while seven did not know the numbers at all. The given numbers are expressed in the SF as shown below:

	Numbers in Yoruba	
a.	Ẹtàdínláàádọ́rin	67
b.	Àádọ́fà	110
c.	Ọ̀tàlérúgba	260
d.	Ọ̀rìnlélọ́ọ̀ọ́dúnrún	380
e.	Ọ̀jìlénírinwó	440
f.	Ẹ̀ẹ́dẹ́gbẹ̀ta	500

In months of the year, a common practice observed was participants singing the months before stating the specific month they wanted to express. Out of seven participants who sang the months, five got them all right, while two mixed them up. Four participants did not know the months. This practice of using the mnemonic device was also noted in most of the participants who filled in the questionnaires. Some explained that they learned them as a song in primary school but rarely used them in conversation, while others admitted to forgetting the song. Like English, Yoruba has twelve months each of which has its own nomenclature as shown below:

	Months in Yoruba	**Months in English**
a.	Sẹ́rẹ́	January
b.	Erèlé	February
c.	Ẹrẹ́nà	March
d.	Igbe	April
e.	Ebìbí	May
f.	Okúdù	June
g.	Agẹ́mọ	July
h.	Ògún	August
i.	Ọwẹ́wẹ́	September
j.	Ọ̀wàrà	October
k.	Bélu	November
l.	Ọ̀pẹ́	December

Participants' practice in naming the days of the week in Yoruba was similar to their approach to months. Eight participants correctly named all the days, two mixed them up, and one did not know them. Days of the week are expressed in Yoruba as shown below:

	Days in Yoruba	**Days in English**
a.	Àìkú	Sunday
b.	Ajé	Monday
c.	Ìsẹ́gun	Tuesday
d.	Ọjọ́rú	Wednesday
e.	Ọjọ́bọ̀	Thursday
f.	Ẹtì	Friday
g.	Àbámẹ́ta	Saturday

Only four participants provided the meanings and usage of the idioms given correctly. However, two of these participants did not attempt the idiom section of the questionnaires. When asked, they said they could not write effectively in the language. Another participant who did not attempt idioms in the questionnaire because of her inability to write in Yoruba answered three correctly in the interview, and one participant answered the only two idioms he answered correctly in the questionnaire in the interview, while five participants did not know the idioms at all. Participants' performance in the idioms was not satisfactory even though the idioms were simple ones whose deep interpretations are discernible from their literal meanings as

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shown below:

1. *Lálá tó rókè, ilẹ ní ń bọ*
Literal interpretation: 'Whatever goes up is coming down.'
Deep meaning: *Kò sí ohun tó níbẹ̀rẹ̀ tí kìí lópin/ ẹ̀tẹ́ ní kẹ́yìn àsejù.*
"Everything that has a beginning has an end/ insult is the culmination of the one who overdoes."

2. *Tí gbogbo igi bá ń wó pani, kì í ṣe bí ti igi ata.*
Literal interpretation: "If someone were to be killed by a tree, it wouldn't be by the pepper shrub."
Deep meaning: *Ohun/ẹni tí kò já mọ ǹkankan kò lè ṣe ìpalára fún ni.*
"A nonentity cannot harm one."

3. *Ọjọ́ tó ọrọ̀ ló kẹyẹlé pọ̀ mádìẹ.*
Literal interpretation: "It is the downpour that forced the pigeon into the gathering of chickens."
Deep meaning: *Ohun tó ṣẹlẹ̀ síni ló fa àrífín látọ̀dọ̀ ẹni tí kò tóni.*
"It is one's situation that causes one disrespect from someone to whom one is superior."

4. *Mélòó la ó kà nínú eyín Adípèlé?*
Literal interpretation: "How many can we count from the multilayered teeth of Adípèlé?"
Deep meaning: *Ènìyàn kò lè kaye ore tàbí aburú tó ti ṣẹlẹ̀ sí í.*
"One cannot count the number of blessings or bad things that have happened to them."

5. *Táa bá ní ká dijú kẹ́ni burúkú kọjá, a kò ní mọ́gbà tẹ́ni rere máa lọ.*
Literal interpretation: "If we opt to close our eyes so as not to see a wicked person pass by, we won't know when a good person will pass by as well."
Deep interpretation: *Àforíjìn dára, ẹ̀san le mú aburuú dání.*
"Forgiveness is good; vindictiveness can be costly."

Participants' speeches were characterized by lexical and grammatical words from English. While a lot of English words have been borrowed into Yoruba and domesticated, with such forms commonly used by semi-educated individuals, for instance:

	Yoruba Words	English Words	Domesticated English words
a.	agbon	basket	basiketi
b.	awako	driver	dereba
c.	ife	cup	koobu
d.	oju popo	road	roodu
e.	idanwo	exam	esaamu
f.	yege	pass	paasi
g.	oluko	teacher	tisa
h.	ikoko	pot	pooti
i.	yipo	turn	toonu
j.	aga	chair	sia

Lexical and grammatical words used by the participants in the interviews and in their speeches while filling in the questionnaires were in their actual forms (original English forms) as shown below:

Grammatical Words

	English Words	Yoruba Forms
a.	then	leyin/lehin naa
b.	but	sugbon/amo
c.	unless	afi
d.	except	ayafi
e.	even	koda
f.	whatever	ohunkohun
g.	nevertheless	sibesibe
h.	so	tori naa
i.	especially	paapaa julo
j.	although/though	botilejepe
k.	still	sibe
l.	anybody	enikankan
m.	whichever	eyitowu/eyiowu
n.	since	niwongba

Lexical Words

	English Words	Yoruba Forms
a.	agree	gba/fenuko
b.	worry	iyonu
c.	right	tona
d.	like	feran/nife

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e.	need	nilo
f.	Sincerely	ni tokantokan
g.	mistake	asise
h.	compulsory	dandan
i.	pass	yege
j.	succeed	sase yori
k.	fail	kuna
l.	rush	kanju
m.	force	ipa
n.	by force	tipatipa
o.	help	iranlowo/iranwo
p.	fine	dara
q.	instantly	logan
r.	anything	eyikeyi
s.	better	san/dara
t.	different	yato
u.	try	gbiyanju
v.	exactly	ni pato
w.	understand	ye
x.	advice	imoran

One participant mispronounced certain Yoruba words during the interview. The participant, however, also did not speak good English. Her incorrect pronunciation of words made her case different from other participants who were interviewed. Excerpt from her expressions is shown below. Words marked with asterisks are unacceptable in Yoruba; the required correct forms are in brackets; English words are underlined.

Ṣé ***tí*** (kí) ń ṣọ nkan tí òwe yẹn ń ṣọ ni tàbí ***tí*** (kí) n kàn ṣọ in a literal meaning?

Okay, inkan tí mo understand nínú òwe yìí ni pé tábá nípé ***tá*** (ká) ***tijú*** (dijú) ***tí*** (kí) ***eniwe*** (enire) lọ...

... So, wípé torí pé mo ń sá fẹ́ni yìí, tí mo bá ní pé ***tí*** (kí) n máa lé lọ...

Okay, inkan tí mo feel tó jẹ́ tábá pòwe yìí is, hmm, emm....

Hẹ, nkan tó ṣẹlẹ̀ ni wípé àwọn ọ̀rọ̀ kan ni Yoroba wa tó *ẹ (jẹ) pé wọn lágbára ***téyàn*** (téèyàn) ò lè sọ ***téyàn*** (téèyàn) ò bá fi English sọ ọ nígbà mîì.

Note: The participant is from Ibadan and has lived in Lagos. Among the things noticeable in her speech were the substitution of [k and d] with [t]; [r] with [w]; inappropriate deletion of one from two identical [e], and wrong elimination of [j] before [ẹ].

Comparison of Results

This section provides a follow-up discussion of quantitative and qualitative results. The results from the two datasets will be compared. This is called side-by-side comparison (Creswell, 2015).

Table 10. *Side-by-side comparison of results*

a.	**Speaking Pure Yoruba**	
	Quantitative results	A substantial proportion of participants (52%) self-rated their competence in Yoruba as moderate.
	Qualitative results	Participants could not maintain pure Yoruba conversation, even when they claimed in the questionnaires that they could speak the language for extended periods. Only one participant conversed purely and spontaneously in Yoruba.
	Note:	Participants could not do without using both lexical and grammatical words from English, despite the presence of equivalent words in Yoruba.
b.	**Yoruba Numerals**	
	Quantitative results	Only a small percentage of participants (6.5% of 21.1% who used SF) correctly wrote all the given numbers in Yoruba.
	Qualitative results	More than half of the participants did not know the numbers asked.
	Note:	The decline in the participants' knowledge of the counting system is extreme.
d.	**Yoruba Months of the Year**	
	Quantitative results	A small percentage of participants accurately expressed the given months in Yoruba. A total

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		of 61.8% with varied performances used SF while (8.1%) used NSF with varied degrees of performances. 30.1% either scored zero or did not attempt the task.
	Qualitative results	Singing the months was a common practice among the participants. Most participants who used the mnemonic device were able to get them right. However, some participants did not know the months.
	Note:	Participants' knowledge of months of the year in Yoruba is moderate.
e.	**Yoruba Days of the Week**	
	Quantitative results	A majority of the participants (61.8%) correctly answered all the days of the week, with varied percentages correctly answering fewer days or providing incorrect answers. There were also instances of nonstandard usage like *ojo isinmi* for Sunday and *ojo jimo* for Friday.
	Qualitative results	Most participants correctly named all the days, while few made errors or mixed up the nomenclatures. The practice of singing the months was recorded.
	Note:	Participants did not have much difficulty expressing Yoruba days of the week. The practice of singing the days was observed among the participants during the questionnaires and interviews.
f.	**Idioms**	
	Quantitative results	A small percentage of participants correctly interpreted the given Yoruba idioms, with 11.4% of the participants correctly interpreting the four idioms given. 61.8% missed the task.
	Qualitative results	Few participants provided the correct meanings and usage of the idioms. Some participants improved their performance during interviews, while five remained unfamiliar with the idioms.
	Note:	Participants lacked competence in this area.

Extent to Which Qualitative Results Confirm Quantitative Results

Both the quantitative and qualitative results in this study provide a comprehensive view of participants' abilities and challenges in their L1. Regarding speaking pure Yoruba, the quantitative results reveal that a substantial number of participants (52%) had a moderate ability. The qualitative results confirm this, as there was a rarity of spontaneous and pure Yoruba communication among the interviewed participants, despite their self-reported proficiency. The careful and deliberate manner in which most participants chose their words in an effort to forestall the intrusion of English expressions shows how proficient and proficient they were in Yoruba. In the context of Yoruba numerals, the qualitative and quantitative results align together. The quantitative results reveal the challenges participants faced with Yoruba numbers, with only a small percentage of participants (6.5% of 21.1% who used SF) exhibiting competence in the aspect. The qualitative results strongly confirm this, as more than half of the participants did not know the numbers asked. Both the quantitative and qualitative data are consistent in the aspect of Yoruba idioms. Quantitatively, only a small percentage of participants correctly interpreted the given Yoruba idioms, with varied numbers correctly interpreted fewer idioms. 61.8% missed the task. The qualitative results support this. However, the qualitative data show improved performance of a few participants who initially did not attempt the task in the questionnaires due to their inability to write effectively in the language but responded correctly to it in the interviews. In the case of Yoruba months of the year, quantitative data show that a high number of participants lacked the knowledge

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of the aspect of months of the year as a small percentage of participants accurately answered the given months in Yoruba, with some using SF and others NSF. 30.1% either scored zero or did not attempt the task. In the qualitative aspect, singing the months was a common practice among the participants. Most participants who sang the months were able to get them right. However, some participants did not know the months. Participants did not have much difficulty expressing Yoruba days of the week because, in the quantitative data, a significant proportion of participants (61.8%) correctly answered all the days of the week, with varied percentages correctly answering fewer days or providing incorrect answers. There were also instances of nonstandard usage like "ojo isinmi" for Sunday and "ojo jimo" for Friday. Qualitative data reveal the practice of singing the months and days, which participants employed for recall. This element, while not present in the quantitative data, enriches the understanding of the mnemonic strategies employed by participants to remember these aspects.

DISCUSSION

Fabunmi and Salawu's (2005) study is entirely a discussion with an illustrational analysis of the overarching threat of language death to Yoruba. Their illustrational analysis specifically raises the question of whether the sheer number of speakers is enough to counteract the forces of language endangerment. Their study acknowledges that despite Yoruba being one of the major languages spoken in Nigeria, its large percentage of speakers cannot prevent the moves of language endangerment. The current study takes a different approach by assessing the actual linguistic capabilities of Yoruba-English bilinguals. This allows for a deeper understanding of participants' competence levels as it also reveals discrepancies between self-perceptions and the actual abilities of the participants. Fakoya's (2007) exploration of participants' perspective where 63% reported perceived lexical and grammatical loss aligns with the current study's findings of participants' inability to communicate in their L1 without employing words from their L2. Similar to Fakoya in terms of approach (i.e., seeking participants' opinions) and both Fakoya and the current study in terms of outcomes, Oluwaseun (2018) operates within the perspectives and opinions of the participants which they gathered through Likert-scale questions to investigate the effects of Yoruba-English code-mixing on Yoruba. According to the study, the phenomenon not only undermines the vitality of Yoruba but also suggests that the convenience of code-mixing has overshadowed the survival of lexical items.

Adeniyi and Olaogun (2020) and the current research collectively enable the understanding of the aspect of vocabulary decline. Using qualitative and statistical descriptive methods, Adeniyi and Olaogun report the decline of Yoruba lexicons among the young Yoruba generation. Out of 94 words tested, 22.3% were obsolete, 43.6% were obsolescent, and only 34% were actively used among the participants. The current study assesses the participants' ability to translate Yoruba words into English. Only 0.8% of the participants accurately translated all the given ten words, 1.6% translated eight and nine words each, 10.6% translated seven words, 22.8% translated six words, 28.5% translated five words, 13.8% translated four words, 5.7% translated three words, 4.9% translated two words, 1.6% translated one word, while 8.1% either scored zero or did not attempt the task despite its simplicity.

Oyinloye (2016) reports that Yoruba idioms are slowly dying in today's discourse, and discusses its social, cultural, religious, and linguistic implications. Only half of the selected sample in the study provided five idioms each out of the minimum ten required while the other half of the participants provided a lesser number of idioms and some could not provide any. Unlike Oyinloye's study, the current study required the participants to interpret the given idioms and not to provide idioms; this study lends support to Oyinloye given that 61.8% of the

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participants missed or did not attempt the task in the questionnaires and the same was demonstrated in the interviews.

The insights from this study and the earlier studies are both similar and different. They are similar in that both the current and the previous literature all point towards the decline in Yoruba competence among the young generation, particularly compared to the older generation. The difference between them is evident in how the current study delves deeper into participants' abilities through various tasks like speaking, translating, and interpreting idioms, and not just by seeking their perspectives. The current study complements the previous studies by providing a crucial layer of understanding the actual ability of bilingual speakers; its coverage of areas that have not previously been explored (i.e., numeracy, days of the week, and months of the year) is unique to it.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the extent of lack of competence in Yoruba among Yoruba-English bilingual undergraduates at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, and compared its findings with previous literature to uncover variations. This study concludes that Yoruba-English bilingual undergraduates cannot engage in a conversation in Yoruba without incorporating English words, both lexical and grammatical items, albeit Yoruba possesses corresponding words. The qualitative data show disparities between the self-reported competence of the participants in the questionnaires and their demonstrated ability to speak pure Yoruba in real-life situations. Also, a common practice of using mnemonic songs learned during primary school to recall months and days of the week was observed among the participants. Although both the current and the earlier studies point towards the decline in Yoruba competence among contemporary speakers, this study covered areas that have not been explored before numeracy, days of the week, and months of the year. The study lends support to earlier studies on the decline of the aspects of Yoruba that have been explored in those studies: vocabulary, idiom, and the negative impact of code-mixing on the language. Based on the findings, this study recommends the introduction of Yoruba as a compulsory general studies course throughout undergraduate programs. This should ensure that all undergraduate students, regardless of their major, enhance their knowledge of Yoruba. The works cited in this study are related in their examination of the diminishing use and competence of Yoruba in contemporary Yoruba discourse and society. The limited scope of previous studies and the absence of similar studies conducted in this geographical context necessitate the need for this study. Future research should employ innovative methodologies, or unique theoretical frameworks so as to offer new empirical or theoretical knowledge on the topic of bilingual competence loss among the youths.

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