

VARIETIES OF THE ANAANG LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The Anaang language, spoken by the Anaang people of Nigeria and Cameroon, is a complex and diverse linguistic system with numerous varieties that reflect the rich cultural and historical tapestry of this ethnic group. This paper provides an overview of the linguistic landscape of Anaang, highlighting the major dialects and language variations within the Anaang community. It explores the historical, sociolinguistic, and geographical factors that have contributed to the development of these linguistic varieties and the ongoing efforts to document and preserve the Anaang language. The study also delves into the linguistic features that distinguish these varieties, shedding light on the phonological, grammatical, and lexical differences that characterize Anaang dialects. By examining the linguistic diversity within the Anaang language, this paper contributes to our understanding of the broader field of African languages and serves as a testament to the importance of preserving and studying endangered languages.

Introduction

Language variation has remained a prominent theme in sociolinguistic enquiry by virtue of its centrality to the explication of the social context of language use. Since no speech community can be said to be completely homogenous, the fact of language variation remains a glaring reality as exemplified in everyday uses of language in different societies. Firth (1951: 78) had stressed the fact that language must be as varied as the groups who use it and the multiplicity of functions to which it is applied. Similarly, Coates (1990: 24) in delineating the domain of sociolinguistics as the social context of language use, argues that the study of language in its social context means crucially the study of linguistic variation.

Consequently, sociolinguistic studies have been largely characterized by the exploration of the systematic relationship between language and socio-cultural organization of speech communities. The basic assumption behind this is that speakers functioning as members of a particular speech community, and within the ambit of a particular culture, have

internalized not only the rules of grammar but also the rules of appropriate speech usage. These rules which are broadly shared by other members of the speech community are applied daily in speech behaviour (Sankoff, 1989).

The language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable. One of the functions of language is to identify people as representatives of groups, communities and cultures in relation to others. The concept of identity helps to describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture (Deng 1995). As it is commonly recognized, the term identity is mutually constructed and refers to evolving images of self and other (Katzenstein 1996). Therefore, identity is people's concept of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others (Hogg and Abrams 1988). It is worth mentioning, that the identity is subject to the individual interpretation, expressing the will to become a member of a group. Herrigel (1993) states: "By social identity, I mean the desire for group distinction, dignity, and place within historically specific discourses (or frames of understanding) about the character, structure, and boundaries of the policy and the economy."

Identity is closely related to language, language use constructs identity, as everyone uses accent, dialect, and language variation that reveals speaker's membership in a particular speech community, social class, ethnic and national group. As well, such variations are obvious when the grouping is based on gender, age, or expanding the linguistics focus to include jargons, registers and styles, occupation, club or gang membership, political affiliation, religious confession and so on (Edward 2009). Several researches have been conducted across the world on identification through language in different areas such as information technology (Constable, Simons 2000), speech recognition (Coulthard 1997), text verification (Giguët 1995); similar languages identification (Ljubescic 2007), criminal identification (Singh 2006), and language identification in web (Martins and Silva 2005). The function of language that identifies people as representatives of groups, communities and cultures has been examined in the context of marking the distinction between "Us" and "Others" (Duszak 2002). In African context, the language is often significantly regarded as a marker of national identity (Simpson 2008).

Language is a symbol system based on pure or arbitrary conventions... infinitely extendable. Extendable and modifiable according to the changing needs and conditions of the speakers Yuke, (1985) according to this definition, language is a symbol system. Every language (that exists in the written form) selects some symbols for its selected sounds. Also, language does not pass from a parent to a child. In this sense, it is non-instinctive. Children have to learn language, and he or she learns the language of the society he is born into. According to Brown (1987), language is the institution whereby humans communicate

and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols. This definition rightly gives more prominence to the fact that language is primarily speech produced by oral-auditory symbols. A speaker produces some string of oral sounds that get conveyed through the air to the speaker who, through his hearing organs, receives the sound waves and conveys these to the brain that interprets these symbols to arrive at a meaning.

Edwards (2009:20) states that “identity at one level or another is central to human and social sciences as it is also in philosophical and religious studies, for all these areas of investigation are primarily concerned with the ways in which human beings understand themselves and others”. Edwards further adds that since language is central to human condition, and since many have argued that it is the most salient distinguishing aspect of the human species, it seems likely that any study of identity must surely include some consideration of it. Omoniyi and White (2006) describe identity as a problematic and complex concept in as much as we recognise it as non-fixed, non-rigid and always being co-constructed by individuals of themselves (or ascribed by others) or by people who share certain core values or perceive another group as having such core values.

Ulrike (2008) explains that most scholars emphasize that although identity is deeply anchored in a society, thus leading to a strong emotional attachment to identity markers like language, language is not the only crucial aspect of minority group identity (Fishman, 1999; Romaine, 2000). For example, Blommert (2006) points out that linguistic behaviour is not necessarily an indicator of ethnicity and that administrative belonging does not always reflect sociolinguistic belonging. Blommert also posits that language constitutes one of the several characteristics that can place an individual in the majority or in the minority. In essence, language is just as much as an identity marker as religion, dress etc because these elements also determine the group (majority or minority) to which one belongs. The point in all of these is that a shared language or a shared territory does not always necessarily translate into a shared ethnicity. What defines a group of people transcends their language and geographical location - other identity markers are equally of importance.

Causes of Linguistics Variations

Zornitsky and Martin (2006) observe that linguistic variations are often caused by two variables or factors in any language. That is, external and internal causes.

External Causes: Language change is often brought about by contact between speakers of different languages or dialects, rather than by variation internal to a given speech community. Such changes are said to be due to external causes. Contacts between populations who speak different languages involve extensive bilingualism: accordingly, Weinreich (1953) pointed to

the crucial role of bilingual speakers as the locus for language contact. However, high prestige languages may influence other languages without necessarily involve bilingualism.

Internal Causes: Within the sociolinguistic tradition of historical linguistics, the strongest advocate for a distinction between externally and internally motivated change is Labov. Summarizing his argument in favor of a difference between change in low-contact vs. high-contact situations, Trudgill states that “when it comes to contact, the present is not like the past” (1989), and indicates the study of change in isolated communities as a possible source for understanding language change in the past, since now “there are simply many more people around”.

Besides, change starting inside a speech community is ultimately due to contact between social dialects or even between individual idiolects. Even though we do not call each individual dialect a language, and accept the existence of speech communities as communities, i.e. as (parts of) societies “defined in terms of a domain of shared expertise” (Croft 2000), it remains true that “any communal language exists because speakers using systems that are not necessarily identical interact with one another. Obviously, contact between distant varieties implies, an important role of adult learners. However, speakers who, within a given speech community, try to conform to a high prestige variety of their own language are similar to language learners: the extent to which they may be more successful, and thus bring about less change in the target variety than language learners would do in the target language, should be measured in terms of quantity, rather than quality.

Linguistic Variations Variables

Lexical variation: Differences in vocabulary are one aspect of dialect diversity which people notice readily and comment on quite frequently. They are certainly common enough as markers of the differences between geographical areas or regions--for instance the fact that "a carbonated soft drink" might be called pop in the inland North and the West of the United States, soda in the Northeast, tonic in Eastern New England, and cold drink, drink or dope in various parts of the South (Carver 1987).

Lexical differences are not as salient in distinguishing the speech of different social or socioeconomic classes, and they have accordingly played a much smaller role in social dialectology (the study of social dialects), which has concentrated instead on differences in phonology and grammar. Nevertheless they are certainly an aspect of ethnic differences--for instance, knowledge of the term *ashy* to describe the "whitish or grayish appearance of skin due to exposure to wind and cold" (Smitherman 1994) is widespread among African Americans but less so among European Americans. Moreover, several dictionaries of African

American English have appeared over the past several years.

Phonological variation: Phonological variation refers to differences in pronunciation within and across dialects, for instance the fact that people from New York and New England might pronounce "greasy" with an s, while people from Virginia and points further South might pronounce it with a z. Or the fact that working class people across the United States are more likely than are upper middle class speakers to pronounce the initial th of they and similar words with a d.

Phonological variants are fairly salient as markers of regional dialect. For instance, the stereotypical Bostonian pronunciation of "Park your car in Harvard yard" as Pahk yo' car in Hahvahd yahd includes not only the r-lessness of Pahk, yo', Hahvahd and yahd (the r in car is retained because the following word begins with a vowel)--a feature shared with many other American dialects, particularly in the South--but also the more distinctive use in these words of a long maximally low or open front vowel [a] where other dialects use a slightly fronter and less open vowel [ɶ] (Wells 1982). In order to represent the pronunciations with some precision, linguists often use a phonetic alphabet in which each distinguishably different sound is uniquely represented by a different symbol, rather than the relatively unphonetic spelling system of English, in which one sound is often represented by different spellings (e.g. the sound "sh" represented by sh in sheet but by ti in nation) and different sounds by one spelling (e.g. s represents an "s" sound in bets but a "z" sound in beds). Sounds and words represented in phonetic spelling are enclosed in square brackets; a key to the phonetic spellings used in this work is included at the beginning of this volume.

Grammatical variation: What is referring to as grammatical variation really involves two sub-types: morphology and syntax. Morphology refers to the structure or forms of words, including the morphemes or minimal units of meaning which comprise words, for instance the morphemes {un}"not" and {happy} "happy" in unhappy , or the morphemes {cat}"cat" and {s} "plural" in cats. Syntax refers to the structure of larger units like phrases and sentences, including rules for combining and relating words in sentences, for instance the rule that in English yes/no questions, auxiliaries must occur at the beginning of sentences, before the subject noun phrase (e.g. Can John go? versus the statement John can go).

It's worthy of note that different version of stories have been told about the origin and immigration of Anaañ people in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria. Greenbergs, (1963) in Nyarks, (2006) maintains that Anaañ people are semi Bantu speakers who originated from the central Benue valley of Nigeria. They might have moved from northern sector of the Cross River to the Enyong Creek and eventually through the present day Eastern Ibibio land (Ikono) and

settled at the location of present day Abak. Essien, (1993) argued alongside Greenberg's in Nyarks, (2006) that the immigration of the ancestors of Anaañ was a matter of securing a special geographical entity in order to separate themselves from Ibibio people. The reason for this separation, according to Essien, Anaañ people see themselves as special and unique people with their own language, traditions, cultures, norms and a way of life which is interwoven with their language. According to the 2006 census figures, the population of the entire Uyo metropolis is 554,906. Majority of these people live and do business in the major towns of the senatorial district of the state.

The people of Anaañ are called Anaañ with a common dialect also known as Anaañ language. The people have a very rich cultural background and are predominantly Christians. The main occupation of the people is farming and petty trading by virtue of the geographical location as one of the commercial nerve- centre of the entire Akwa Ibom State.

Acts of Identity Theory Robert Le page

A basic tenet of this approach is that all linguistic behaviour is stimulated by some social contexts or the other. The individual is considered to be the locus of language behaviour along with the realization that individual behaviour at any given moment is largely unpredictable. The individual is also seen as an active and creative agent, constantly locating and relocating himself within the multi-dimension linguistic environment through what le page refers to as "projection" and "focusing". According to his assumptions, individual manipulates these features in creating a social identity but he creates his rules - - - so as to resemble as closely as possible those of the group or groups with which, from time to time, he wishes to identify as constrained by a number of factors. These include;

- a. The extent to which he is able to identify his model groups.
- b. The extent to which he has sufficient access to those model groups and sufficient analytic ability to work out the rules of their behaviour.
- c. The strength of various motivations towards one or another model and towards retaining his sense of his own unique identity.
- d. His ability to modify his behaviour.

In conclusion, the theory of Page has correlations with the present study on the premises that it's discussed individuals, their languages and the society they live in.

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