

10. Post-colonial countries

10.1. A short history of colonialism

Colonialism played a large role in making the world the way we know it today. For nearly five hundred years, large parts of the world fell under the rule of a few European countries.

Modern colonialism started at the beginning of the 16th century, when America was invaded by Spanish troops after the first European expedition led by Christopher Columbus reached it in 1492. It was initiated by Spanish explorers and developed by the Monarchy of Spain through its administrators and missionaries. One of the most important campaigns in the Spanish colonization of the Americas was the conquest of the Aztec Empire (1519–1521) in an area that is now Mexico and the Inca Empire in an area that today covers Peru and parts of Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile and Columbia (1532–1533). The conquests were accompanied by exploitation of local natural resources, enslaving of local peoples as a workforce, destruction of material, cultural and social foundations of local societies and dissemination of the Christian faith.

The new lands in South and Middle America were initially divided between the Spanish Empire and the Portuguese Empire. The 17th century saw the creation of the British Empire, the French colonial empire, the Dutch Empire and the Danish colonial empire. Also Sweden established some overseas colonies in 17th through 19th centuries, although on a smaller scale.

The colonies can be roughly divided into exploitation and settler colonies. The former were characterised by the exploitation of local natural resources and local populations as a workforce needed to run everything. This was accompanied by the presence of relatively few representatives of large private companies, military troops and government civil servants from the colonising country. Depending on the particular situation (such as the local and the colonising culture, local political relations, distribution of powers in the territory, etc.), the local cultures and structures were either destroyed or left in place (while adding the new masters at the top of the social hierarchy) as the colonisers sought to rule with the help of either the established local elites, or new elites they themselves put into power. In settlement colonies, large numbers of people, largely of peasant origin, moved from Europe to new territories in order to live there. In such colonies, rather than being used as a workforce, the local peoples tended to become territorially confined, fall into poverty and start dying out as a result of the destruction of the material foundations of their societies.

Colonies in Africa as of 1899

Belgium

Congo	
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France

Mauritania	Chad
Senegal	French Algeria
French Sudan (now Mali)	Tunisia
French Guinea (now Guinea)	French Morocco
Côte d'Ivoire	French Somaliland (now Djibouti)
French Dahomey (now Benin)	Madagascar
Niger	Comoros
French Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso)	Oubangi-Chari (now the Central African Republic)
Gabon	Middle Congo (now the Republic of the Congo)

Germany

German Kamerun (now Cameroon and part of Nigeria, 1884–1916)	German South-West Africa (now Namibia, 1884–1915)
German East Africa (now Rwanda, Burundi and most of Tanzania, 1885–1919)	German Togoland (now Togo and eastern part of Ghana, 1884–1914)

Italy

Italian Libya	Italian Somaliland
Italian Eritrea	

Portugal

Cap Verde Islands	Portuguese Guinea (now Guinea-Bissau)
Portuguese Angola	São Tomé e Príncipe
Portuguese Congo (now Cabinda Province of Angola)	Fort São João Baptista de Ajudá (now Ouidah in Benin)
Mozambique	

Spain

Spanish Sahara (now Western Sahara)	Spanish Guinea (now Equatorial Guinea)
Spanish Morocco	

United Kingdom

Egypt	British South Africa
Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (1899–1956)	The Gambia
British Somaliland (now part of Somalia)	Sierra Leone
Kenya Colony	Nigeria
Uganda Protectorate	British Gold Coast (now Ghana)
Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania)	Nyasaland (now Malawi)
Bechuanaland (now Botswana)	Basutoland (now Lesotho)
Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)	Swaziland
Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia)	

At that point, there were three independent states in Africa: Liberia, founded by the American Colonization Society of the United States in 1821 and independent since 1847, Ethiopian Empire (Abyssinia), and Sudan, which was independent from the British between 1885 and 1899 as a result of the Mahdi uprising.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, numerous settler and mixed-type colonies in North, Middle and Central America successfully fought wars of independence and liberated themselves from their former European centres, ultimately forming the United States in the North and a number of free states in South and Central America.

Europe's economic and military superiority over the rest of the world grew in the 19th century. In its second half, the race for colonies took on an unprecedented scale. The strongest colonial power was the British Empire. However, in the late 19th century, many European powers were involved in the competition for colonial power in Africa; this period saw the emergence of the German and the Belgian colonial empires. At the Berlin Conference in 1884-85, Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Spain and Portugal divided the African continent up among themselves.

One of the economically most important regions was the huge subcontinent of India, which was conquered by the British. It was a major supplier of cotton, wheat, rice, tea, spices, jute, carpets and decorative articles from the local culture. In 1858, the British government took direct control of India, controlled by the private East India Company that had been in operation since the 17th century. British rule in India exemplifies how laws, industry and military power were working together to give the colonial powers maximum control of the market and the society. Military force and taxation drove peasants off land and turned them into landless labourers working for the British companies on cotton plantations on their former farms. The peasantry became dependent on getting a job from British companies. Cotton was shipped to the U.K. where it was made into cloth, which in turn was sold back to India where its production was now prohibited.

Other parts of the Far East were also appropriated by the European powers (and later also by the U.S.). France seized Annam and Cochin in China, Tonkin (Vietnam), Laos and Cambodia, which together formed French Indo-China. It also occupied Tahiti, New Caledonia and the South Solomon Islands. Britain controlled Malaysia and Burma, as well as the Fiji Islands, Sarawak, North Borneo and Tonga in the Pacific region. Germany seized Northern New Guinea, Samoa and the Marshall Islands and purchased the Marianas and Carolines from Spain. At the turn

of the century, the U.S. annexed Hawaii and, after a victorious war against the Spanish, the Philippines, Guam and the port of Samoa.

The Russian Empire and Ottoman Empire⁸⁵ existed at the same time, but expanded through the conquest of neighbouring territories rather than over the oceans. After the French, the British and the Russians defeated the Ottoman-German alliance in the First World War, the German colonies in Africa and parts of the Ottoman Empire were divided among the victorious parties.

France and England loosened the bond with their colonies in the 1930s. The status of most British colonies, not including India, was changed to that of self-governing dominions in 1931, when the Statute of Westminster established the Commonwealth of Nations. Its member countries are freely associated; fourteen (including the U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Jamaica) are also united by a common allegiance to the British Crown and called Commonwealth realms. India became independent in 1947 after a period of peaceful resistance led by Mahatma Ghandi, and Egypt, granted limited autonomy after the First World War, followed in 1953. Pan-African ideas and liberation movements also developed in Africa at that time. As for France, the 1946 Constitution similarly substituted the French colonial empire with a new entity called the French Union. French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) withdrew from it in 1946; this led to the Indochina Wars that ended with independence for countries in the region. Algeria fought for its independence during the years 1954–1962. Morocco and Tunisia gained it in 1956, and the Sub-Saharan African colonies from 1960 on. In 1960, the United Nations proclaimed a Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It set up a special committee to promote the process, which continued intensely until 1975. Contrary to initial hopes, however, social and economic inequalities between industrialised countries and many ex-colonies kept on growing well into the 21st century, which is reflected in the notion of the Third World.

⁸⁵ The territory of the former Ottoman Empire currently includes 40 countries.

10.2. Former colonial languages in post-colonial Africa, Asia and Oceania

Asian, Oceanian and African post-colonial countries, in particular besides North Africa which comprises of Arab countries, are characterised by a multitude of languages, upon which the colonial languages have been superimposed for administrative and educational purposes. Today, while colonial languages lost some of their official status in some of the newly independent countries, they still form a significant part of the linguistic landscape. The former colonial languages obtained the status of being the sole official languages in 30 of 52 independent African countries (French: 13, English: 11, French and English: 1, Spanish/French/Portuguese: 1, Portuguese: 4). Among the remaining 22 countries, five use Arabic only, and three use Arabic and French. African countries that have not officialised the former colonial languages include the five countries where Arabic is spoken as the sole official language, along with Ethiopia and Somalia.

There are 14 African countries in which local languages other than Arabic have been made official; in some other countries the former colonial language is “official”, and a local one, or several, have been declared “national”.

According to statistics from late 1970s, 32 countries declared a commitment to counterbalance the domination of the colonial language by using local languages in education. These declarations have not always been put into practice for various reasons, including a lack of political will and low priority of language policy implementations in governmental agendas.

Development in other regions has been nominally less favourable to the former colonial languages. Among the many British colonies in Asia, which became independent beginning in the 1940s and continuing through the 1960s, English remained as one of the official languages in India and Singapore; it is also an official language, along with Chinese, in Hong Kong which was returned to China in 1997. In former French colonies in Asia, which today consist of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and a part of India, French has not been granted this status. Two of the countries and provinces located on the territories of former Portuguese colonies – Macao, which today is a special administrative region of China, and East Timor – retained Portuguese as one of their official languages. In Southwest Asia and Oceania, the Dutch colonized the islands of Indonesia (today the fourth largest population among all the countries of the world), but they never made Dutch its official language. The Oceanian islands Fiji and Tonga retained English as one of their official languages, and the Solomon Islands as the sole one. Papua New Guinea, which used to be controlled by Australia, is today a Commonwealth realm with English as one of the official languages.

Even in countries that nominally gave it up as their official language, English still plays an important role in former British colonies – as a lingua franca, and an educated code for some prestigious uses. For instance, although Burmese is the official language in Sri Lanka, English is commonly used in government while it is spoken competently by only about 10 percent of the population (CIA, *The World Factbook*). In Malaysia, it continues to be used in tertiary schools, and there have been attempts to reverse the implementation of the official language, Bahasa Malaysia, as the language of instruction in all subjects.

10.3. Anglophone post-colonial Africa: Nigeria

Nigeria is a federal constitutional republic comprising of thirty-six states and its Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. With a population of 149 million, it is the most populated country in Africa and one of the world's most populated countries. It had a GDP/PPP (gross domestic product on purchasing power parity) of about 2,300 per capita in 2009.⁸⁶

Between 1886 and 1960, the region was a British colony and a colonial "protectorate" (which differs from a colony mainly in having its own government but is dependent on the "protecting" country). In the late 19th and early 20th century, many wars against subjugation had been fought by the states which later became Nigeria against the British Empire. In 1914, the Niger area was united as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. In 1960, Nigeria gained its independence from the United Kingdom and it became a federal republic in 1963. Since that time, it was under military dictatorship over several periods of time until very recently. Under dictatorship, the organs of the state were annulled, political parties banned or intimidated and human rights violated, which included killing opponents and human rights activists,⁸⁷ in addition to imprisonment under life-threatening conditions.

The official language is English. There are also between 400 and 500 indigenous languages (Simire 2004: 137), some of which are mutually intelligible; in some areas, people are bilingual in two of them. The most widely spoken ones are Hausa, Igbo (Ibo) and Yoruba, which have more than fifteen million speakers each (ibid.: 138). Even if English is widely used for education, business transactions and for official purposes, it is mainly used and known to people in urban areas, which shelter only about 25 percent of the population. In addition, there is an Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin (ANP), and Arabic is used as the language of the Muslim

⁸⁶ Compare, for example: Norway 57,000, U.K. 35,000, Poland 18,000, Brazil 10,000, Vietnam 2,900. CIA, *The World Factbook*.

⁸⁷ While such acts were frequent, in 1995 international attention was particularly focused on the hanging of the writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others who protested against the devastation of land and dispossession of the Ogoni people by western oil drilling companies exploiting Nigeria's oil on Ogoni territories. The oil giant Shell has agreed to pay \$15.5 million (U.S.) in a legal settlement in which it was accused of having collaborated in the execution of the writer and eight other leaders of the Ogoni tribe. The settlement was one of the largest payouts agreed to by a multinational corporation charged with human rights violations. Another act that attracted international attention was the death sentence pronounced "in absentia" on the writer and Nobel Prize Winner Wole Soyinka, who managed to flee into exile in 1994.

religion. Of the country's multiple languages, 118 are codified and have written forms. The three major indigenous languages are spoken mainly in their respective regions and are seldom spoken as a second or third language, so they hardly play the role of a lingua franca in over-regional communications between different ethnic groups.

Language policy in the colonial era

What became Nigeria in 1914 is a conglomerate of diverse cultures and ethnic groups. The education before the colonial era was mainly in the hands of the Christian missions. Between 1842 and 1882, because the local people were the target of Christian missionaries, local languages were used at sermons and, consequently, were often applied also in mission-based education to the effect that some became codified. This was the stage when in some regions the local language dominated educational policies, activities and achievements.

However, between 1883 and 1964, when the government became involved, the local languages suddenly played almost no role because the government and the companies present in the region needed a literate local workforce, which necessitated more emphasis on English, the language of the colonial administration.

The policy was regionally differentiated; in the Northern region, Hausa was recognized in addition to English as an official language, but Yoruba (spoken in the West) and Igbo (spoken in the East) were not given such status. On the whole, there was no recognisable consistent pattern of language policy.

Language policy since independence

The Nigerians who spoke and read good English took over from the British, becoming members of the political elite and administration when Nigeria became independent in 1960. The country's constitutions since 1979 prescribed the use of English in the National Assembly and permitted the use of Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba "when adequate arrangements have been made thereof". These three languages are spoken of as Nigeria's national languages. English was chosen as Nigeria's official code "because its international status gave Nigerians more access to the outside world, a role none of the three national official codes of today would have been able to play" (Simire 2004: 138). English was also the language in which communication was carried out between different ethnic groups in the cities, even if their general knowledge of English was quite limited. However, the communication between other groups, also within one state, was strongly deficient.

After Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba had been officially recognized as major languages at independence, further languages were also given distinguished status as a result of demands coming from other ethnic groups, so that today there are twelve languages officially recognized as being major. The three “national” languages are spoken mainly in 18 of 36 states. The other nine “minority national languages” play an important role in their respective states, where they dominate over dozens of lesser languages. The estimated numbers of speakers for whom they are mother tongues are: 54 percent for the three major national languages; 22.5 percent for the nine “minority national” languages; 23.5 percent for the remaining languages (ibid.: 138-139).

The pattern of Nigerian bilingualism in those people who manage to become bi- or multilingual is extended diglossia with the native languages – which are acquired earlier than English – being used for personal and social interaction, and English serving official and inter-ethnic functions. It is estimated that 33 percent of the population is literate in English and about 15 percent *of these* people use it in their professional activities.

While English is regarded as Nigeria’s “window on the world”, it does not fulfil aspirations to the country’s own African identity. Instead of English, the language frequently used for lingua franca communication even in semi-formal public contexts, including the media (television, radio, written advertising), is Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin. It is also used unofficially as a medium of instruction in some schools, and in other linguistically heterogeneous contexts such as colleges. It is estimated that it is more widely spoken than any of the national languages.

Some scholars advocate that ANP should be lifted to the status of a national language as it is in fact the most popular medium of inter-ethnic communication, and would not lead to any ethnically-based resentment because it is not related to any particular ethnic group. Due to interethnic marriages, it became a mother tongue for many first and second generation speakers, especially in multilingual states. However, its social prestige is low, and no political initiative has been launched to push this idea.

The present national language policy is spelled out in the country’s four constitutions dated between 1979 and 1999, and the official policy papers: National Policy on Education (1977, revised 1981, 1998 and 2004), The Cultural Policy for Nigeria (1988), and Government Views and Comments on the Findings of Recommendations of the Political Bureau (1987).

The main points specified in these documents are:

- Each child shall learn the languages of his or her immediate environment.
- In the interest of national unity, children should learn one of the three major languages different than their own mother tongue.
- The medium of instruction at the pre-primary level (2-5 years) shall be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community.
- The medium of instruction in the primary school (6-11 years) shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English will be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as the medium of instruction, and the language of the environment and French shall be taught as a subject.
- At the secondary level, the language of instruction shall be English, and major Nigerian languages will be taught as subjects.
- In the junior secondary school (three-year duration), core languages will be English, French and the language of the immediate environment. The latter shall be taught as the first language if it has orthography and literature. In cases where it does not have them, it shall be taught with emphasis on oracy as a second language. Arabic will be taught as an optional subject.
- In the senior secondary school (three-year duration) English and a major Nigerian language shall be obligatory and literature in English, Arabic, or any Nigerian language that has orthography and literature will be taught as a choice subject.
- French shall become the second official language in Nigeria and be compulsory in schools at the primary and junior secondary level.

As well, the government promised to educate qualified teachers in teacher training colleges.

According to these policy statements, at the end of secondary education, a child is expected to have learnt four languages, if the language of his or her immediate environment is different from a major language: the language of the immediate environment, English, French, and a major language, i.e. one of Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba.

To date, these ambitious plans have not materialized. Bamgbose (1994) identifies the following constraints in the implementation of the provisions: failure to accord priority to language policy, negative attitude to all indigenous languages, absence of well-coordinated implementation strategies, political instability

leading to frequent changes of policy makers and policies, failure to use language experts and a lack of political will. He considers, for example, the above mentioned expression “when adequate arrangements have been made therefore” referring to the use of the major languages in the constitution as an escape clause because it is not time bound. This justifies its non-implementation after almost three decades of the initial formulation in 1979. Similarly, the formulation “but the House may in addition to English conduct...” made the provision that was meant to promote the indigenous languages unbinding.

Owolabi (2004) speaks instead of an outright opposition to policies supporting indigenous languages: from speakers whose native languages are not overtly recognized; the elite who despise local languages and do not wish their rise because this would rob them of their privileged position; and those who oppose the policies because they are not part of the teams that produced them.

Adegbite (2008: 6-7) comments on the deficient implementation of the policies:

... scholars have reported instances of nonimplementation of Provisions ... Ohiri-Aniche reports that most of the nursery schools in Nigeria, which are privately owned, use English as a medium of instruction and some of them do not even have the language of the immediate environment as a subject on the school time table⁸⁸ ... Some prominent scholars have commented that the four year period of change-over from language of immediate environment to English is too early for effectiveness. They suggest that the native language should be used as a medium of instruction throughout the six years of primary school or even till the end of basic education, while at the same time [English should be taught] as a subject. Furthermore ... some scholars ... argue that French does not deserve the status of a second language, most especially at a time when Nigerians are still grappling with the problem of learning and using English effectively and at the same time clamouring for more attention to be paid to developing indigenous languages.

Adegbite (ibid.) points out the very small ratio of bilinguals fluent in spoken and written mode in both a mother tongue and English. He offers an explanation: “Normally, children of the low class have adequate exposure to their native language orally at home before going to school but fail to achieve literacy in the language as well as master any skill in English at school because of several constraints. In contrast, children of elite parents never mature in their native language before going to school and thus lack both oral and literacy competence

⁸⁸ Although the policy of starting education in the children’s native tongue is prescribed by the policy papers mentioned above, schools may be granted waivers that free them of this requirement, an option used mainly by private schools.

in it. Some of them, however, eventually succeed in gaining mastery of English via adequate exposure to it at home and in their elitist schools. For this category of students, English replaces the parent's language as the native language of the child." The spread of such a practice is a mechanism that leads to language shift.

Furthermore, Adebite (ibid.: 10-11) mentions another type of bilingual speaker who emerged in the last two or three decades, the semilingual one, who does not have native competence in any language, which he blames on language policies of parents and educators:

First is the generational shift in language taking place as a result of contact of languages with English. The social prestige and high status accorded English have influenced the attitudes of parents and children positively towards English and less so towards the native language. Some parents forbid their children from speaking the native language at home, even when the fathers and mothers speak it to each other. Some overzealous parents even prevent their children from playing with peers in the neighborhood, except those who can speak to them in English. A second reason is the low priority accorded indigenous languages at school in a "straight for English" programme. Apart from the fact that fewer periods are allocated to the languages in the school curriculum, if they occur as subjects at all, school regulations forbid children from speaking them, even when the teachers do so. Thus, for some children who initially have some mastery of the oracy skills in their native language before going to school, further interest in the language is killed at school and there is little or no chance to become literate in the language.

Jibril (2007) reports that 34 percent of primary school children in the Rivers State could not speak any indigenous language; even among children from a major language group (Igbo), 18 percent in private schools and 10 percent in state-run colleges could not speak their native languages. As a result of poor language skills, the transmission of values, norms and wisdom – briefly, the cultural heritage – embedded in the indigenous languages (stories, proverbs, songs, folk tales, lyrical poems, nursery rhymes, elaborate greeting patterns, kinship systems, etc.) is also greatly impaired.

The non-implementation of the written policy of supporting indigenous languages has been explained by Adebite (2003: 188) by the fact that politics and administration is in the hands of the elite, whose interests are served best by the dominance of English, the language which they have the privilege to know well (while others do not). Linguistic competence serves here as a way to maintain social power.

In effect, the written policies have not managed to change the negative social attitudes towards the local languages vis-à-vis English, which stands for modernity and social power. Adegaju (2008) observes that churches with sermons in English are more numerous and have a larger attendance, which is a symptom of low social prestige of local languages compared to English. A marginalising tendency can also be observed in television broadcasts of the news in the local language: the text is abridged and follows after the English version.

The decline of native tongues has been lamented by scholars and proposals have been made for their revitalisation. However, they have been usually made and heard within the academic community only. While academic reflection can be the first step towards revitalisation, it is in itself not sufficient and produces little effect unless it gives rise to a political initiative.

The decline of native tongues vis-à-vis English in Nigeria is not an isolated example; rather, it is typical for African countries, where many languages are seen as being endangered.

On the other hand, students' competence in English is generally low. Adegbite (2008: 11) blames it on inadequate exposure to data, poor language reinforcement, wrong curriculum objectives, planning and implementation, shortage of qualified and motivated personnel, inadequate materials and poor infrastructure.

Scholarly proposals concerning language use in Nigeria also include the codification of the Nigerian variety of English. There are differences from British English pertaining to vocabulary, phraseology, grammar and phonetics. Nigerian English is on its way towards being recognised as one of the World Englishes, an *endonormative* variety of its own. A codification of a non-native variety means that dictionaries and grammar books are produced fixing this variety, so that regular differences from other standard varieties (such as British English) are no longer deemed as being language errors, and students are free to use this variety in language and other exams. A complication arises from the fact that there occurs a spectrum of usage from Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin. It includes varieties influenced by local languages, such as Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba (it has been observed that the pronunciation and prosody depend on the native tongue of the speakers), and a code preferred by educated speakers irrespectively their native tongue. Thus, the existence of a single Nigerian English is a matter of controversy, which could be settled by a systematic codification.

In many African countries students' achievement in English is estimated according to their mastery in British English even though they hardly get any exposure to this variety, especially in the spoken form, while, at the same time, they get a lot of exposure to a very different local variety. This makes the requirement to speak British English unrealistic, especially in the field of phonetics (pronunciation and prosody). The idea of the codification of the local variety of English has occurred in several African countries, with Nigeria being the most advanced in this respect. An example of pragmatically-oriented initiatives in this field is the following call for the standardisation of Nigerian English, published on the Internet in 2010:

... let all of us in this forum and other concerned Nigerian citizens join hands together to persuade the government to form the Standardisation Authority or Commission to actualise this dream. We should direct many people to join this forum. We can even form a group out of this forum to kick-start this action. We may need to approach Bayero University, Kano (BUK) to be the centre of operations as they have already done much in this field as revealed by Dr Farooq Kperogi. We need to take a positive action to awaken the government to do something about this matter. We may present this to politicians who will be running for the Presidency in 2011 to include this in their manifesto ... We should not let this be a paper or Internet or scholastic exercise only. WE MUST ACT. A good thought without action dies with the thinker.

I am using this medium to call upon all Nigerians to join this forum and support this initiative by commenting on how we shall take this forward to a meaningful and measurable level. This forum or movement is called Standardise Nigerian English Movement (SNEM). See our website: <http://p1.fr/snem>. Please your comment here.

Thank you all for reading and for your anticipated support.

Shadie Okpako.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ A Call For The Standardisation of Nigerian English, submitted January 21, 2010.

10.4. Francophone post-colonial Africa: Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast in English) is a country in West Africa, a territory slightly larger than Poland or Italy, with about 20 million inhabitants. In 2009, it had a GDP/PPP per capita of \$1800 (U.S.), ranking 194 among the world's 229 countries.⁹⁰ In 2000, the average period of institutional education amounted to 10 years for boys and 5 years for girls. Its capital is Yamoussoukro and the biggest city is the port city of Abidjan.

Côte d'Ivoire is ethnically heterogeneous. In 1998, the largest ethnic group, the Akan, made up 42 percent of the population, Voltaiques or Gur 18 percent, Northern Mandes 16 percent, Krous 11 percent, Southern Mandes 10 percent, and other groups 3 percent, including 130,000 Lebanese, 14,000 French and some Vietnamese. Foreign-born people, including numerous immigrants from neighbouring Liberia, Burkina Faso, and Guinea, amounted to 35 percent of the population in 1999.⁹¹ About 40 percent of the total population (that is, including immigrants) are Muslims, while Christians amount to about 33 percent; the remaining population claims an indigenous religion (Voodoo), other or no religion.⁹²

An exporter of cocoa beans, coffee and palm oil, the country is heavily dependent on export revenues from agriculture. Political instability and a degrading infrastructure endanger the future development. Since the civil war in the years 2002-03, political turmoil has continued to damage the economy; incomes have declined, and the country is heavily in debt.⁹³

Historical outline

A succession of powerful kingdoms in West Africa, spanning a millennium, was based on wealth coming from trade along caravan routes. Beginning in the 8th century, Islam spread gradually along the trade routes reaching West Africa, and by the 10th century many of the merchants were Muslims. In the 11th century, the rulers began to convert. France made its initial contact with what today is Cote d'Ivoire in 1637, when missionaries landed at Assinie near the border to the Gold Coast (now Ghana). Prior to its colonization by the French, the territory was divided among several kingdoms, some of which attempted to retain their separate identity throughout the colonial period and into independence. In the

⁹⁰ CIA, *The World Factbook*.

⁹¹ Djité 2007: 151.

⁹² Estimate by CIA, *The World Factbook*.

⁹³ Ibid.

years 1843-44, France signed treaties with the kings of territories that are now part of Cote d'Ivoire, making them a French protectorate. French explorers, missionaries, trading companies, and soldiers gradually extended the area under French control, though not without resistance from the local peoples.

In 1893, Cote d'Ivoire officially became a French colony. From 1904 to 1958, it was a constituent unit of the Federation of French West Africa (*Afrique occidentale française*).⁹⁴ Before the Second World War, French West Africa was administered from Paris. The Africans in the federation were officially French "subjects" without rights to citizenship or representation in Africa or France. They were drafted for forced labour, and had to serve in the military. Also Cote d'Ivoire was administered centrally by governors appointed in Paris, without a local participation in policy making, until 1958.

An ideological basis of French colonial policy was the concept of assimilation, based on the idea of expanding French culture to the colonies outside of France. In contrast with the British distance-keeping imperial policy, the French taught their subjects that by adopting French language and culture they could eventually become French. The French created a small, but influential, educated local elite trained in French administrative practice that formed an intermediary group between themselves and the Africans. Keeping this group satisfied with its privileges prevented any rise of anti-French sentiments. After 1930, a small number of westernised Ivoirians were granted the right to apply for French citizenship.

During the Second World War, in 1943, Charles de Gaulle's provisional government took over control of French West Africa. The native African troops fought against Germany in Africa on the side of France and Great Britain. In recognition of African loyalty during the war, French citizenship was offered to African "subjects", they got the right to organize themselves politically, and forced labor was abolished.

Prior to this period, members of the elite believed that they would achieve equality with their French peers through assimilation rather than through independence from France. When it became clear that even the post-war reforms based on assimilation kept the superiority of the French over the Ivoirians in place, independence was pursued.

⁹⁴ It also included Mauritania, Senegal, French Sudan (now Mali), French Guinea (now Guinea), Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Dahomey (now Benin) and Niger.

In 1958, the French Union⁹⁵ was replaced by the French Community and, in 1960, the country became fully independent. The country has been maintaining political and economic cooperation with its West African neighbours and close ties to France ever since. While in other African countries the Europeans left following independence, in Côte d'Ivoire the French community, which includes teachers, managers and advisors, doubled to 60,000 in 1980. The economy maintained a high annual growth rate of about 7 percent up to that time. In the early 1980s, it collapsed sharply when the prices for the country's exports went down on the world markets.

From the first elections in 1960 until his death in 1993, the presidency was in the hands of Felix Houphouet-Boigny, the leader of the democratic party who had lived in France before his election, representing Cote d'Ivoire in the French National Assembly from 1946 to 1959. This included three years as a minister in the French cabinet; he was the first African to become a minister in a European government. Under his presidency, there was no free press and only one political party existed, the one he led; and yet, he was reportedly popular with the people.

In 1990, after strikes and protests against institutional corruption, a multi-party democracy was introduced. In 1999, six years after Houphouet-Boigny's death and after two decades of economic recession, Côte d'Ivoire experienced a military coup; a civil war followed in 2002. A political agreement between the government and its opponents brought a return to peace, with the United Nations and French troops still stationed there in 2011 to support reconciliation.

Colonial education

The foundations for primary and secondary education were established by Catholic and Protestant missionaries.⁹⁶ Today's religious private schools, which still educate the children of the elite, are the direct descendants of these early institutions.

Later, the administrators began to create an official public school system. The colonial education in French Côte d'Ivoire was provided to relatively few and pursued a narrow purpose – to give part of the population a summary education (a knowledge of French and arithmetic) and to train a native support staff for administrative services (Mundt 1987). In 1911, a hierarchy of schools to be

⁹⁵ In a referendum of 1958, only Guinea voted against association and did not join the Community.

⁹⁶ <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/308/C-te-d-Ivoire-EDUCATIONAL-SYSTEM-OVERVIEW.html>, retrieved April 7, 2011.

implemented was introduced: primary-elementary, professional, and higher primary. There were also regional schools for only Ivoirians of French citizenship which provided a level of education equivalent to that of schools in France. By 1923, Côte d'Ivoire had a rudimentary network of primary schools, although not all regions were included. In 1948, the estimated ratio of school-age children in the school system was about 5 percent. Education became more accessible shortly before independence, reaching 20 percent in the 1950s.

The first secondary school opened in 1928. Education at both levels took place in French only. The primary school system was intended to educate young Ivoirians in the three Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) which were needed in the workplace. Secondary education, however, represented a potential long-term threat: officials worried that educated locals might lead to resistance against the established colonial order. Therefore, secondary education did not develop much between 1928 and the end of the Second World War. At the same time, there was a need for an educated base of native Ivoirian administrators (Lee 2009).

To meet this need, village schools implemented a six-year program, but less than 10 percent of graduates moved on with the higher level of education. The sons of local tribal chiefs were selected for secondary education and later sent to France or one of the tertiary schools established by the French in Senegal on scholarships for further training; others became teachers or village clerks. As a result of this selective education, in 1945, there were just a few university graduates, and an estimated 200-300 Ivoirians were graduates of Ecole Ponty, a teachers' college in what today is Senegal. About 1,000 students received scholarships for completing their secondary and tertiary education in France, mainly sons of tribal chiefs.⁹⁷

The education took place in French only, and pedagogical use of local languages in the classroom was forbidden in both public and private schools. Its objective was once defined by a General Inspector of Education: "not to protect the originality of the colonised, but to elevate them to our level" (Djité 2007: 166).

Languages

The official language is French, although 73 native languages and dialects were spoken in 1995, with Dyula being the most widespread among them. French is taught in schools and serves as a lingua franca in the country in two basic varieties: educated Standard French and Ivoirian (or Popular) French. Dyula acts as a trade language as well as a language commonly spoken by the Muslim

⁹⁷ Ibid.

population. Muslim religious services are held in Dyula and Christian services are in regional major languages.

The continued immigration of people from other, poorer African countries has further increased the linguistic diversity. At the same time, the inherited artificial colonial borders cut through many regional cultures; in effect, the country shares several languages with its neighbours.

This diversity has been used as an argument against any language policy that would take the indigenous languages into account. French seems to be a politically-neutral choice that does not privilege any ethnic group, and offers the additional advantage of providing access to science and technology. Yet, some scholars argue that the traditional descriptions exaggerate the degree of heterogeneity by counting closely related varieties as separate languages (cf. e.g. Djité 2007: 155).

The communication patterns of individuals reflect this situation. According to Djité (2007), an average Ivoirian has a repertoire consisting of a mother tongue, the dominant language of a particular region (for instance, Baule, Bete, or Senufo), and one or more of the over-regional lingua francas – typically Dyula for the Muslims, and French independent of religious affiliations.

Language attitudes

Typically for Sub-Saharan African countries, the wide-spread attitude inherited from the colonial system is the low opinion of the indigenous languages as being locally limited and not offering prospects of personal advancement; thus, they are not seen as a proper vehicle of education. This attitude stems from the preconceived notions that the local languages cannot express modern concepts needed in professional and intellectual fields. It is also accepted and disseminated by the elite, whose elevated status is closely related to mastering French, achieved through education (with French as the language of instruction): career prospects and access to public offices are only available to those who have a command of French, even if this skill alone does not guarantee such a career. Also, the French government actively promotes French in Cote d'Ivoire and all former French Africa. Such is the prestige of French that some Ivoirian parents speak French with their children instead of their own mother tongues.

Yet, the fact that a majority of the people cannot communicate in Standard French also produces a very different effect: black speakers of Standard French are sometimes resented when using it in colloquial encounters, as it is perceived as being snobbish, and an intentional display of social superiority (Djité 2007: 176).

Education since independence

Standard French remains the sole language of education from the kindergarten on up, and proposals for introducing a mother tongue in education are viewed with suspicion by the general public as attempts of the elite to trick the majority of children into a second-rate education and bar their climb up the socio-economic ladder (Djité 2007: 163).

Reasons why local languages are not viewed as possible vehicles of education are numerous: the lack of standardization, which has not been undertaken because the universal use of French was a simpler option; the presence of small minorities that would necessitate selectivity; the notion that the choice of any local language for special use would meet with opposition of other ethnic groups; and the perception of French as a unifying factor that counters the centrifugal effects of the country's ethnic and religious diversity.

Moreover, the elites are French-educated in the spirit of the doctrine of assimilation; for example, the former President Houphouët-Boigny named local languages "a folklore that reminds us of the shame of the past and paralyses our economy" (Djité 2007: 167). It has been claimed that a crucial reason for not promoting local languages was the awareness that it would have diminished the power of the current elites, as the elevation of French combined with their own command of it renders them vastly superior to the majority of the people (ibid.: 169).

The approach was different in the 1970s when introducing local languages in schools was seriously considered and a national commission, created to reform the education system, sought a new language policy. The commission entrusted the Institute of Applied Linguistics of Abidjan with devising and implementing a plan for integration of local languages into schools. The plan included:

- description and codification of all languages,
- writing grammars,
- laying out the lexicon,
- producing teaching materials,
- encouraging literary publications in local languages,
- protecting their cultural character.

A number of descriptive research projects were carried out as a result, and three languages – Baulé, Bété and Dyula – were taught in academic courses. Yet, not only was the country's omnipotent President French-educated and well-assimilated, but the main donor of financial assistance and resources was the

French government, acting through its Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique and concerned about maintaining the international status of French rather than the promotion of African languages. Teaching methodologies and materials for French were donated and promoted, and by the early 1980s the idea of an education in a learner's mother tongue in Cote d'Ivoire, as in all former French Africa, gave way to full acceptance of French as the sole medium of education and the cornerstone of the country's development.

Success of French-only policy

While Standard French is the major medium of communication, the official language, and the language of instruction in the schools, it has not established itself as the main language of everyday communication. The economic decline increased the school drop-out rate and lowered standards of education, particularly in rural areas. Literacy is limited to 50 percent of the total population, and the current school life expectancy⁹⁸ for women lies at 5 years. Only 20 percent of the population reaches above the primary level, 2 percent reaches the tertiary level, while only one in five of them actually graduates. Secondary schooling is concentrated in urban areas and tertiary education is only available in four cities.⁹⁹ Illiteracy in French is estimated at 60 percent of the population, and the influx of immigrants contributes to keeping it at this low level. The result is the spread of other lingua francas, such as Dyula¹⁰⁰ and Popular French. The latter is a simplified, culturally-specific variety of French characterized, among other things, by a transfer of phonetics and prosody from other languages, many borrowings – including calques of set phrases – from the local languages, and newly coined set phrases.¹⁰¹ According to Djité (2007), the official promotion of Standard French has actually made networks of speakers of Dyula and Popular French expand.

⁹⁸ This is a term meaning, roughly speaking, the total number of years of schooling which an average child of a certain age can expect to receive in the future.

⁹⁹ Yet, in the country based on agriculture, school and university graduates face large-scale unemployment. The state keeps expenditures on public services at a low level, so that, for example, graduates of medical schools, teacher training colleges and qualified academics are offered no jobs while health service remains underdeveloped, and schools and universities have extremely high teacher-student ratios. This undermines trust in education as a secure path to prosperity.

¹⁰⁰ The failed and unpopular military coup of 2002, associated with Dyula speakers, may have stopped this expansion.

¹⁰¹ It was estimated to have been spoken by 30 percent of the population in late 1970s; Djité (2007) believes it to have spread since then. The language, however, carries little prestige and has not been researched.

Moreover, as mentioned before, because Standard French is not attainable for the majority of the population, it is marked as appropriate for formal occasions only.