

# ENG854 ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN WEST AFRICA

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# **COURSE GUIDE**

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### Introduction

Welcome to ENG 852 (English Language in West Africa). This is a postgraduate course. ENG 852 is the course code while "English in West Africa" is the course title. You are expected to understand the relationship between the code and the title. As a postgraduate course, the course provides an opportunity for students to explore the knowledge of the nature of English in West Africa. Therefore, it is expected that you learn new ideas, concepts, and facts beyond your understanding of regional varieties of English at undergraduate level. The course opens your mind to a detailed knowledge of the place of English in West Africa. Students who have studied this course would be able to identify factors responsible for the coming of English to West Africa, understand the various arguments that define, one, West Africa as a speech community and, two, the role of English in the social life of the sub-region and to apply the acquired knowledge to expanding the scope of the discipline of language in contact. Students would be expected, therefore, to discover the perceptual and conceptual description of English within the determining factors that make West Africa a speech community that accommodates English and the theories of language study that make academic discourse possible within this frame. You are expected to be familiar with mainstream literature on the history of English in West Africa, the social and political issues on West Africa and some sociolinguistic facts such as language contact, language change and semantic/pragmatic variations. Once again, welcome to ENG 852.

This course guide provides you with the necessary information about the course contents and the materials you need for familiarising yourself with in order to properly understand the subject matter. The guide has been designed to help you understand the course. Therefore, you are provided with the guidelines on how to think productively about the principles and facts underlying the study of English in West Africa. Information has been provided on how you can execute projects, undertake assignments and engage in productive academic reading on the course. You will receive on-the-spot guidance from your tutorial classes. You are advised to approach these classes with seriousness.

The study of English in West Africa is a course that will launch you into the world of academic discourse on the nature and spread of English in West Africa.

#### **Course Aims**

The course has been designed to expose you to the study of the nature and history of English in West Africa. Therefore, the course aims to help you understand the various

aspects of English as a language of communication in West Africa. The goals of the course are to:

- enable you to have a broad understanding of the manners by which English came to West Africa;
- help discover the role of indigenous West African languages in shaping the English language in West Africa;
- enable you understand the differences between the varieties of English in West Africa across regions;
- help you discover the functions of pedagogy, migration, sociolinguistics and history to the description of English in West Africa.

## **Course Objectives**

Each unit of the modules has objectives. The combination of the course objectives makes up the total sum of the objectives. If all the objectives are attained, you would meet the following broad objectives at the end of the course:

- discuss historical facts about English Language in West Africa;
- explain in clear terms the peculiarities of West African English and differentiate them from concepts such as English in West Africa;
- determine the language planning strategies that suitably determine facts about English in West Africa;
- explore the methods of teaching any of the aspects of language study to meet the expectations of standard English, despite regional variation;
- explain factors affecting English in the present-day West Africa and project into the future of the language in the sub-region.

## **Working through the Course**

To finish this course successfully and without any hitch, you are advised to study the units thoroughly. You are, therefore, expected to locate the recommended textbooks and read them. At the end of each unit, there are recommended texts for further reading. It is your responsibility to locate all of these materials and study them thoroughly on your own. Remember that NOUN has materials provided for you to benefit immensely from your study. You must take advantage of all of these materials and explore them totally. At the end of each unit, there are at least three Tutor-Marked Assignments. You are required unconditionally to attempt them all. Your tutor will receive them for marking. The task is not about grading alone. It is meant to ensure that you work on understanding

the content of the course. The Tutor-Marked Assignments will constitute a crucial part of your overall assessment. There will be a final examination at the end of the course. You are expected to go through the course for a minimum of fourteen weeks. You must allocate time to all the units in order to complete all the units successfully. You must complete the course on time and be ready for your final examination. You must also note that as a postgraduate course, you are required to improve on your writing and argumentation skills. Reading and writing are non-negotiable conditions for postgraduate studies. Therefore, as you read each unit, you must practise doing your assignments through consistent and well-organised writing. Besides, you are not expected to jump units. All the units have been written with your knowledge assimilation process in mind. Therefore, to understand Unit 2, you must have read Unit 1. To understand Module 2, you must have understood Module 1. Never discriminate against any module or unit.

## What you will Learn in the Course

You will learn in this course the nature and functions of English in West Africa. You will be introduced to the historical facts about the origin of English in West Africa. Besides, you will learn about the nature of the grammar and phonology of English in West Africa and pedagogical issues around the subject matter. You will be given information on language planning and policies in West Africa as they affect English. Moreover, the course teaches basic facts about the roles English plays in the sociocultural development of the West African sub-region.

#### **Course Materials**

The major components of the course are:

- 1. Modules each module contains a minimum of four units.
- 2. Units the units are the constituents of the modules. The units contain information needed for the comprehension of the course.
- 3. Textbooks
- 4. Assignments

### **Study Units**

There are nineteen study units spread into five modules:

Module 1	The History of English in West Africa
Unit 1	A Brief History of English in Africa
Unit 2	The Language Situation in West Africa

Unit 3 Unit 4	The Colonial West Africa and the English Language The Nature of English and Indigenous Languages in Contact in West Africa
Module 2	The Role of English in West Africa: An Overview
Unit 1	English and Social Interaction in West Africa
Unit 2	English and Politics in West Africa
Unit 3	English and Commerce in West Africa
Unit 4	English and Migration in West Africa
Unit 5	Language Planning and Policy in West Africa
Module 3	The Nature of English in West Africa I: Phonology
Unit 1	The English Segments and West African Languages
Unit 2	The English Suprasegments and West African Languages
Unit 3	Speech in English and West African Languages
Unit 4	Teaching and Learning English Phonology in West Africa
Module 4	The Nature of English in West Africa II: Grammar
Unit 1	A Brief Description of West African English Grammar
Unit 2	Morphological Issues around West African English
Unit 3	Some Problems of Use of English
Module 5	Researching English in West Africa
Unit 1	Colonial and Postcolonial Debates on English in West Africa
Unit 2	A Brief Sociolinguistic Survey of English in West Africa

Each study unit contains a week's work. In each unit, there are specific objectives, specific directions for study, Tutor-Marked Assignments, conclusion and summary of each study. You are expected to study each unit thoroughly and you must come to full understanding of their contents.

#### **Textbooks and References**

Some textbooks are required and you must buy them. At the end of each unit, you have a list of recommended texts. It is your responsibility to obtain these books and read them thoroughly. Reading textbooks increase your knowledge and understanding of concepts in the course.

## **Tutor-Marked Assignments**

This course will be assessed in two ways: Tutor-Marked Assignments and written examination. There are Tutor-Marked Assignments at the end of each unit. These assignments are meant to help you understand the content of each unit. Ensure that you submit your completed weekly assignments to your tutors for assessment. Your tutorial facilitator is your tutor and their duty is to ensure formal grading of your submitted assignments. You are required to adhere strictly to the deadlines stated in the presentation schedule and the assignment file. The Tutor-Marked Assignments will account for 30% of your total course grade.

You are expected to complete your assignment on time. When you finish, you must send it to your tutorial facilitator. You must ensure that your assignments reach your tutor on or before the due date. If for any reason you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutorial facilitator before the due date to discuss the possibility of granting you time extension. Extensions will not be granted after the date the assignment is due, unless under exceptional circumstances.

### **Final Examination and Grading**

The final examination of ENG 852 (English Language in West Africa) will be three hours and will carry 70% of the total course grade. The examination will be based on the content of the course. The examination questions will be similar to the assessment questions that you have encountered in the Tutor-Marked Assignments. That means all areas of the course will be tested. You should use your time between finishing the last unit and date of examination to revise the entire course. You may find it profitable to go through your assessment exercises and Tutor-Marked assignments before the examination. Note that examination malpractices are not pardonable. You may be dismissed if you are found engaging in any malpractice.

# **Course Marking Scheme**

The following table lays out how the actual course marking is designed:

Assessment	Marks
TMAs 1-4 (the best three of the assignments submitted)	Totaling 30%
Final examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

# **Course Overview**

Unit	Title of Work	Week's Activity	Tutor-Marked Assessments
	Course Guide		
	Module 1		
1	A Brief History of English in Africa	1	
2	The Language Situation in West Africa	1	
3	The Colonial West Africa and the English Language	1	
4	The Nature of English and Indigenous Languages in Contact in West Africa	1	TMA1
	Module 2		
1	English and Social Interaction in West Africa	1	

2	English and Politics in West Africa		
3	English and Commerce in West Africa	1	
4	English and Migration in West Africa	1	
5	Language Planning and Policy in West Africa	1	TMA2
	Module 3		
1	The English Segments and West African Languages	1	
2	The English Suprasegments and West African Languages	1	
3	Speech in English and West African Languages	1	
4	Teaching and Learning English Phonology in West Africa	1	TMA3
Module 4			
1	A Brief Description of West African English Grammar	1	
2	Morphological Issues around West African English	1	
3	Common Syntactic Features of West		

	African English	1	
4	Some Problems of Use of English	1	
	Module 5		
1	Colonial and Postcolonial Debates on		
	English in West Africa	1	
2	A Brief Sociolinguistic Survey of		
	English in West Africa	1	TMA4
21-	Revision	2	
22			
23	Examination	1	
Total		23	

#### **How to Get the Most from this Course**

The study units replace the university lecturer in the distance learning programme. The advantage is that you can read and work through the course on your own and at your pace. It gives you the opportunity to select your time and the place of work that suit you. As you study the materials, think of the whole experience as listening to your lecturer. Just as a lecturer might give you in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate items.

There is a format that each unit follows. There is introduction. In it, you are given an overview of the unit. It also provides information on the links between the units that make up each module of the entire course material. It is important that you read the introductory parts of the units. After the introduction, each unit has objectives. To understand the content of the course, you read the objectives and ensure that you meet them. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. Use the objectives to guide your study. At the end of the unit, you should go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you follow this guideline, your chances of passing the course will increase.

#### **Tutors and Tutorials**

There are twenty hours of provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and locations of these tutorials, together with the name and phone numbers of your tutors. Your tutors are your tutorial facilitators. This will be done as soon as you are assigned a tutorial group.

Your tutor marks and comments on your assignments, keeps a close watch on your progress and on any difficulty you might encounter, as well as provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail/submit your Tutor-Marked Assignments to your tutor well before the due date. Your tutor marks and returns to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone or e-mail if you need help. Contact your tutor if:

- you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings;
- you have difficulty with the Tutor-Marked Assignments;
- you have a question or a problem with an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should endeavour to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance that you have to interact with your tutor and seek help and get attention instantly. To get adequate attention and benefit from the tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will gain a lot from participating actively.

## **Summary**

ENG 852 (English Language in West Africa) is a postgraduate course. This course guide has been prepared to make you familiar with the course. The expectations set for you have been articulated in the guide. Information has been provided on the course overview, examination conduct and interaction with tutors. Enough guidance has been provided on textbooks and relevant reference materials. The course provides insights on the nature of English in West Africa.



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#### MODULE ONE: THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH IN WEST AFRICA

## Unit 1 A Brief History of English in West Africa

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  - 3.2 Aspects of Religion
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- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the English language in another way different from what you already know from undergraduate classes. This course is about English language in West Africa. West Africa is one of the regions of Africa. As a region, its linguistic nature is peculiarly distinct from other regions of the continent. First, it is about the presence of English as a language of social interactions and, second, it is about the learning and teaching of English as a subject in school. Therefore, we can say, in terms of the former aim, that the course is about the English language and, in terms of the latter, it is about English language in West Africa. You need to know that there are controversial views on the subject-matter. Over the years, there have been comments, debates, descriptive statements and observatory statements on what constitutes the nature of English in West Africa. This course is not going to drag you into the controversies. We leave that to field workers and philosophers but you are now being introduced to the basic concepts that will guide your understanding of the course. This unit takes you into the history of the language in West Africa.

The study of the history of any phenomenon requires the deployment of memory. You are expected to use the power of memory to follow the arguments that establish the origin of English in West Africa. Attention should be paid to the discussions on the sources of information on the rise of the language, its role, that is, the functions it performs at various levels of socialisation. From the benefit of memory to historical accounts, we often work with periods in the discussion of historical events about anything. Therefore, periodisation is one of the techniques one must pay attention to. Each period is marked with specific events. These events come with their specific social nature, cultural dispositions and other issues that contribute to the growth of the situations under historical examination. As you read the history of English in West Africa, you are

expected to open your mind to understanding that the accounts depict what happened in the past. You must deploy the part of your mind that receives information on past events and examine them in order to detect useful information for decision making.

#### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the events that brought English to West Africa
- enumerate specific events that brought English to West Africa
- give account of the contributions of the specific events
- develop your arguments by researching further on the topic.

#### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

## 3.1 A Brief History of English in West Africa

The rise of English as a language in West Africa has its origin in many branches of the history of the sub-region. These branches of the history of the sub-region do not really have any connection with linguistic interests. The connections are social, economic and political. It is not wrong to say that the English language in West Africa is a product of any of or a combination of these connections. To understand the history, therefore, one must study the determinants of its existence. Trade, religion and politics are major determinants of the history of English. Crystal (2003) hints that:

The English began to visit West Africa from the end of the fifteenth century, and soon after we find sporadic references to the use of the language as a lingua franca in some coastal settlements. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the increase in commerce and anti-slave trade activities had brought English to the whole of West African coast. With hundreds of local languages to contend with, a particular feature of the region was the rise of several English-based pidgins and creoles, used alongside the standard varieties of colonial officials, missionaries, soldiers, and traders (p. 49).

The fact in the quotation from Crystal's (2003, p. 49) work points to the general situation of the language in five countries. The countries are The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. In these countries, British 'varieties' of the English language developed. The situation in Liberia and Cameroon assumed a pattern that was different from the other five countries. It must be noted that Cameroon is no longer considered a part of the West Africa sub-region. The quotation also supports the fact that trade was one the determinants of the rise of English in West Africa. The argument goes further to suggest that by the nineteenth century, the language had become the lingua franca in the West African sub-region. The meaning of that was that the people of West Africa used the

English language to interact across linguistic boundaries. Note, in the quotation, too, that 'several English-based pidgins and creoles' arose as regional languages. These forms of language were freely used 'alongside the standard varieties of colonial officials, missionaries, soldiers and traders' (Crystal 2003, p. 49). Now we examine how each of the determinants contributed to the rise of English in West Africa.

Trade was a major determinant in the rise of English in West Africa. Trade means buying and selling of goods and services. Omoniyi (2006) reviews works of notable scholars on how English came to Africa (Spencer, 1971; Lucko et al, 2003) and reports that

From historical accounts, the English language arrived on the West African coast sometime in the sixteenth century after the earliest European explorers had first landed at various ports – Prince Henry the Navigator in Cape Verde in 1444, Sierra Leone in 1460 and Gold Coast in 1471 (p. 174).

This simple report points to the role of explorers in the spread of English. These explorers were on trade expedition on behalf of the governments of their European monarchs who needed contacts in domains outside their sovereign territories. Their missions, more often than not, was to open new markets for products they had to sell in exchange for goods found in some of the newly discovered territories through the exploration. The explorers came with the English language.

Omoniyi (2006) also reports that as far back as 1555 and beyond, 'African interpreters were already being sent to Britain for training' (p. 174). The training was necessitated by the need for interpretation between European traders and African dealers. One trade that flourished then was slave trade. Crystal (2003, p. 51) gives account of the influence of trade on the rise of English in West Africa. He explains that in the 1780's British philanthropists had established themselves in Sierra Leone. These philanthropists bought land in the country and established settlements for freed slaves from England, Nova Scotia and Jamaica. The settlement became a Crown Colony in 1808 and served as a site for dumping slaves rescued from slave merchant vessels. By 1896, the hinterland of Sierra Leone was declared a British protectorate. We can see clearly here how the language got to Sierra Leone. Ghana had a similar experience. Then it was called Gold Coast. The British in 1874 launched an expedition against the Ashanti and succeeded in protecting their trade interests. By then, the territory became a British protectorate. Although Ghana became independent in 1957, English is used as a second language by 1.5 million citizens. English trading along the coast of the Gambia River started as early as the 1600. Crystal (2003) says that a British base for anti-slave activities were established in the capital, Banjul, in 1816 and the same site became a Crown Colony in 1843. The English was firmly rooted here too by the activities of the British to enforce the stopping of the slave trade and the establishing of commodity trade. Nigeria, another British colony, was host to the English language in the manner described above about other nations. Nigeria did not exist until 1914 when the Southern and Northern

protectorates were amalgamated. The ceding of Lagos to Britain as a colony in 1861 was a significant experience in the entrenchment of English as a language.

The case of Liberia brought in a new twist into the accounts of the origin of English in West Africa. According to Crystal (2003, p. 52), Liberia was 'Africa's oldest republic' and

was founded in 1822 through the activities of the American Colonization Society, which wished to establish a homeland for former slaves. Within fifty years it received some 13,000 black Americans, as well as some 6, 000 slaves recaptured at sea. The settlement became a republic in 1847, and adopted a constitution based on that of the USA. It managed to retain its independence despite pressure from European countries during the nineteenth-century 'scramble for Africa'.

The peculiar situation of Liberia brought in the fact that a variety of English emerged in Liberia. That the foundation of the country was formed on American political design, the Liberian English has been found to be laced with American accent. One other thing we must note about Liberian English, an aspect of West African English, is that its origin did not have much to do with trade as a major determinant. The emergence of Liberian English could be traced to political activities of the America government and the desire to terminate slavery.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Discuss in detail the factors that account for the rise of English in West Africa.
- 2. Examine the periods in history and events that led to the development of English in West Africa

## 3.2 Aspects of Religion

The entire history of West Africa is rich with religious themes that determine not only political and economic positions but, also, linguistic structures that define the social status of the sub-region. English in West Africa cannot be discussed as a topic without a consideration for the contributions of the early Christian Missionary Society to the growth and spread of the language. Therefore, religion is one of the determinants of the rise of English in West Africa. By the nineteenth century, Christian Church activities had been fully established in West Africa. Many of the freed slaves that were camped in Sierra Leone later went to school and took up missionary service as a career. One of them was Bishop Ajayi Crowther. Before Ajayi Crowther was Henry Townsend who was born in Exeter in 1815. Townsend worked in Sierra Leone between 1836 and 1840 for the Church Missionary Society. He left for England and returned to West Africa in 1842. This time he came to Abeokuta and in 1844 a C.M.S. station was opened. But before

leaving for Abeokuta, Townsend had stopped at Badagry, where he met another British missionary, Thomas Birch Freeman of the Methodist Church. The import of this account is that the English language set foot in Nigeria through the missionary activities of these clergymen. Schools were established in Badagry and Abeokuta, for instance, for the teaching of specific subjects that would aid the jobs of the missionaries. The medium of communication in these schools was English. The situation in Lagos, Badagry and Abeokuta was not much different from the experiences of Freetown, Accra, Banjul and Calabar.

Apart from the Church Mission Society activities, we had the political angle to the spread and growth of English in West Africa. By now, one would have noticed that the English language came through trade and religious activities but none of these mediums would have been successful without the political influence. First, you must remember that when trade expeditions were launched, political forces were behind them. Second, the execution of many of these expeditions took place with the aid of the military institutions of the home governments of the explorers. Third, the language of transaction was English and these explorers did not hesitate to introduce it to the natives they met in the places visited. The fourth point is that about the time the Church mission activities were taking place, the colonial political structures were also being established. Therefore, there was an intermingling of trade, church and political activities at about the same time. The treaties establishing Colonial Colonies in the West African territories occupied by the British were written in English and the explanation of the contents of the documents to the local Heads of Government required the services of interpreters. Many of these interpreters had received trainings to satisfy the European traders' interest. At the end of the slave trade, many of these interpreters were converted to service the political interests of the British colonial administration. The interpreters became one of the mediums through which the English language found its root in West Africa.

While the discussion so far has given a clear view of the determinants of how English took its root in West Africa, there is need to situate the impact of the accounts on the spread of the language in the sub-region. In Lagos, for instance, the language was a strong force in the experiences of socialisation. It was taught as a subject in the missionary schools. The missionaries used the language for communication in the Church. Trade companies employed the services of those who could speak and write in English. The British colonial officers wrote their diaries in English and employed government staff who had to use English for communication. Moreover, the armed forces were formed in line with the English tradition, thereby making the use of the language inevitable. Apart from Lagos, similar experiences took place in Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. Echeruo (1977, p. 61) depicts the nineteenth century Lagos as a major factor in the entrenchment of English as a language in West Africa. He observed that the contributions of the first indigenous education officer, Henry Carr, laid a firm foundation in the growth and spread of the English language. The political angle here lay in Carr's recommendation to the British colonial administration in Lagos as to how the language could be treated. Echeruo (1977) quotes Carr's recommendation verbatim:

Greater attention should be given to the study of English. Good authors should be carefully studied in this connection and extracts from them, both in prose and sentences and idioms ... from English to Yoruba and vice versa, should be frequently and systematically practised. The whole process should offer a field for the exercise of grammar, for acquiring a good sense and good taste in composition and for giving the pupils the power to appreciate and enjoy what they read in English. It is necessary thus to insist on the study of English because for the majority of the boys, the only opportunity they have to learn to speak English is the school; and a parent has a right to expect that his boy, after passing through the highest class in a secondary school, should be able to write an ordinary letter in correct and direct English style (p.61).

From this discussion, we have some clues to the way the English language came to West Africa. Our next task is to discuss the specific topical historical events that ensured the implantation of the English language in West Africa. The difference between this perspective and the ones discussed earlier is that the historical accounts tell how the language came to the sub-region. Banjo (1996, p.1-34) makes extensive explanations on the phenomenon and lists factors such as commerce, education, religion, policy formulations as determinants of the implantation of English in West Africa. His explanations also include whether or not Pidgin and Creole are languages or variants of English, drawing upon the circumstances that determine their rise. It is important that we examine these factors with a view to understanding how they could have some influence on the processes that determine the implantation in question. It is also important that we pay attention to the historical conditions under which these factors determine the implantation. Commerce, for instance, is about buying and selling. Education is about learning and the way of learning could affect human behaviour. Religion, like education, does have effect on human ability to construct belief system and management of behaviour. Policy formulations and implantations are social processes that have means of affecting human affairs in diverse ways in society. These factors, one way or the other, have had to influence the implantation of English in West Africa. We have mentioned some deep historical facts about the coming of the English language to West Africa. In brief, we now review Banjo's (1996) arguments as examples of the effects of these factors on the situation of implantation from Nigeria, one of the countries of English West Africa.

Banjo (1996, p.) has fingered commerce as one of the agents of implantation of English in West Africa. Using the Nigerian experience to substantiate his facts, he draws facts from the works of Spencer (1971) to show that as far back as 1530 and 1532, notable merchants had traversed the Guinea Coast 'en route for the New World'. Banjo (1996: 2) specifically states that, although it was not certain if the English language was the language of commerce during these visits, commercial activities of the Europeans began in the West of Nigeria. However, by the eighteenth century, 'even before the ascendancy of the slave trade, English traders had established themselves in places like Bonny and

Calabar'. Trade transactions from these commercial activities took place with the English language as a medium of communication. Banjo (1996) writes that:

We can only speculate about the earliest form of English that the English traders brought to Nigeria although, as we have just seen, by the end of the eighteenth century, Nigerians were already going to England to acquire the language. Indeed, the beneficiaries of these overseas courses lost no time, on their return to Nigeria, in establishing local schools for the propagation of the language(p. 2).

This point made shows, undoubtedly, that commerce was a means to the bringing and implanting of English in West Africa.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. Enumerate the means by which religion influenced the entrenchment of English in West Africa.
- 2. Critically discuss the role of Henry Carr's recommendation on the use of English in West Africa
- 3. Assess trade and religious activities as factors responsible for the use of English in the Sub-region.

#### 3.3 The Role of Education

The role of education is next. West African nations, where English has been implanted, had indigenous ways of life before the European culture came. Language and culture are two inseparable elements of society that when one is discussed, it is always in terms of the influence of the other. In this light, we have found in Banjo's (1996, p.14) discussion that education was one of the agents of implantation of English in West Africa and, therefore, it is also the source of the presence of European culture. The English language found its firm root in West Africa through the educational systems that were established shortly after the missionaries followed in the wake of the merchants. Banjo (1996, p. 14) reports that there are no evidences of the impact of English on 'indigenous systems of education' at about the period 'between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries'. In the same account, he points out that schools for the training of interpreters were established in Calabar around the eighteenth century. These schools did not intend to implant the language but they were meant to facilitate the traders' business.

Another angle to the contribution of education as a determinant was the roles missionaries played in the implantation process. The history of West Africa is replete with the differences between the missions of the merchants and the Christian missionaries. While the traders' stay was temporary, more often than not determined by economic indices, the missionaries came to stay for a long time. Therefore, the communication problems posed by language barriers had to be solved. The missionaries, therefore, established primary schools alongside churches. First, the schools established,

unlike the case of the traders' training programme, brought in some cultural reorientation projects that interfered with the indigenous educational systems. Banjo (1996, p. 15) says 'a new system of education came to be superimposed on the indigenous systems, the latter being banished more and more to the periphery until reduced to virtual non-existence'. This superimposition was successful owing to the system introduced by the missionaries.

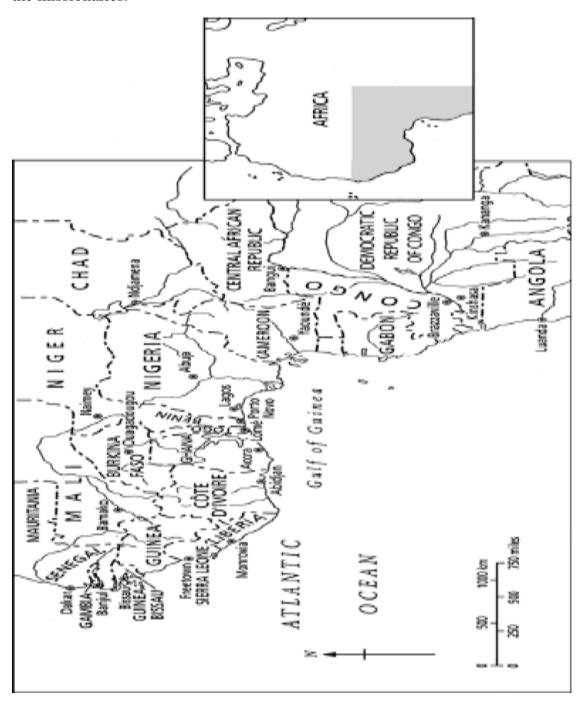


Fig. 1 The Map of West Africa (Crystal, 2003)

West African pupils spent ten years in their primary schools where they were taught in the ways of the English. At the end of their education, pupils were awarded certificates and were employed in the different branches of the Church and civil administrations. 'One of the most important subjects,' Banjo (1996, p.15) writes, 'was, naturally, English, and it must be said that the standards achieved in the language by early products of the system became the great envy of their late twentieth-century progeny.' With the success of the primary school experiment, the missionaries established secondary schools. The first of such schools was in Calabar – Hope Waddel Institute. The Scottish Presbyterian Church had a hand in this. The Methodist and the Anglican Churches concentrated their efforts in establishing schools in the south-western Nigeria while the Catholic Church concentrated on the south-eastern region. The Baptist Church also came and found the north of the south-west suitable to have their minimal impact. The English language, through this means, was rooted in the social system of the West African nations.

Beyond the part played by education as examined here, religion was another factor. Banjo (1996, p. 11) speaks of this phenomenon as a case of 'grafting the language to the Nigerian sociolinguistic scene'. This was done by the activities of the missionaries. The missionary works in Badagry and Abeokuta were responsible for the creating of a status for the English language in Nigeria. By the year 1842, when some of these activities were going on, freed slaves were returning to the sub-region. We had them returning to places like Accra, Sierra Leone, Monrovia, Lagos, Abeokuta and Calabar. Evidences of the effect of the English language on the lives of the freed slaves could be found in the diary of Antera Duke and the writings of Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoano and Ignatius Sancho whose various use of English typify exposure to the language in varying circumstances. All of these slaves returned to West Africa with the Christian Faith as their new way of life. Banjo explains that Antera Duke learnt English at home through the schools established by the missionaries or the traders. Equiano, Cugoano and Sancho, Banjo (1996, p. 11) reveals, 'all had lived most their adult lives in Britain'. Equiano had lived from the age of ten as a slave in between the Caribbean and England, working aboard slave ships. He was reported to have bought his freedom at the age of twenty-one while working as a sailor for many years. The relationship between the coincidence in the freedom for the slaves and the establishing of the Christian Churches is seen as one of the vital factors in the implantation of the English language. Banjo (1996) sums up the situation in these words:

The slave trade, which raged in the eighteenth century with catastrophic consequences for West Africa, indeed added a new dimension to the story of the English language in West Africa by first linking up homegrown varieties of the language with the metropolitan variety brought back by manumitted slaves, and dispossessing many a West African of his indigenous language (p. 14).

#### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Explain the role of education in the spread of English in West Africa
- 2. Would you agree that missionary activities were part of the major factors in the use of English in the British colonies of West Africa? Discuss your point with examples.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The history of West Africa as it relates to the English language is embedded in slave trade, Western Education and the Christian religion. These three factors have seen to it that the English language was grafted and rooted within the Western sub-region. Consequently, in recent times, the place of English as a language of wider communication, especially in government and education, cannot be over-emphasised. Majority of its lexicon has been grafted in English-based pidgins and creoles that are common in West Africa. Presently, an Anglophone West African's status is, in relation to his/her educational credentials, determined by his/her competence in the English language.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been able to study how the English language came into West Africa and its place as a lingua-franca between English traders and their African counterparts in the fifteenth century. We also investigated the development of the language in West Africa as the language of instruction in missionary schools. We observed the roles education and religion played in the integration of the language, especially with the presence of indigenous languages in these West African countries.

#### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1. Discuss how the English language was imported into West Africa.
- 2. How have the factors of commerce, education and religion served to enforce the development and spread of the English language in West Africa?
- 3. How is the English language situation in Liberia different from that of the other Anglophone West African countries?

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## Unit 2 The Language Situation in West Africa

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#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The importance of examining the language situation in West Africa stems from the controversies generated by the concept of varieties of language. The debate over which concept is right or wrong between the notions, English in West Africa (EWA) and West African English (WAE) is at the core of this unit. The main focus of this unit is to arouse your consciousness on the divergent views scholars on the subject hold about the right perspective. While some scholars insist that the place of English in West Africa is a matter of containment, others hold the view that the matter is that of constitutive membership. The unit, therefore, presents the arguments from both sides of the camps in order that the factors adduced by scholars from each side are clearly outlined. Before going further, you are expected to pay attention to the premises established by scholars on the identification of the variety of English discussed.

As discussed in the previous unit, it is clear that the language is not indigenous to any of the territories where it is an inevitable language. Contact with indigenous languages must have created some situations that affect the relationship between English and the West African languages. There is a unit devoted to the discussion of these situations. However, you should note that this unit presents arguments that serve as precursors to other facts that will be discussed later in Unit 4. In this unit, then, you will learn facts about the nature of Nigerian English, Ghanaian English, Sierra Leonean English, Language situation in the Gambia and Liberia. Specific attention has been paid to Pidgin and Creole. Examples are given to show the features of these language variants across the English speaking regions of West Africa.

#### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- discuss the language situation in West Africa
- identify how English and West African languages interact
- state the effect of English on West African languages and their users.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

## 3.1 The Language Situation in West Africa

A rather unique feature of the language situation in West Africa is the multiplicity of indigenous languages in the countries that make up this African region. There are five Anglophone West Africa countries and among these countries are hundreds of indigenous languages in which Nigeria takes over four hundred. This linguistic plurality is expected to create enormous problems, especially in the areas of governance and education. It is only reasonable in such a situation that a common language is chosen to cater for the day-to-day activities of commerce, religion, education and politics. For the Anglophone countries of West Africa, the English language mostly serves as the official language alongside major indigenous languages (as seen in the case of Nigeria), which serve as regional languages.

An official language is designated as having a unique legal status, that is, it is typically the language used in a nation's legislative bodies and official government business. The official language of a country may not necessarily be a language of wider communication as it is not usually indigenously produced (e.g. English in West Africa), however, to an extent, it solves the problem of communication disintegration, especially in a multiethnic/multilingual environment. The multiethnic nature of West African countries encourages the need for the establishment of a National language, which does not operate in the place of an official language; rather it is chosen by decree to represent and express the national identity of a nation. Contemplating this, one could conclude that a multiethnic nation may find it belabouring to come up with a national language without seeming to be biased. However, Aito (2005) states that choosing a national language is based on such considerations as literacy, political and educational status. This statement enunciates the need to tag (a) national language(s) as a major language in a nation as against the other languages that may exist, which conveniently fall into the category of the minority.

Most West African countries also have the designations, *Lingua-franca* and *Second Language*, for the types of languages that exist on the basis of their functions within the country. The lingua-franca is the language used by different ethnic groups as a general means of communication, especially when these ethnic groups share a common spatial

environment (Bello, 2001). In West Africa, the Pidgin is gradually becoming a linguafranca. The Pidgin in these countries is English-based. Majority of its vocabulary is taken from the English language, while the sound system, grammar and syntax adhere to the rules that govern the substrate languages. It is important to state here that the dialect of English utilised in Pidgin is not the Standard British English; rather, it is the dialect of English found occurring among the uneducated native speakers of the language.

Like lingua-franca, code-switching and code-mixing are common phenomena of the linguistic situation in Anglophone West Africa. Due to the presence of more than one language existing in these countries, there is bound to be what is called language contact. Code-switching refers to alternating between two or more languages. Structurally, code-switching does not occur intra-sententially, i.e. the alternation does not take place within a single sentence. Rather, the switch occurs inter-sententially. It involves the lifting of phrasal, clausal or sentential structures (Ugot, 2009).

Apparently, code-switching requires a degree of linguistic competence in more than one language. However, arguments have arisen on the basis of code-switching occurring in communication as a result of insufficient knowledge of either language. A response to that argument speaks in favour of code-switching as a suggestive indicator of the degree of bilingual competence of the language user. An ideal bilingual is able to switch from one language to another on the basis of the changes in the speech situation such as the interlocutors, topic of discussion, gender and status. Code-mixing also occurs in societies in which two or more languages are used. It is the random alteration of two languages within a sentence. The basic difference between code-switching and code-mixing is the composition of the elements that make up the utterances and the arrangement of such intermingling.

An average West African is bilingual. Consequently, the presence of more than one language in West African Anglophone countries allows for about four options in interaction (Walters, 2007). These four options are: (a) Local languages, which are not necessarily the National languages of the countries; (b) National languages, which have been selected by decree to serve as the national identity of the native speakers; (c) Pidgin English, which serves as a common means of communication; and (d) The English language, which is the official language of these countries. The last two options enjoy a great success as connecting languages, especially for speakers of the many native languages present in these countries.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

- 1. Discuss the language situation in West Africa in the 21st century.
- 2. What are the likely consequences of the language situation on the English language in West Africa? Outline your points and give examples.

## 3.2 The Pidgin in Anglophone West Africa

The history of the West African Pidgin can be traced back to the period when the British dominated the Atlantic Slave Trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. During this period, British slave merchants and local African traders were in constant contact, therefore, developing this 'language' to facilitate their commercial interactions. However, this lingua-franca rapidly spread up the river channels into the interior parts of West Africa due to its importance as a medium for trade interactions among West Africans of different tribes. The bulk of the lexicon of the Pidgin is taken from the English Language, while its sound system, grammar and syntax are influenced by the local languages.

In Post-colonial West Africa, the Pidgin is still very much in use, especially in the area where it serves as a common and convenient medium of interaction in a multilingual society. According to Ejele (2003), the Pidgin is viewed as a self-imposed language that cuts across ethnic, cultural, political and psychological barriers. Nevertheless, there are arguments as to the value Pidgin holds in the West African region. Akinnaso (1989) and Adegbija (1994) are of the opinion that the Pidgin possesses some qualities that are beneficial to the acquisition of language. Conversely, such researchers as Brann (1985) and Elugbe (1995) view Pidgin as contemptible and describe it as a debased and bastardised form of the English language.

Decamp (1971), Hymes (1971) and Hudson (1990) state that the Pidgin possesses some characteristics that distinguish it from other languages:

- the elimination of grammatical devices like inflections, plural possessive and tense
- the use of reduplication as intensifier
- ability of a word to have a semantic extension

To explore the concept of Pidgin as a Lingua-franca, we view two West African countries (Nigeria and Ghana) as case-studies.

### 3.2.1 The Nigerian Pidgin

Despite its lack of official status in Nigeria, the Nigerian Pidgin has spread and become more acceptable as a necessary medium of communication. Its acceptability is further enhanced by the heterogeneous nature of the country's sociolinguistic terrain. The Nigerian Pidgin is also sometimes used, albeit informally, in politics, trade and the mass media. Although Nigerian Pidgin possesses elements of Portuguese, English and Spanish, a number of the lexicon of the local languages are incorporated into the lingua-franca. Below is a breakdown of the grammar and structure of the Nigerian Pidgin as assembled by Elugbe and Omamor (1991):

In phonology, the vowels present in Nigerian Pidgin are: a, e, i, o, u, (plus nasals).

The consonants take a slightly different appearance from what is present in the English language as they incorporate some consonants that are present in some Nigerian local languages. The consonants are:

p, f, m, b, v, t, s, n, d, z, l, r, tú, dú, j, k, 
$$\times$$
, g, kp, gb, w, h

As with the vowels and consonants, the lexis of the Nigerian Pidgin is tinged with borrowings from Yoruba, Portuguese, Hausa and English as seen in the following examples:

Yoruba: oyibo - white man, wahala - trouble

Portuguese: pikin - child, palava - discussion, sabi - too know

Hausa: wayo - tricks

English: Story – tori, doormat – dormot, knock – nak

- reduplications: katakata (scatter) confusion, chaos, wakawaka (walk) wander perpetually, toktok (talk) gossip
- compounds: kresman crazy man, switmaut (sweet mouth) flattery, greed, wochnait night watchman

At the level of grammar, the Nigerian Pidgin makes a distinction between the subject and the object of a sentence as explained below:

# Subject:

	Singular	plural
1 <sup>st</sup> person	a	wi
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	yu	una
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	i/in	dem

## Object:

	Singular	plural
1 <sup>st</sup> person	mi	wi/os
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	yu	una
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	am/in	dem

The definite article 'the' is rendered as "di" in the Nigerian Pidgin so that we would have:

di + noun

In the Standard British English, the plural form of the definite article only reflects in the noun that it qualifies, as in: "The apples". However, in the Pidgin, the plural is expressed through the inclusion of the lexical item "dem", as in: "diappledem".

The indefinite articles 'a' and 'an' carry the sense of the number '1' and it is rendered as 'won' in Pidgin. For example,

A white man = Won oyinbo man

The plural form is expressed with the inclusion of either of the lexical item 'plenti', 'meni' or 'boku'.

In framing polar questions in Pidgin, there is the required inclusion of the lexical item 'shebi' at the initial position of the question, as in:

Shebi in mama don chop? (Meaning: Isn't it the case that his mother has eaten?) However, in posing wh-questions, there is the inclusion of the lexical items 'Na wetin' (to ask the question: what is...?), 'nko' (to ask the question: what about...? or how?) and 'nko; (to ask the question: what if...?). there are also the non-verbal clauses such as: 'hau nau?' (to ask the question: how are things) and 'hau bodi?' (to ask the question: how are you?)

#### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. Explain in your own words the nature of the Nigerian Pidgin.
- 2. Discuss the features of grammar in Nigerian Pidgin

## 3.2.2 The Ghanaian Pidgin

The Ghanaian Pidgin, which is formerly called (in Akan term) *kruEnglish*, or *Kroobrofo*, is a predominantly oral and urban phenomenon. It is spoken in the Southern towns, especially in the capital, Accra. Ghanaian Pidgin is confined to a smaller (though growing) section of society than Pidgin in other Anglophone West African countries. Perhaps, this is due to the position of Twi (as the main lingua-franca in Ghana's south) in the country. The Ghanaian Pidgin is not recognised as a respectable medium of communication as the educated English speaking Ghanaians consider Pidgin as an inferior form of the Standard British English. Therefore, its use is mostly relegated to cater for the communication needs of the less educated in the multilingual society.

The phonology, grammar and structure of the Ghanaian Pidgin are not considerably different from its Nigerian counterpart. As we have in the Nigerian pidgin, there is no productive way to mark gender in the Ghanaian Pidgin. However, unlike what is applicable in other West African Pidgins, the plural of a noun is most frequently indicated by the inclusion of the English-s. Sometimes, the plural noun remains unmarked and less frequently, the plural is marked by reduplication. These are indicated in the examples below:

Dat ples, no moskito-s (There are no mosquitoes in that place)

wi get sam wumã we de kuk (There were women, who cooked for us)

At the level of grammar, the Ghanaian Pidgin shares virtually the same indicators for the subject and object of a sentence as with the Nigerian Pidgin. This is shown in the table below:

# Subject:

	Singular	plural
1 <sup>st</sup> person	a	wi
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	yu	yu
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	i	dem

## Object:

	Singular	plural
1 <sup>st</sup> person	mi	wi/os
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	yu	yu
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	sam	dem

The definite article is rendered as 'de' in the Ghanaian Pidgin. Plural nouns take up the English -s, so that we can have:

De moskito-s

Or the indefinite articles 'a' and 'an', Ghanaian Pidgin utilises 'sam' as an indicator. This is shown in the example below:

Sam eria, de kol am Kaokodi (An area that was called Kaokodi)

In framing interrogatives, polar questions (Yes/No questions) are distinguished from statements by a rising intonation. The Wh-questions are framed in much the same way as they are constructed in the Standard British English; however, the orthography is identical to that of the Nigerian Pidgin:

Wetin (What), Wai (Why), Wataim (When), hau (how), Wishples (Where) and Whishmā/hu (Who)

#### Self-Assessment Exercise

- 1. Describe features of the Ghanaian Pidgin.
- 2. Discuss, with ample examples, the grammar and the phonology of Ghanaian Pidgin.
- 3. Explain the features of suprasegments of the Ghanaian Pidgin in contrast with those of the Nigerian Pidgin.

### 3.3 The English Language in Nigeria

As stated earlier, the English language in Nigeria enjoys the status of Official Language with the intent to unite the country both linguistically and culturally. Although English is

a foreign language in Nigeria, it has been domesticated to accommodate and express indigenous thoughts. This domesticated form of the English language is suitably regarded as Nigerian English.

The term 'Nigerian English' has elicited a number of debates as regarding its acceptability as a variety of English that is internationally acceptable and intelligible. Linguists such as Bokamba (1982; 1991), Jibril (1982) and Jowitt (1991) attest to the existence of this variety. Some other linguists like Akere (1982) also go as far as identifying the possibility of the emergence of a Standard Nigerian English. Nevertheless, there are others who view the seeming existence of Nigerian English as 'bad English' (Vincent, 1974) and 'errors of usage' (Salami, 1968). On the whole, there exists a variety of English that expresses the Nigerian thought. As a variety of the English language, Nigerian English possesses a number of characteristics that distinguish it from the Standard British English. In the Nigerian context, these characteristics are not particularly detrimental to the development of the English language; rather they are acceptable due to the mutual intelligibility it enjoys among its users.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Briefly discuss debates on whether or not there is Nigerian English.

## 3.3.1 Characteristics of Nigerian English

At the phonological level, Nigerian English displays certain features that distinguish it from the British Standard variety:

- Primarily, it is syllable-timed, i.e. normally unstressed syllables in the British Standard are not reduced and syllables are made prominent between stresses. This inclination is principally considered a basilectal form of language.
- It allows for fewer vowel contrasts so that vowels in the Standard British English Language that are closer to the ones present in indigenous languages are immediately replaced.
- Diphthongs are automatically reduced to monophthongs.
- Consonant sounds, such as  $/\theta$ / and  $/\delta$ / are, usually replaced by its close neighbours in the indigenous tongues /t/ and /d/.

At the level of lexis, Nigerian English accommodates transfers from indigenous languages. Apparently, these lexical transfers are largely intelligible within the Nigerian context. Examples of such transfers are *danshiki*, *bààtá*, *gangan*, etc. There is also what is called semantic expansion. Here, a lexical item of English origin is given an extended meaning beyond its primary meaning (Ajani, 2007).

At the morpho-syntactic level, there is usually the occurrence of such features as:

• Sense repetition, which is achieved by merging American English and British English words (that carry the same meaning) to form a word with the same

- meaning of both words. For example, *torchlight* is a common Nigerian word for *torch* or *flashlight*.
- Semantic contortion. Fakoya (2006) explains that meanings are attached to words rebelliously regardless of the lexico-semantic order that exists in the language. He further points out three areas this discrepancy is exploited: in Nigerian usage, words are given opposite senses (as in *dupe*), erratic enlargement (as in *customer*) and mischievous reduction (as in *beverages*).

At the level of discourse, idioms and proverbs are literally translated from local languages to the English language, so that the senses they carry are not lost in translation. However, internationally, these meanings do not have references beyond the Nigerian context.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Describe the characteristics of Nigerian English at the following levels:
  - a. Phonology
  - b. Syntax
  - c. Morphology
  - d. Lexis
- 2. From your point of view, explain the concept, Nigerian English.

## 3.3.2 The Future of Nigerian English

While some researchers recognise and oblige the existence of Nigerian English, others disclaim its credibility by pointing out its shortcomings, especially when placed side-by-side with Standard British English. However, in reality, Nigerian English is thriving and aiming towards becoming a standard in itself. Perhaps, a Standard Nigerian English is already realised, errors and misrepresentation notwithstanding. Nigerian English, it appears, is more than a passing fancy and has carved a niche for itself within The West African Standard English continuum.

#### Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Provide critical comments on the assertion: "Nigerian English is more than a passing fancy and has carved a niche for itself within the West African Standard English continuum."

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

To study the language situation in West Africa means to trace the history of the region from the era of the Slave Trade to the present. In this module, we have been able to establish the influence of colonialism on the linguistic development of Anglophone West Africa. Although indigenous languages are not ultimately eradicated, their status is

placed only a step behind the English language. This is a decisive statement that the colonisation and the Western infiltration of the West African region will not be erased so easily.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we were able to examine the language situation of Anglophone West Africa by studying how slave traders and local traders were able to conduct their transactions successfully through the use of a lingua-franca. Consequently, we examined the place of the Pidgin as a lingua-franca in multilingual West African countries and we selected the Nigerian Pidgin and the Ghanaian Pidgin as representatives for the study of the nature of the West African Pidgin English. Furthermore, we moved onto the English language as used within the West African context. Nigeria was chosen as the representative country to view the existence of an indigenised English language and its likely sustenance in the face of what is acceptable and intelligible, internationally.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1. Is the English language efficient as a lingua-franca in West Africa? Discuss
- 2. Discuss the possibility of a standard West African English.
- 3. Do an investigative study of the situation of English among Nigerians born between 1980 and 1996.

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# Unit 3 The Colonial West Africa and the English Language

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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The development of the English language in West Africa has its origin in the region's earlier contact with slave trade and, particularly, the colonising mission of Britain. The Berlin conference, which culminated in the partitioning of Africa into spheres of influence, was responsible for the occupation of West Africa by the British and the French. Prior to their arrival, the abundance of languages in Africa had meant enormous problems of communication with its attendant challenge to the unity of the people. However, the establishment of the colonial administration accentuates the need for the introduction of the English language as the language of doing government business. The acquisition of the language, therefore, became the password for accessing white-collar jobs, privileges, positions and status. The colonial experience altered not only the linguistic behaviour of the people; it also changed their social and economic lifestyles.

In this unit, therefore, you will learn about the role of colonialism in the entrenchment of the English language in West Africa and its steady replacement of the indigenous languages in official, educational, political and, to a large extent, domestic domains.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- establish the relationship between colonialism and the functions of the English language
- identify the colonial experiences that entrenched the English language in English West Africa
- evaluate the effect of colonialism on the social life of West Africans.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

# 3.1 The Colonial West Africa and the English Language

The English Language came into West Africa as a result of Colonialism. It became the most important legacy left behind by the British (Bamgbose, 1971, p. 35). Since then, English has become the leading language of communication in West Africa. As a result English now serves as a tool for promoting culture in West Africa (by West Africa, we mean the English-speaking or Anglophone countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia).

Since colonialism by the British came to West Africa, the English language has imposed new mental structures on the colonized. These mental structures are used by colonial masters to promote their culture and impose ideas on others. They paint a picture that English learning and culture are inseparable, and help in enhancing the growth of the English language in the Anglophone countries of West Africa. English thus served as the official language of the Anglophone countries of West Africa. It was chosen to facilitate the cultural and linguistic unity of the region. The English language became widely used for education, business transactions, for politics, governance, the language of employment, a status symbol, the primary language for general literacy or documentation (reading and writing) and several other sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic functions in Nigeria. In other words, the English language thus served as the window through which people can see in the society of the West African people.

One of the major functions or roles played by the English language is unity. In Nigeria, for example, there are over three hundred languages and dialects. This makes the Nigerian society a multilingual one. In trying to curb mistrust and promote unity, English has to be used as a means of communication between the different tribes that are in Nigeria.

It should be noted that the Anglophone countries of West Africa already had their indigenous languages before the coming of the English language. So, what happened to

the English language when the local languages met with it was that changes occurred. English received the culture and social norms of the new speech communities. This has a special impact on the recipient society and the foreign language itself. One of such impact is the West African English and the West African Pidgin English that is spoken along the coastal region of West Africa.

Language policy was another factor that promoted English in West Africa. This language policy was introduced by the colonial administration. This administration made sure that their language policies in all its colonies were in favour of the English language. Most of the countries that made up the Commonwealth of Nations, including the English-speaking West African countries were still indirectly controlled, linguistically, through the use of English as their official language. Even the language of policies adopted and still practised by these countries is still in favour of the English language, as can be seen in our educational policy where the English language still remains the major language of instruction in schools, the language of performance evaluation and one of the requirements to gain employment. This has, therefore, helped in spreading English in West Africa.

English has been the only language generally accepted in Anglophone West African countries. There is hardly anywhere in West Africa where you will find someone who cannot speak the English Language, at least the Pidgin English.

Arising from what seems as indispensable in all the sectors of the Anglophone countries, the general attitude to the English Language is favourable to its growth and promotion. Literacy in West Africa is attributed to the ability to speak and write English. Anyone who cannot speak and write English is seen as an illiterate. As such, everybody tries to speak English, at least the passable kind of English; everybody wants to be associated with the winning population, who are English speakers.

The English language has a lot of functions it performs in different areas of the society that is different from the native usage of the language, like the United Kingdom, United States of America, etc. The English Language in West Africa is functional in almost every area of our lives. The English language has been nativised or domesticated to suit our socio-cultural context and is made to perform such functions as language of government. English language is used in transactions in government offices; minutes, official correspondences, memoranda, instructions and directives are given out in English language. English was the only language used to communicate between the colonial administrators and their African counterparts. In fact, the first constitutions in most of these Anglophone countries were drafted in English, just as it was used to write the 1922 constitution in Nigeria. After the independence also, English continued to be the official language and though other indigenous languages were introduced, there were conditions placed as to when and how they can be used.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Outline the key situations that arose from colonialism and the English language in West Africa.
- 2. Discuss some specific functions of English in West Africa.

### 3.2 International Communication

The English language is also used to carry out international communication. In most Anglophone West African countries, announcements at airports are done in English because foreigners are likely to be among them. English also serves as the language of the media. By media, we mean both print and electronic media. Most newspapers are written in English. The electronic media which comprise the private and the federal owned radio and television stations broadcast mostly in English language. English language in West Africa is used in the area of science and technology. This is probably due to the fact that most indigenous languages have not developed enough to handle some of these scientific and chemical names.

If a Ghanaian or a Liberian meets a Nigerian for the first time, the language he is likely to use for communication will be English, which could be Pidgin, Broken or even Standard West African English (SWAE). In most gatherings, and interactions, for example, during traditional marriage celebrations, house warming ceremony, parties and child dedication, the language mostly used is English, at times, code-switched or code-mixed with indigenous languages.

The introduction and spread of English in West Africa has its consequences on the West African Society. The establishment of English in West Africa is as a result of English contact with West African languages. This is called language contact. This variety of English spoken in West Africa has evolved a different type of English from that of the native speakers. It has undergone what is known as Africanisation and nativisation, which has resulted into a unique variety of English language that can be studied. The consequences of the presence of English in Africa can be segmented into linguistic and social consequences. We can say that the language of a people is a window to their culture.

The linguistic consequences of English in West Africa are numerous and they have to do with such phenomena as multilingualism, lexical items into other local languages and vice versa. One of the results of English in West Africa is that it has succeeded in creating a legion of multilingualism. Multilingualism is a phenomenon where people in a speech community speak more than two languages. English in West Africa has resulted into people speaking their mother tongue as well as the English language. This has, therefore, produced a linguistic situation that attracts attention, not only in terms of social structures and political integration, but also, in terms of actualising the ethnic – based aspiration within the ambit or the genuine development of the region.

The presence of English and the prestige that comes first with it has made the English language the first language of some people in West Africa. It is typical to find this in homes of professional middle class and in inter-tribal or inter-country marriages. In these homes, children speak English as their first language, and if desired, their mother tongues as the second language. English soon gains dominance over other languages in the lives of these children. Parents feel that since English is the official language of their country, it is best to equip the child with such a language to face the challenges of life. English has therefore become a language of informal communication in this sense.

Another possible influence was indigenous languages of the region, coupled with other languages that have come in contact with the people residing in West Africa; languages like French – spoken by the colonial masters of the neighbouring Francophone West African countries such as Benin, Togo and Mali; Portuguese – language of most European traders that came to engage the people in trade; and languages spoken by the returned slaves from other parts of the world.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Explain how English has facilitated international communication in West Africa.
- 2. Discuss multilingualism in relation to English and West Africa as a speech community.

# 3.2.1 Double meaning

Thija and Bello (200,p.102) point out that some English words have in West Africa taken up additional meaning apart from the original meaning.

# Examples are:

Corner - WAE - to deviate

Compound - WAE - houses - fenced in yard

Ground - WAE - Earth, Soil

The examples above have taken a new West African meaning to better explain the culture of the people.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Discuss the new meanings English words assume in West Africa.

# 3.2.2. Indigenous West African Languages

The indigenous knowledge tends to influence the use of English in this region. While BrE has terms for "step-father", "step siblings", "step mother", the WAE tends to use the super-ordinate term "mother" and "father". This makes the few available terms to become rich in meaning. Also, there are terms that represent far more than family relations. They indicate honour and respect. For example, Aunty, WAE – represents an older female, a school teacher, whereas in BrE English, the word refers to the sister to either of your parents.

The emergence of Pidgin English is another result of the English language in West Africa. This variety of English is mostly used by the not so educated class to communicate with one another. Mostly in a multilingual society like Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra-Leone, Liberia and Cameroon, this language is a fusion of English and the indigenous languages. This form of English has people wanting to associate themselves with it in informal contexts. This variety of language has entered into the media system so much that news, programmes, books, music and movies have been done in Pidgin English.

These languages were combined with English and other local languages to form the West African Pidgin English. It is learned outside the four walls of educational institutions.

Examples of Pidgin English cutting across all the West African Anglophone Countries

# Nigerian Pidgin English

You sabi do am? - Can you do it?

She you dey come? - You are coming, aren't you?

Nna, the test hard no be small - The test is really hard.

# **Cameroon Pidgin Eng**

Dei no sabi laik ohs. - They don't really like us.

I ron go rich I hohs - He ran until he reached his house.

Bring di ting kam putam foh hia - Bring it here

#### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Itemise the features of West African languages in West African Pidgin
- 2. Trace the similarities in the variants of Pidgin in West Africa.

# 3.3 Functions of Pidgin

In some regions of West Africa, like Sierra-Leone, Liberia and even some part in Nigeria, the Pidgin English has been so deep rooted to the extent that some people see it as their local language and can no longer speak their mother tongue. These people now pass on this variety of English to their children in that the present generation of children have no contact at all with what was their parent's mother tongue. This is probably as a result of slave trade like in Liberia and Sierra-Leone. This variety of Pidgin has developed and attained some level of sophistication. This type of Pidgin has gradually become creolised. These people have, therefore, become native speakers of Pidgin English.

Another linguistic consequence of English in West Africa is that it breeds and brings about the intrusion of the American dialect thus called "Americanisation of West Africa English." In Liberia and Sierra-Leone, for example, this gradually crept in as a result of slave returnees from America. These returnees have acquired over time, the dialect of Americans. West Africa is normally a British colony, so West Africa English should normally be that of the British norm. Recently, however, most people have acquired a number of Americanisms particularly at the phonological and lexical levels. Apart from the afore-mentioned reason why this happens, another reason could be because at present, the United States of America maintain their status in the forefront of today's world technological, political, social and economic affairs and, as such, many people want to be identified with anything American, including West Africans. Examples Americanisation creeping into West Africa English are

- i) Lexical items apartment, flashlight, etc;
- ii) Diphthongisation as in privacy
- iii) The tapping of "/t/" as in student and
- iv) Adopting the American stress patterns and mannerism "as in", "like" etc.

Awonusi (1994) observes that in Nigeria, there is a problem of three standard varieties: British Standard English (BrSE), American Standard English (AmSE) and Nigerian Standard English (NSE) and people are expected to be proficient in all three ... this has influenced the societal structures on linguistic behaviour observed in native speakers in English societies and may equally apply in regions like West Africa, where English functions as a second language.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. Describe aspects of Americanism in West African Pidgin
- 2. Discuss the distinct phonological features of Pidgin in West Africa.

### 3.4 Code Variation

The emanation of code variation is as a result of linguistic consequence of English Language in West Africa. Code variation refers to the instance those West African speakers of English as a second language code – switch or code – mix at intervals when engaged in discourse. Different terms have been used like inter-lading, code-alternations, loan and borrowings. No matter the term used, code variation is a phenomenon whereby a multilingual uses two codes in the stretch of an utterance or series of utterances when communicating. That is, he uses the two languages inter-changeably and, at times, moving from one language to another and yet to another, substituting words in one language for another in the same stretch of speech. For example,

a) E ma disturb mi rara (Yoruba) (Don't disturb me)

b) Shey you are coming, Abi? (Yoruba)' You are coming, are you not?

c) Biko yem mirin to drink (Igbo) Please, give me some water to drink.

d) Bia here (Igbo) Come here

e) Aboki, my friend (Hausa)

Code variation is believed to be adopted for ease of articulation and understanding mostly when speakers are in loss of word or the speaker's indigenous language does not have an exact word that fits the context.

Language cannot be studied in isolation, because language is the creation of society. When a language is studied in relation to social factors such as: age, sex, class, educational level, ethnicity, etc., it is known as sociolinguistic or what Yule (2002) calls social dialects. The social consequences of English Language in West Africa have caused a lot of changes and these changes come in form of difference in usage in relation to the society. That is why the usage of English is different in Nigeria than it is in Ghana or any other Anglophone West African Country. This could be as a result of geographical location, social class of the speakers, age differences of the speaker and the sex of the speaker. Let us see the social variations that exist in Africa.

Though English is a second language to some West Africans, the type of "lect" used by an individual speaker determines the social class the speaker belongs. Social class determines the pattern of a person's linguistic variation. One of the features of the hierarchical social structure of a country like Britain is that social class takes precedence over geography as a determinant of speech. In West Africa, social class is so fluid and unstable. There is no definable class demarcation as to what is seen in other parts of the world. However, the accent a speaker uses tells if a person is educated or uneducated. The educated speakers are identifiable with the standard variety of West African English, while the uneducated speakers are identified with the non-standard variety. In this continuum, it is possible and easier for the educated class to descend in the linguistic ladder to speak the non-standard variety of English when he wants to be associated with the lower class. This is not so with the uneducated as they cannot move up the ladder easily.

The kind of occupation one engages in sometimes determines the type of variety of English to be used. For example a graduate who decides to do a conductor work for a living, though may be proficient with the correct use of English language, would not use it because that variety of English is not suitable with the type of job he is doing. This is also applicable to an uneducated man working in a well-established organisation will use the standard variety because of the calibre of people he discusses with on a daily basis. Yule (2002) complains that education as a socio- linguistic factor that makes some learners "talk like a book", which is possibly a recognition of an extreme form of educational influence. It is this variety of English that Bamgbose (1982) classified as Victorian English, while Ubahakwe (1974) calls it "bookish Nigerian English".

It is common to hear the youths say "how far" as to the elders' "how are you", or hear the youth shorten words to "Whaz up".

Also with the emergence of social networking sites like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *blackberry messenger*, *2go* and their likes, West African youths have recreated the English language to suit their moods and emotions. This is quite different from the language created by the westerners. Examples are:

- a. Laugh won kill me die (LWKMD)
- b. You too gbaskey (ytg)
- c. Be right back (brb)
- d. I dey laugh sit down for ground (IDL SDG)
- e. Laugh Out Loud. (LOL)

This could be as a result of geographical location, social class, of the speakers, age differences of the speaker and the sex of the speaker.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Explain the main reason for the use of code variation in West African Pidgin.
- 2. Discuss the special codes used in communicating in West African Pidgin.
- 3. Describe the nature of language variation in accordance with the nature of English in West Africa.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the coming of the English language into West Africa through colonialism has enforced its usage in our everyday life. It has also made change totally the cultural experience of the people, infusing a mixture of culture in the society by bringing out a variety of English that suits the lifestyle of the West African People. English has, therefore, undergone Africanisation, nativisation and pidgnisation so as to better explain the West African world uses. English Language has come to be not just a second language of the people, but a language that helps to promote their way of life.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we studied the advent of English in West Africa through colonial activities and how English culture was imposed, alongside the language, on the colonised people. We examined also the functions of English in West Africa, chief of which is its being a unifying means of communication in a multilingual society. In addition, the factors promoting English in West Africa were observed such as language policy, as introduced by the colonial administration. We also looked at the linguistic and social consequences of English in West Africa.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss the influx of English into West Africa, highlighting the factors that encouraged it.
- ii. What stands to be the greatest influence on the English language, especially West African English, in terms of growth and expansion?
- iii. Discuss the concept of code variation in relation to the language situation in West Africa.

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Unit 4 The Nature of English and Indigenous Languages in Contact in West Africa

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Nature of English and Indigenous Languages in Contact in West Africa
  - 3.2 Effects of Globalisation
  - 3.3 English as an African language
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language contact occurs when two or more languages interact. When speakers of different languages interact closely, it is typical for their languages to influence each other. Languages normally develop by gradually accumulating dialectal differences until two dialects cease to be mutually intelligible. Language contact can occur at language borders. Thus, language contact occurs in a variety of phenomena which include language convergence, borrowing, and reflexification and the most common products of contact are pidgins, creoles, code-switching and mixed languages.

The most common way that languages influence each other is the exchange of words. Much is made about the contemporary borrowing of English words into other languages, but this phenomenon is not new.

The result of the contact of two languages can be the replacement of one by the other. This is most common when one language has a higher social position over the other. This sometimes leads to language endangerment or extinction.

Mufwere (1971) puts it that it is possible to interpret language contact synonymously with lingua franca as that variety that enables two or more (group of) individual speaking different vernaculars to communicate when they come in contact with each other.

Hein (1970) includes several traditional African languages whose morpho-syntax is not significantly restructured.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that languages do not actually come in contact with each other. It is always the speakers of the languages who are in contact. Their attitudes towards each other will affect the way they speak. If speakers of a language want to identify with each other, they may find themselves adjusting their speech to eliminate the more obvious differences in pronunciation or vocabulary. However, if they do not want to identify with each other, they may emphasise the differences in their speech, particularly if someone from "outside" is present.

It should be noted that the reason people want to associate with each other or not does not have much to do with the language they speak, rather, it has more to do with the status or prestige of one or the other groups of people. One may then begin to link speech differences with social, political and even geographical phenomena. These differences may also reflect differences in economic and political power. While we may react to someone's speech with a positive or negative attitude, we are really reacting to the whole complex of social, economic and political connotations.

The point being stressed here is that when one group is very powerful, they may use that power, unintentionally or otherwise, to attempt to eliminate the speakers of another language, or as it is more often the case, to eliminate their speech variety.

Thus, differences in economic or political power and prestige almost always put the (speakers of the) less-powerful language at a disadvantage. People may decide to stop speaking it in order to avoid social stigma of being part of the less powerful group.

Sometimes, however, speakers of such a language resist having their identity (as marked by their language variety) taken away from them and they may react to the pressures to use the more prestigious language by working all the harder to preserve, protect and develop their traditional language of identity. This is the case reflected in Ngugi wa Thiongo, a Kenyan author who chose to reject English as the medium of expression for his work in favour of Gikiyu and Kinswahili. Ngugi wa Thiong'o lamented the use of language outside of the one that emanated from his own local enrolment.

When languages come in contact with each other, there exists a greater need for at least some individual to become bilingual. Mufwere (1997) theorizing the Shaba-Swahili language in Bantu area of Zambia proposes the term endogenous and exogenous contact languages. He further claims that the former has local lexifiers, whereas the latter has external ones. These terms could be adopted in reflecting how the indigenous languages especially of the West African countries, had been influenced and vice-versa. Thus, the indigenous languages of the West African countries are referred to in this paper as the endogenous lexifiers while the super state language is referred to as the exogenous lexifiers.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define the concept of language contact
- identify the consequences of English in contact with indigenous languages of West Africa
- discuss how indigenous languages have affected the English language and its use

# 2.0 MAIN CONTENT

# 3.1 The Nature of English and Indigenous Languages in Contact in West Africa

Lederer (1990, p.11) puts it that English is the most widely spoken language in the history of our planet, used in some way by at least one out of seven human beings around the globe. Half of the world's books are written in English and the majority of international telephone calls are made in English.

From the foregoing, English could be said to be one of the most populous, if not the most populous language in the world. Its influence amongst other languages has been so remarkable to an extent that between sixty to seventy per cent of international mails is written and addressed in English and eighty per cent of all computer texts is stored in English.

Lederer (1990, p.11) further argues that English has acquired the largest vocabulary of all the world's languages, perhaps as many as two million words and has generated one of the noblest bodies of literature in the annals of the human race.

Language generally is like the air we breathe. It is invisible, inescapable, and indispensable and we take it for granted. But when we take time, step back and listen to the sounds that escape from the holes in people's faces and explore the paradoxes and vagaries of English, we discover a lot of anomalies with the language, particularly, when it comes to the use and the meaning ascribed towards. For instance, a writer is someone who writes and a stinger is something that stings. But fingers don't fing and hammers don't ham; if the teachers taught why can't the preacher praught?

Sometimes, one has to believe that all English speakers should be committed to asylum for the verbally insane. For instance, how can expressions like, "No football coaches allowed" "I'm mad about my flat" and "I'll come by in the morning and knock you up" all convey such different messages in two countries that purport to speak English?

Little wonder that we English users are constantly standing the meaning on its head. Let us consider a number of familiar English words and phrases that turn out to mean the opposite of or something very different from what we think they mean.

I COULD CARE LESS. I couldn't care less is the clearer, more accurate version but why do so many people delete the negative from this statement? May be because they are afraid of the n't ... less combination which will make for a double negative that is a nono.

I REALLY MISS NOT SEEING YOU. Whenever people say this to me, I feel like saying "all right, I'll leave! Here, speakers threw in a gratuitous negative 'not', even though "I really miss seeing you" is what they want to say.

Lederer (1991. P.23), quoting Whitman, puts it that ..... all languages (as well as English) are a little crazy.

They contradict themselves. This is a wing to the fact that language is invented and not discovered. As such language (with reference to the English language reflects the creativity and asymmetry of the human race.

In view of the often expressed view that language is a vessel for thought and behaviour, it could be argued that the English language, like a virus, has spread round the world, carrying with it a way of looking at and expressing new experience. English becomes the pathology of a global culture.

One of questions that come to the mind of majority is the question of the meaning of the English language as a global language, its component as a global language, the need for English as a global language and its danger as a global language.

Crystal (2003, p.3) argues that a language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognised in every country... where a large number of people speaks the language.

As a mother tongue in the case of English, this would mean the USA, Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, several Caribbean countries and a sprinkling of other territories. However, no language has ever been spoken as a mother tongue in more than a few countries (Spanish, Leads, etc), so mother tongue use by itself cannot give a language global status.

To achieve this status, a language (with reference to the English language) has to be taken up by other countries around the world. They must decide to give it a special place within their communities, even though they may have few (or no) mother tongue speakers as it is evident in most of the West African Countries.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Explain the concept, language contact.
- 2. Relate the concept of language contact to the relationship between West African indigenous languages and English.

### 3.2 Effects of Globalisation

Language globalisation could be realized via two major ways. Firstly, a language such as the English language could be made the official language of a country to be used a medium of communication in such domains as government, the law court, the media and the educational system. To get on in these societies, it is essential to master the official language as early in life as possible. Such a language is often described as a second language, because it is seen as a complement to a person's mother tongue.

The role of an official language is today best illustrated by English, which now has some kind of special status in over seventy countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, India, Singapore, etc.

This is far more than the status achieved by any other language – though French, German, Spanish, Russian and Arabic are among those which have also developed a considerable official use. New political decisions on the matter continue to be made; for example, Rwanda gave English official status in 1996.

Secondly, a language can be made a priority in a country through foreign language teaching even though this language has no official status. It becomes the language with which children are most likely to be taught when they arrive in school and the one likely to be taught when they arrive in school and the one most available to adults who – for whatever reason – never learned it, or learned it badly in their early educational years. Russia, for example, held privilege status for many years among the countries of the former Soviet Union. English is now the language most widely taught as a foreign language to be encountered in school, often displacing another language in the process. In 1996, for example, English replaced French as the chief foreign language in schools in Algeria (a former French colony).

In reflecting on these observations, it is important to note that there are several ways in which a language can be official. It may be the sole official language of a country, or it may share this status with other languages; and the more it is linguistically mixed, the less it can rely on individuals to ensure communication between different groups.

Crystal (2003, p.15) puts it that in communities where only two or three languages are in contact, bilingualism (or trilingualism) is a possible solution, for most young children can acquire more than one language with self-conscious ease. He added that in Africa and South East Asia, such a natural solution does not readily apply.

The problem has traditionally been solved by finding a language to act as a Lingua Franca or common language, known as Pidgin, which combines elements of their different languages. Many such pidgin languages survive today in territories which formerly belonged to the European colonial nations and act as lingua franca, for example West Africa Pidgin English is used extensively between several ethnic groups as a lingua franca – usually the language of the most powerful ethnic group in the area.

The geographical extent to which a lingua franca can be used is entirely governed by political factors. Many Lingua Franca extend over quite small domains – between a few ethnic groups in one part of a single country or linking the trading population of just a far country as in the West African case.

The benefits which would flow from the existence of a global language such as the English language are considerable. However, several scholars have pointed to the possible risks. For instance, Crystal (2003, p.13) puts it that perhaps a global language will cultivate an elite monolingual linguistic class, more complacent in their attitudes towards other languages. Perhaps those who have such a language at their disposal and, especially, those who have it as a mother tongue will be more able to think and work quickly in it, and to manipulate it to their own advantage at the expense of those who do not have it, thus maintaining in a linguistic guise the chasm between the rich and poor. Perhaps the presence of a global language will make people lazy about learning other languages or reduce their opportunity to do so.

A person needs only one language to talk to someone else. This is sometimes argued that once a world language is in place, other languages will simply "die away".

It is important to face up to these fears and to recognise that they are widely held because it is difficult to deal with anxieties which are so speculative, or, in the absence of evidence to determine whether anything can be done to reduce or eliminate them. It must be noted that the use of a single language by a community is no guarantee of social harmony or mutual understanding as has been repeatedly seen in the world's history (e.g. the American Civil War, the Spanish Civil War, the Vietnam War), nor does the presence of more than one language within a community necessitate civil strife, as seen in several successful examples of peaceful multilingual coexistence (e.g. Finland, Singapore, Switzerland).

The other points need to be taken more slowly, to appreciate the alternative perspective. The arguments are each illustrated with reference to English.

The historical account traces the movement of English around the world beginning with expansion which continued with the nineteenth century colonial developments in Africa and the south pacific and which took a significant further step when it was adopted in the mid-twentieth century.

The question that seems perturbing is in the depth we could go in measuring the origin of English as global language. Be it as it may, the language has always been on the move spreading round the entire territory of Europe and America alike.

# 3.3 English as an African Language

Although the topic of African English is a potentially vast one, several factors make it a manageable and coherent theme. One is that the main influence of English has been in Sub-Saharan Africa rather than the more Northern countries in which French and Arabic predominate as cultural and contact languages. Formal British colonialism touched mainly West and Central Africa and almost all of East and Southern Africa in the establishment of colonies and protectorates.

According to Spencer (1971, p.8), English was probably first taken to Africa in the 1530's when William Hawkins the Elder passed there on his way to Brazil. This would have been a form of Elizabethan English.

During this time West Africans were taken in small numbers to Europe to be trained as interpreters. An account in Haklyt (1598-1600), cited by Spencer p.:8), suggests that by 1555, five West Africans had been taken to England for over a year for this purpose.

Within Africa, the earliest contacts between English speakers and the locals were informal and sporadic. The West Africa English whose roots lie in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century is today more wide-spread in the Cameroons, Ghana and Nigeria than is English as a second language.

From the foregoing, the earliest form of the spoken English handed over by the original speakers of the language to the trainees had without any doubt been diluted. This is the aftermath of the coming together of two languages with possible realisation of new codes through borrowing and loaning.

According to Spencer (p.8), contact is a major ingredient in the formation of Sub-Saharan English. He puts it further that it is important not to prejudice the influence of contact and to examine other possible factors that may have shaped S.SE significantly. One consideration is that English was often introduced in the classroom, rather than via the sizeable presence of L1 (first language speakers). The learning of English was, therefore, a relatively controlled process.

Dolphyne (1995:28) highlights the various indigenous languages spoken in Ghana and also submits that in practice, however, English is the medium of instruction, especially, in the urban centres where the presence of children of different linguistic backgrounds in the same class makes it impossible for a teacher to use one Ghanaian language.

Adekunle (1995, p.64) submits that the English language acts as the vehicle for that aspect of contemporary Nigerian culture. Equally significant is the fact that quite a substantial body of the intellectual endeavours of Nigeria is carried out and recorded in the English language. From the arguments of the scholars above and many more, one could conclude that the influence of the English language on the Anglo–African countries is inevitable. The inevitability of this language is precipitated upon the composition of the language speakers in a particular speech community. An instance of this could be drawn from a submission earlier made by Dolphyne.

Dolphyne (1995, p.27) recalls that Ghana as at 1995 had a population of 16 million with 42 different local languages. This language diversity is in no way different from what obtains in Nigeria. It, therefore, bothers one how a community with different communicative codes attains oneness of thought without having to subscribe to a particular language of wider communication.

Adekunle (1976) corroborates the feelings above when he argues that:

one of the major problems of young multi-ethnic nations is the integration of their various groups. Language is a potent factor for achieving national integration.

The major attraction from Adekunle's submission is that language is a potent factor for achieving national integration. Thus, the success of a community is hinged on the level of competence and understanding every speaker has in the language of wider communication.

The English language without gainsaying has had considerable influence on the indigenous languages based on the multi-ethnic nature of most West African countries. For instance, the English language gains ground in most urban centres where governmental activities are being carried out because it has had to foster unity among several languages in a speech community.

Dolphyne (1995,p. 29) says that another area where English plays an interesting role is religion. In the urban centres, the orthodox churches, that is, the Methodist, Anglican, etc. preach their sermon first in English and then translate or sum up in the relevant Ghanaian languages. Be it as it may, the indigenous languages in West Africa could not have been said to have been totally relegated.

Adedoyin (1999) argues that the English Language in Nigeria has been acculturated, naturalized and domesticated. Several other literary writers like Achebe, Soyinka, Okot B'tek, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Ola Rotimi also have found means of expressing the indigenous thought or passing across indigenous messages through the use of the English language.

To them, the English language only functions as a means to an end, in order to reach the wider population. This, to a large extent, suggests that the indigenous languages have also in a way influenced the English language.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Discuss the arguments that account for the rooting of English in West Africa.
- 2. Explain the events of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries that preceded the growth of English as second language.
- 3. Itemise some of the influences English has on the social life of West African citizens.

### 4 CONCLUSION

The interaction of two or more languages via the speakers causes one to rub off on the other. This yields an affectation of speech in favour of the dominant language. Hence, the widespread of English in West Africa can also be attributed to the globalisation of the English language. Therefore, this phenomenon places the indigenous languages at the risk of extinction. This notwithstanding, English continues to thrive in West Africa, playing important roles in various aspects of the society. However, the linguistic state in West Africa becomes a win-win situation when the English language undergoes domestication in the hands of West African users.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

We have examined the influence of one language on another through language contact, and the possible endangerment or extinction of either language. We also studied the nature of the English language in a worldwide context, looking at its peculiarities and eccentricities. We have seen too how English has attained a global status, especially in colonised territories where we observed the influence of English on indigenous languages and how the latter has also succeeded in influencing the former through nativisation.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- 1. What are the results of language contact? Illustrate with examples from the West African region.
- 2. Is the English language really a global language? Give reasons for your stance.
- 3. Discuss the nature of the English language.
- 4. How did the English language rub off on indigenous languages and vice versa?

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### MODULE TWO: ENGLISH AND SOCIAL INTERACTION IN WEST AFRICA

Unit 1 An Overview of English and Social Interaction in West Africa

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.0 Main content
  - 2.1 The Nature of Social Interaction
  - 2.2 Domains of Social Interaction
    - 2.3 The Role of English in Social Interaction in West Africa
- 4.0Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit provides an overview of the nature of the relationship between the English language and social interaction in West Africa. You will, therefore, learn about how members of the Anglophone West African countries use the English language to create and sustain a network of interpersonal relationships within the social space. A close look at how a society is constituted reveals that social life is permeated by language at every level. As members of society, we use language not only to describe, question or explain what is going on around us, but also to perform actions that others may describe, question or explain. The relationship between language and social life is thus a mutually constitutive one. Without language there could be no social life, at least as we human beings live it. Conversely, without social life there would be no need of language, since it is communication that lies at the heart of language. Through language persons are able to communicate with one another; we need to communicate because we lead social lives together and it is linguistic communication that makes social life what it is.

This unit, therefore, is designed to examine the various layers and domains of interpersonal activities - politics, commerce, education, peace keeping, migration, religion, sports and entertainment that are constitutive of the social network and how these activities are projected through the use of the English language, with particular reference to the West African sub region.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- understand the nature of social interaction
- explain the various domains and layers of social interaction
- discuss the role of English in fostering social interaction

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

# 3.1 The Nature of Society and Social Interaction

Society is made up of social activities of many different kinds. What makes these activities 'social' is that they are done with or in relation to others. Some activities are collective activities — these are done by several or many persons acting together. Examples of such collective activities are a family meal, a business meeting, a football match or a political election. Other activities may be done by a single individual but with reference to others, or in a context that involves and is made possible by other people. Examples of these are getting dressed in the morning, walking along the street, reading a book or writing a letter. Such activities can be referred to as 'individual' activities so long as it is remembered that, like collective activities, what is done and how it is done is shaped by the fact that the activity is part of a shared social life, a life that we lead with others.

But what is social interaction? Social interaction refers to the mutually influential interactional activities among members of a community. The interaction is facilitated by language. There are two important aspects of this concept. The first is communication, and the second is community.

The first aspect of social interaction involves communication through language. Communication with one another helps us form perceptions of reality and relationships and these become the foundation of a community. Communication is a dynamic process of creating and exchanging meaning between individuals and groups. The word meaning is particularly important. Initially, communication was thought to be based in message transmission and reception; a sender delivers a message using a set of symbols and some channel to a receiver, who provides feedback that the message has been received. However, communication is a much more dynamic process where meaning is actually created between individuals and groups through the exchange itself. In other words, our ideas – our perception of reality, our judgments, even our opinions – are shaped and formed by our interactions.

From this perspective, it does appear that language as a means of social interaction is more than a simple exchange of information; it helps in the construction of reality that characterises every of our daily activities. The functional view of language as interactional exchanges – the exchange of our beliefs, values, interests, and perceptions with one another– strengthens the belief that language is the basis of all human relationships. We enter into relationships as friends, working partners, casual associates or romantic commitments are through the interactions we have with one another. So, our acceptance or rejection of other's messages is influenced by the perception of the relationship that we have with that person. We have all experienced having different reactions to the same message depending on our relationship with the source of that message. We tend to accept the messages of those we trust and find credible, and reject the ideas of those with whom we have no connection. This does not mean, however, that we only take ideas, beliefs, and values from our closest relationships. We accept messages often from people we do not know at all, such as celebrities or newscasters (or Facebook pages).

The second aspect of social interaction is that of community. Though we may be used to thinking about the formal meaning of community as a "civic" term, there is a broader, deeper understanding of the concept that is at work in social interaction. Through the daily collective interactions that occur among and across established groups of people, we actually create a shared perception of reality; in other words, we start to see things in the same ways, using shared terms that describe reality in "our" own language and symbols. In doing so, we form a shared sense of identity, a collective sense of "us" that is often contrasted by the collective sense of "them."

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. Define social interaction and explain the role of language in establishing it.
- 2. Explain the social domains that require language in creating social interaction.

### 3.2 Domains of Social Interaction

The view of language as a practical vehicle of communication suggests that small everyday instances of social interaction shape the social world and are the way in which we 'live' large-scale social systems and institutions. Much interaction is unfocused: individuals are aware of other people but do not directly interact with them. Also most social interaction, especially in small-scale societies, will be face-to-face and between people who know each other. In modern societies much social interaction is with acquaintances and strangers, but the development of ICT means that social interaction is often now carried out at a distance.

Communities, whether on-line or of practice, provide the breeding place for norms that give us powerful cues for how to interpret meaning and determine our preferences, traditions, and rituals. All this occurs through our collective, intersecting, ongoing and overlapping conversations, held through a variety of mediums, from one-to-one conversations over the backyard fence or on the telephone to large civic gatherings like church, a school assembly, a community forum, or even vicariously through our watching television or film.

In view of the foregoing, the domains of social interaction could be described as those where communicative encounters take place within both the informal and formal environments. These include the family domain, educational domain, religious domain, official domain, political domain and business domain. In other words, members of a society participate in various communicative events where they perform different roles. In performing these roles, community members resort to the use of appropriate linguistic codes which could either be the official language (English) or their indigenous languages. For instance, a father who is a government official makes use of English while performing his official duties but also has to use the mother tongue in talking to his old illiterate grandmother. Similarly, in a social encounter with a stranger with a different linguistic background, there would be recourse to a language of wider communication or a language that approximates to one of two languages in contact (e.g. pidgin.)

### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Describe the role of English in social interactions in domains such as
  - a. the cyberspace
  - b. friendship
  - c. business
  - d. politics
  - e. education

# 3.3 The Role of English in Social Interaction in West Africa

The English language is the language of conducting official business in West Africa and so permeates the official domain. In the educational domain, the English language is the dominant means of instruction for a greater number of the child's school life. Both in politics and governance, the English language often dominates discourse, especially at the national levels. Much of the social interaction among the elite takes place in English. This is not unconnected with the status conferred on the user of the language. It is also noteworthy that upward mobility on the social and professional ladder requires a good command of the English language.

The multilingual nature of West African countries makes the use of English for cross-lingual communication an imperative. Both intra-boundary and inter-boundary relationships among peoples of different ethnic backgrounds require a language of wider communication, in this case, the English language.

At the informal level and, particularly where the level of literacy is low, the dominance of the English language is suspect. Where the need arises, people often communicate in their indigenous languages or perhaps resort to the use of pidgin. The situation is almost the same in the case of traders across the geographical boundaries of the West African coast that would need a language other than their indigenous languages in order to carry out their trading activities.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Discuss the functions assigned to the English language in West Africa.
- 2. How has English been helpful in uniting the many ethnic groups in West Africa?

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Members of a society use language to do the social activities that make up their lives together. As we have already suggested, everything we do, from the most extraordinary and significant things down to the most insignificant and ordinary ones, including the trivial and uninteresting parts of our lives, are done in and through the use of language. To ignore how people actually use language in social interaction will amount to trivialising the importance of societal structure and the nature of its relationship with language. Social interaction at every scale lives at the heart of who we are and what we do. It is impossible to separate our social practices from our social interactions.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt about how persons use language together to accomplish the social activities that they are engaged in. Since society is an aggregate of individuals who come together for a common purpose, there is the need for them to engage in activities that will engender communal living through the use of language. You have also learnt that people use language in various domains into which their daily activities fit. Finally, it is clear that since social interaction among West Africans cut across regional boundaries, English language serves as the language of cross-border interaction.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. "The relationship between language and social life is thus a mutually constitutive one." Explain.

2. With reference to any two domains of your choice, discuss the communicative role of English language.

# 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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# Unit 2 English and Politics in West Africa

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main content
  - 3.1 Meaning of Politics
  - 3.2 The Role of English in Politics in West Africa
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

It cannot be gain-said that there are many languages in West Africa. But what we are yet to determine is whether these languages are capable of representing an average West African in all ramifications of life. The West African sub-region consists of both the English speaking population as well as the French speaking population. However, our concern here is the English speaking population. This comprises West African countries that have embraced the English language as the language that represents them among the comity of nations. In other words, we attempt here an analysis of the way the English language is used in politics.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define politics
- explain the role of English in West African politics
- discuss the effectiveness of English in performing this role
- Some of the power play in politics

### 3.0 MAN CONTENT

# 3.1 Meaning of Politics

The term politics can be defined as the process of coming together with the aim of exercising power within a group or an organization. It is usually concerned with people

with vested interest in the organization of a country and the interest in deciding the fate of the people concerned.

The Language of politicians, especially when they are speaking in public, is an interesting combination of specially chosen phrases as if they went to school to learn this. This language is a combination of phrases similar to both religion and law, on the one hand, and the rhetoric of advertising and the media, on the other hand. In other words, the language of politics in West Africa is both incisive and convincing. It is a variety that is much abused. That probably accounted for Crystal's (1995, p.378) claim that those elected to power were politicians whose language the people did not understand.

In analysing English and politics in West Africa, a number of things will be examined. For example, there are issues of personal consistency: that is, saying what one actually means to say; there are issues of credibility, that is, the use of language by the concerned politician credible enough; can he be taken for his words? This is because political questions and answers cannot easily be taken at face value. They have to be looked at critically because they are laced with many meanings. One of such meanings is the fact that people have formed the opinion that politics is a dirty game, hence it is meant for dirty people.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. Discuss the meaning of politics and language.
- 2. Describe the language of politics in some detail.

# 3.2 English and Politics in West Africa

English is the language of some West African governments. This is because most of the languages in the sub-region are either incapable of being used extensively in politics or are grossly inefficient in political use in the region. What this means is that since the region is multilingual in nature (that is, the existence of many languages), politicians in the region will find it somewhat difficult if they have to use indigenous language in political gatherings. What is even more sticking is that fact that most of the sub-regional governments are not readily interested in developing their indigenous languages; hence the arrival of the English language is a welcome development. The above means that very

little difference exists between English as the language of government (that is, all government activities are done in the English language) and English as the language of politics since most governments are interested in holding on to power, they then must use and learn the language that has a wider acceptance. This is where the English language comes in.

We may, therefore, say that English and politics are interwoven in West Africa. However, during electioneering, it is possible to code-switch or code-mix as the case may be. This gives room for wider coverage as well as acceptance in some not too-developed villages in the sub-region. We cannot shy away from the fact that there still exist villages in West Africa that are populated by semi-illiterate people, which include old men and women who never went to school and are, therefore, not grounded in the rudiments of the English Language. For example, Awonusi (2007) says:

The constitutional provisions laid down guidelines for the use of English as the Language of parliamentary debates. The pre-1969 constitutions eventually resulted in the use of English as the Language of political debates at the federal level, and English and Nigerian Languages at the regional level. Specifically, English was used in the West Region House of Parliament while Hausa was more readily used in the North, although proceedings were recorded in English and Hausa (p. 74).

The above, therefore, means that we are most likely going to have English and politics on the one hand, and West African indigenous languages and politics, on the other hand in West Africa. These indigenous languages, however, play only a complementary role to English which is seen as a bigger force. Awonusi 2007) says:

As the Language of electioneering campaigns, the English language proved of tremendous value to Nigerian politicians who freely used it in addition to Nigerian languages. This political speeches, pamphleteering, radio jingles and sponsored advertisements in newspapers and on bill-boards were in English, which was a useful tool in such a multilingual country as Nigeria where the second Language is English .... Consequently, English had to be the Language of political conventions. For example, in 1983, at the convention of the National Party of Nigeria held in Benue State, only two out of over 20 speakers spoke in Hausa, in spite of the fact that the convention held in a state where Hausa is the lingua franca(p. 74).

### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Discuss the role of English in the politics of West African states.
- 2. Demonstrate the influence of indigenous languages on the use of English in the discourse of West African politics.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Politics is the world of the half-truth. Crystal (1995, p.378). This means that politics encourages some elements of lie-telling, be it on a large scale or on a small scale. No wonder, politicians, in some quarters are seen as liars. Even though politics is the world of the half –truth, we still cannot do without it, since it is a process of producing leaders that are saddled with the responsibility of governing and leading a group of people, every one of us then gets involved in the choice of electing leaders in this process. Hence, we all are trying to cope with this because prices are expectedly paid in life and, in this case, it is the price we have to pay for democracy. We, therefore, submit here that English, which is gradually becoming a sub-regional language in some parts of West Africa, is the language tool needed by politicians to manipulate the mind and psyche of West Africans. Another submission is the fact that in political speech is it party convention, electioneering, debates, campaigns, the need to draw applause is of paramount concern to politicians. They can never imagine being booed after any of their speeches by their supporters. They, therefore, take time to structure their speech in such a way that it gives the audience the need to applaud them. They do this, according to Crystal (1995), by adapting an ancient rhetorical structure – the three part list: X, Y and Z. Some of such phrases, according to Crystal (1995, p. 378), are:

Signed sealed and delivered; father, son and Holy Spirit; Tom, Dick and Harry; the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; this, that and the other.

He goes on to say that such lists, supported by a strong rhyming and a clear rising + falling intonational sequence, convey a sense of rhetorical power, structural control and semantic completeness. They are widely used in formal writing and they are especially common in political speeches, where the third item provides a climax of expression which can act as a cue for applause.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

From the aforementioned, we can summarise this unit by saying that in the sub-reign of West Africa, the importance of English in politics cannot be over-emphasised as it plays

a decisive role in the way politicians manipulate it to suit their purpose. English is such an interesting language, since it allows for dynamism as well as creativity. We can break down some of the functions of Political English in West Africa as follows:

- 1. It is the language of electioneering campaign.
- 2. It is the language of political speeches (debate).
- 3. It is the language of political convention.
- 4. It is the language of parliamentary debate.

Hence, in this unit, you have learnt the following: the role of English in West African politics and the effectiveness of English in performing this role.

# 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- 1. What do you understand by Politics?
- 2. How effective is the English language in West African Politics?
- 3. Mention some of the sub-functions of Political English in West Africa.

### 7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READING

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# Unit 3 English and Commerce in West Africa

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 English in commerce
  - 3.2 Negotiations
  - 3.3 Advertisement
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading.

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The English Language plays an important role in the day to day commercial activities in West Africa, but recent researches have indicated that other sub-regional languages play complementary roles. Commerce as well as entrepreneurial activities are important in this region, since this region has been classified as a developing economy; to continue to develop then and meet up with international standards, an international language of the status of English is needed in the situation.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the importance of commerce in West Africa.
- discuss the role of English in negotiations in West Africa.
- identify the role of English in advertisement.

### **6.1 MAIN CONTENT**

# 3.1 English and Commerce in West Africa

There cannot be a better language for the role of entrepreneurial activities in West Africa (Anglophone West Africa) than the English Language. The English Language is an internationally acclaimed language the world over and it is spoken in many continents, including sub-regions in the world. It is spoken by citizens of some super power countries and, in fact, it is the official language of many of these countries. Any country or sub-

region that intends to transact business with some of these super-powers should learn and speak their language. In the words of Crystal (1995),

The USA dominant economic position acts as a magnet for international business and trade, and organizations wishing to develop international markets are thus under considerable pressure to work with English. The tourist and advertising industries will wish to establish officers in the major English- speaking countries (p. 106).

From the above, we see that English, being an international language, cannot be wished away by the West Africa sub-region. It is one language that this developing sub-region needs to come to international commercial limelight, or else, the region will remain in international commercial doldrums, and this will be dangerous and counterproductive. The English language has become an international language that should be embraced by serious-minded regions.

Commercial and commercial activities are the bedrock of any meaningful growth in a region and that is why the West Africa region is looking up to the English language. We can thereby conclude this section by saying that English is gradually becoming the language of commerce in this region.

# **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. Explain the role English plays in the development of commerce in West Africa.
- 2. Will West Africa survive without the English language?

# 3.2 Negotiation

This can be said to be any discussion which is aimed at reaching an agreement. In this case, we use 'negotiation' to refer to any form of discussion which is aimed at reaching an agreement in price in buying and selling. Negotiation is an important factor as it determines who eventually gets what and at what rate. If we say that English is gradually becoming the language of commerce in West Africa, then English is the language needed in business negotiation. This is so because negotiation is an aspect of commerce. There cannot be a successful commercial transaction if the parties do not negotiate.

Another important point here is that West African countries are developing nations; they look up to many European countries, including the United States of America, for

direction in commercial activities. It then becomes pertinent to speak the language spoken

English is the language of international air traffic control and is currently developing its role in international maritime, policing and emergency services. It is the Chief language of international business and academic conferences, and the leading language of international tourism.

If the above is true about English then West African region is in safe hands with the English Language serving as its representative international negotiations.

# 3.3 Advertising

English is the language mostly used in advertising. Advertisements created to sensitize the people about a particular product are done in the English language. Bill board messages, fliers, hand bills, jingles and other forms of advertisements are done in English. From Nigeria, through Ghana to Sierra Leone and other Anglophone West Africa, we see the impact of the English Language. Crystal (1995:106) also supports this in the following quotation:

English is the main language of popular culture and its associated advertising. It is also the main language of satellite broadcasting, home computers, and video games, as well as of such international illegal activities as pornography and drugs.

It follows that a developing region like West Africa needs an international language in the calibre of the English language to come to limelight so as to be seen and heard well in international business meetings that involve great nations of the world.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

1. What have been the contributions of English to the development of advertising in West Africa?

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Thus far, we have demonstrated that the English language is important in commercial activities in West Africa. However, despite its importance, other West African languages are always there to give it their support when commercial activities are to be localized.

That is, indigenous languages are used in local business transactions and English is used for international business transaction.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have demonstrated that commercial activities, negotiations and advertising, being three related agents of development in West Africa, are expectedly conducted in most West African countries using the English Language. This is so because English has an international appeal and its status spreads across most developed countries of the world.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1. Why is English needed in West African Commerce?
- 2. What role does English play in negotiation in West Africa?

### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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# UNIT 4 English and Migration in West Africa

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is Migration?
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The movement of people across different geographical boundaries is certainly not a new phenomenon. Mobility has always been an important feature of people's lives, whether as part of nomadic life, the transhumance, or itinerant trade or agriculture. In recent years, migration has come to the top of the political and social agenda all over the globe and, particularly, across all of Africa. It has therefore necessitated regional integration initiatives that have led to the development of frameworks, legislation, and mechanisms for increased economic and social integration among concerned states. The West African sub-region has always been characterised by strong migratory dynamics due to prevailing labour market and political conditions. Labour mobility and market integration have been explicitly addressed in the context of the regional integration process of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UMEOA). However, an interesting feature of these movements is the fact that as people move from one environment to another, they carry their language with them. This raises some questions; what happens to their language as a result of migration? How do they cope with the language of this new environment?

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- define the concept of migration
- state the factors that contribute to migratory activities in West Africa.
- explain the role of the English language in the movement of persons in the English-speaking territories of West Africa.

#### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

## 3.1 What is Migration?

Migration refers to the spatial mobility of human population involving a change of place of usual residence between well-defined geographical entities. Various reasons behind the migration of people from one location to another can be broadly categorized into two; voluntary and involuntary.

Voluntary migration occurs when people decide on their own volition when and how to move and where to settle. In other words, it is the personal decision taken by people to relocate to another location. Involuntary migration, on the other hand, refers to a situation where people are forced by circumstances such as natural disasters, depletion of resources, political persecution and armed conflicts to settle somewhere else. For instance, as a result of the war in Liberia in the 90s, many residents of that country became refugees in other parts of West Africa.

Both voluntary and involuntary migration can occur either internally or internationally. In effect, migrants all over the world are seeking what all human beings desire: better standards of living, a safe environment and freedom from want and fear.

Migration among West Africans dates back to the pre-colonial era. This is because the people have migrated over the generations in response to demographic, political and economic factors. According to Agyei and Clottey (2007: 3), West Africa under the colonial era,

witnessed a new framework for massive movement of people as a result of demand for labour to meet the requirements of plantations, mines, infrastructural development and public service. In some of the new political units created by the colonialists, the local labour supply could not meet the requirements. This was in response to the booming export sector promoted by the economic policies of the colonial masters.

According to Sudarkasa (1975), some Yorubas were brought from Nigeria to construct Fort James in Accra.

The attainment of independence by many of the West African countries marked the end of an era of unregulated intra West African migration flows. The gradual introduction in the late 1960s of rules and regulations was a deliberate attempt to make a distinction between internal and international migration and to control immigration into their countries in order to protect the job security of their nationals. For instance, Ghana

enacted the Aliens compliance order (Act 160) in 1969. Section 10 of Act 160 prohibits the engagement of foreign nationals to reside and work in Ghana, except in accordance with a licence granted by the Minister responsible (see Adepoju 2002)

The introduction of these regulations, notwithstanding, it was reported that in the 1960s, some Nigerians migrated to Ghana and when Ghana experienced economic difficulties in the 1970s and 80s, many Ghanaians moved to Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria in search of jobs to improve their well-being. According to Adepoju (2005), there were about 2.5 million immigrants from West Africa residing in Nigeria in 1982 and Ghanaians constituted over 80%.

The formation of ECOWAS in 1975 introduced a new dimension to the issue of migration. ECOWAS member-states' recognition of the need for economic integration including free flow of persons, goods and services stimulated the enactment of Protocol on free movement of persons, and the right of residence and establishment in 1979. The first phase of the protocol guaranteed free entry of citizens from Member states without visa for ninety days and it was ratified by all member states in 1980. The second phase of the protocol right of residence became effective in July 1986 and all member states ratified it.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

What is migration?

# 3.2 Factors influencing migration flows in West Africa

One of the major factors responsible for the subsistence of migratory activities in the West African sub-region is the existing bilateral and multilateral forms of economic cooperation within the region. This has opened up perspectives for more extensive cooperation among member-states based on the need for a collective solution to the political, economic and socio-cultural challenges of sustainable improvement in the welfare of their populations. It has also been realised that pooling together of their resources, particularly human resource, will ensure the most rapid and optimum expansion of the sub-region's productive capacity.

Free movement is further facilitated by easy accessibility through road networks that criss-cross the entire West African sub-region.

Another important factor is the unrestricted commercial activities that go on across the borders of West African countries. Traders in various goods travel to other neighbouring countries to buy and sell their goods. This has further been encouraged by the expanding

market frontiers of multinational companies operating in these countries, especially in Nigeria and Ghana. These trade activities thrive because of the ease with which the currencies of these countries can be converted along the borders.

A number of migrants are in search of jobs and better standard of living which they hope to get in the countries to which they have relocated. The movement of skilled manpower and professionals, especially in the education sector, has been heightened by the economic downturn which some of these countries are going through.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. Explain the factors that encourage migration in West Africa.

# 3.3 The Role of English in Migration in West Africa

Language is central to all forms of social interaction. To the extent that it constitutes the resource with which humans build relationships and preserve our cultural identity, language or, rather, its use would be deemed indispensable. Usually, when people move from one location to another, especially one that is not linguistically homogenous with their former territory, they are often confronted with the language problem. The implication, therefore, is that language could become a barrier to migration.

Within the context of the English-speaking West African sub-region, the English language enjoys the status of an official language by virtue of their common colonial heritage. Notwithstanding this prestigious position of the English language, there exist numerous indigenous languages with equally important roles in each of the countries. A migrant who has limited or no knowledge of these indigenous languages will certainly be faced with a lot of communication challenges. And this is where the English language then comes in as the necessary tool for interactional activities.

The English language, for an immigrant, will, therefore, be required as the language of

- Official communication
- Informal communication
- Education.

In all of the English-speaking West Africa, the English language serves as the official language in the conduct of government business and in all other forms of official transaction. What this means, therefore, is that the English language is required for successful interaction; otherwise, the migrant may become dysfunctional. For instance, transactions in government offices, banks and various public institutions will be expected to be done in the official language. Interactions at informal levels with the locals whose indigenous language the migrant does not speak will of necessity be carried out in

English or a version approximated to the local languages. These informal settings may include local markets, churches or mosques, bus or taxi trips, or the neighbourhoods where the migrant resides.

Children of migrant workers who would, of necessity, have to enrol for schooling might be faced with the challenge of the language of instruction, if it is not the English language. However, use or non-use of English as a means of instruction will largely depend on the language policy of the host country.

Migrants could be seen as agents of the spread of the English language in West Africa. The assumption underlying this position is rooted in the belief that there is the tendency for some migrants to adopt the language of their new homeland. This is because it is very common for words derived from one group of people to be absorbed or adopted by the "mainstream" or "dominant" culture. But even when migrants shed their native tongue or the variety of English brought from their home country, terms derived from the earlier language often persist. Even when words derived from an earlier language disappear, forms of grammar, syntax and sentence structure sometimes persist. For instance, it has been discovered that a lot of Nigerians who emigrated from Nigeria to Ghana in the 60s and 70s speak exactly like Ghanaians. This is particularly noticeable in their pronunciation and word choice. Many of them who later returned to Nigeria and became employed as teachers then became the models of the English language to which the learners were exposed.

In some other ways, migrants maintain a distinctive inter-language, or resort to a pidginized form of communication in order to cope with the communicative exigencies of their new environment. This perhaps was the case of the development of Creole in Sierra Leone. In this way, migrants contribute to the spread and the changing form of the English language.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Highlight factors associated with the use of the English language that has promoted migration in West Africa.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Migration is commonplace in the world today. Within the milieu of growing and intensive economic, political and socio-cultural interdependence among state and non-state actors, mass intra-and inter-border and continental movements of people have been

on the ascendancy. The West African sub-region is no exception to this growing phenomenon. Among factors that have encouraged inter-border movement of persons within Anglophone West Africa is the global nature of the English language. English serves as the language of wider communication for many migrants whose indigenous languages are different from the indigenous languages of the host countries. This is one reason the English language will continue to enjoy prominence in the sub-region. Governments of these countries will therefore need to harness the human capacity and economic potentials of these migrants for an overall sustainable development of the region.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

The focus of this unit has been on the role of the English language in the movement of persons across the Anglophone countries of the West African sub-region. You have learned about the nature of migration as well as the factors that are responsible for migration. In addition, you have learned about the compelling need for the use of English language by migrants in their official, everyday informal interaction with others and in meeting the educational need of their children.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. In a one-page essay (A4, single 1.5 spacing), discuss the problems and prospects of the use of the English language in migration in Anglophone West African countries.

### 7.0 REFERENCES/READING FURTHER

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# Unit 5 English and Language Planning in West Africa

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is Language Planning?
  - 3.2 Issues in Language Planning and Policy Making in West Africa
  - 3.3 The Future of English Language Policy in West Africa
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The reality and the challenges of role allocation to languages in a multilingual community demands a deliberate and carefully thought out language policy that will (i) guarantee the effective use of the languages, and (ii) ensure adequate protection and maintenance of the status of each of the languages in the community. The main thrust of this unit is to examine the concept of language planning and policy in the context of the adoption, use and role relationship between the English language and other indigenous languages in West Africa. This unit also explains the role of English in the educational policy of West African states.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define the concept and scope of language planning and policy.
- identify the various approaches to language planning and policy formulation in West Africa
- state the language policy direction with regards to the role of English in the educational curriculum in West Africa.
- evaluate the overall developmental objectives of the continued dominance of English in West African states.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

# 3.1 What is Language Planning?

The abundance of scholarly literature on the question of language policy and planning attests to the prominence the subject enjoys among researchers, most of whom share similar opinion on the scope and goals of language policy and planning efforts in multilingual communities. Generally, language planning is the attempt to influence how a language is used. More specifically, it refers to a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of languages or language variety in a speech community.

Akindele and Adegbite (1999) describe language planning as

a set of deliberate activities systematically designed to select from, organize and develop the language resources of a community in order to enhance the utilization of such resources for development (p. 76).

Noss (1994) defines language planning as a process whereby authority formulates and coordinates policies on the use and promotion of specific language varieties in particular roles within its jurisdiction. In addition, language planning involves the coordination of policies on the identification and/or codification of the language varieties concerned, and subsequently the implementation of these policies, evaluation of the implementation and, if necessary, of the policies.

Ignace (1998) defines language planning as the development of goals, objectives and strategies to change the way a language is used in a community.

The intervention and social engineering of the language use through policies by the government are designed to achieve certain goals. The main goal of any language planning process, therefore, is the selection, organization and development of the languages available to a community. This process involves the formulation and coordination of policies on the use and promotion of specific language or language varieties in particular roles within its jurisdiction. (Noss, 1994; Ignace 1998). The achievement of this goal involves some intervention or social engineering of language use by governments and other agencies responsible for language development.

The importance of language planning is underscored by the several purposes that such an exercise serves. These include helping

- to select official and national languages as well as assign roles to other languages;
- to achieve national unity and harmony in a multilingual community, as a nation building tool;
- to strengthen communicative integration, either within national or international boundaries;
- to revitalize a language;
- to modernize and standardize indigenous languages to fulfil communicative, educational and developmental roles;
- to reverse language shift, and thus prevent language death.

In a review of the role of English in language planning efforts by non-native communities, Bamgbose (2006, p.645) states that "language policy is sometimes overt in terms of pronouncements, laws, regulations, constitutional provisions and a series of measures by governmental and non-governmental organisations and agencies." He, however, maintains language policy could covertly be inferred from observed practices.

In general, there are different forms of language planning geared towards fulfilling the several roles highlighted above. According to Coronel-Molina (1999), language planning involves three components, which are corpus planning, status planning and acquisition planning.

- 1. Corpus planning is an attempt to create new words, expressions or change old ones to have a new meaning. Corpus planning is involved with creating standards for a language, such as spelling and grammar, or to create dictionaries. Another area of corpus planning which seeks to prevent foreign influences on a language because they are seen as bad is linguistic purity. Three traditionally recognized types of corpus planning are graphisation, standardisation, and modernisation. While, graphisation refers to the development, selection and modification of scripts and orthographic conventions for a language, standardisation is the process by which one variety of a language takes precedence over other social and regional dialects of a language. Modernisation is a form of language planning that occurs when a language needs to expand its resources to meet growing functions.
- 2. Status planning is the allocation or reallocation of a language or variety to functional domains within a society, thus affecting the status, or standing, of a language. These domains include official, provincial, group, religious, wider communication, etc. In other words, status planning wants to change the way a language is used. It is about making some languages (or dialects) official languages for a territory. An integral part of status planning is creating a writing system for a language that was only spoken before.
- 3. Acquisition planning is a type of language planning in which a national, state or local government system aims to influence aspects of language, such as language status,

distribution and literacy through education. Acquisition planning is about teaching the language. It looks at ways to make it easier or more attractive to learn a language. Generally, acquisition planning involves making the language more attractive to learn for speakers of other languages.

#### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Briefly, but clearly, explain the concept of language planning.
- 3.2 Issues in Language planning and policy making in West Africa

Language planning efforts are generally geared towards national development in areas that include political, scientific, socio-economic, educational, technological and educational development. In a multilingual community like that of the West African countries, deliberate efforts are required to coordinate the linguistic diversity which obtains in the communities in order to address the problem of ethnic imbalance and the attendant mutual suspicion among the various ethnic nationalities. The objective of language planning, therefore, will be to coordinate the linguistic resources as a step towards solving the problems engendered by linguistic plurality. Akindele and Adegbite, (1999, p.77) argue that in multilingual communities like Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone:

an uncoordinated linguistic diversity may result in the creation of many problems like educational underdevelopment, ethno-linguistic agitation, breakdown of information and communication gap between the government and the people. The objectives of language planning will be to coordinate the linguistic resources of the nation in order to tackle and check these problems.

The various attempts by governments of Nigeria, Ghana and other West African nations to tackle the problems associated with multilingualism have centred on politics, education, economic, sociological and linguistic considerations. There have been issues associated with the choice of a national language, the language of national/international communication, language of educational instruction, etc. The major concern in language planning, therefore, relates to the policy direction to be adopted that will enhance the overall development of the communities. In this regard, the pursuit of an exoglossic language policy has become attractive to these countries. It is perhaps perceived as a way of avoiding the acrimony and general discontent that may attend the adoption of an endoglossic policy that prefers one of the indigenous languages above the others. Writing about the policy direction of countries in Africa, Lodhi (1993,) states that

Nigeria follows the Indian model - in each Region of Nigeria, the regional language (i.e. the largest language in the region) is the medium of

instruction at the primary level; English is the medium at the secondary and higher levels. At the secondary level, one more regional language is introduced. For students of arts, a third regional language (and/or French) is offered. At the university level, language/linguistics students are offered a non-Nigerian African language e.g. Arabic or Swahili (pp.83-84).

## He (p. 81) states further that,

As far as language policies are concerned, it is difficult to find a comprehensive document in African countries. Language policies are usually taken for granted, and very often they are defined in decrees or directives from the ministries of education stating the language, or languages, of instruction at different levels of the educational system. In a few cases it is mentioned in the national constitution, i.e. in Egypt and Nigeria. Normally, the language in which a country's constitution is written is generally accepted as the official language of the country.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979, p.51) states that,

"the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made thereof"

And in Section 91 of the same document, it is stated that

"the business of the States House of Assembly shall be conducted in English, but the House may in addition to English conduct the business of the House in one or more other languages spoken in the state as the House may by resolution approve."

However, at the state level, when there is no consensus regarding one or more local languages to be used besides English, English continues to enjoy the monopoly of functioning as the language of legislation.

Notwithstanding the paucity of Constitutional provisions and the apparent lack of a coherent language policy in Nigeria, Emenajo (1979?), states that the de facto National Policy on Languages (in Education) recognises:

(i) Mother-Tongue (MT) and or Language of the immediate community (LIC) as the Language of initial literacy at the pre-primary and junior, primary levels, and of adult and non-formal education.

- (ii) The three major (national) Languages Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba at L2 as the languages of national culture and integration.
- (iii) English the official language as the language of formal literacy, the bureaucracy, secondary and higher education, the law courts, etc.
- (iv) Selected foreign languages, especially French and Arabic, as the languages of international communication and discourse. These are the languages for which language villages have been set up.

In terms of unstated policies, the National Policy on Education (NPE) provisions on languages advocate multilingualism as the national goal, recognises English as the de facto official language in the bureaucracy and all tiers of formal education; treats Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as potential national languages which are to be developed and used as official languages and L2 all through the formal educational system. In addition, all Nigerian languages are regarded as meaningful media of instruction in initial literacy, and in life-long and non-formal education. The Nigerian model policy allocates functions to both the adopted foreign language and indigenous languages through coordinated status planning.

The situation is not so different in Ghana. Owu-Ewie (2006, p.76) states that several years after independence,

Ghana is still grappling with which language to use as the medium of instruction in the lower primary school (primary one to three/grade one to three). The language policy of education in Ghana has had a checkered history since the colonial era. In May 2002, Ghana promulgated a law, which mandates the use of English language (hereafter L2) as the medium of instruction from primary one (grade one) to replace the use of a Ghanaian language as the medium of instruction for the first three years of schooling, and English as the medium of instruction from primary four (grade four).

The reasons for the exoglossic language policy approach in Ghana was largely predicated on a number of factors which, according to Owu-Ewie (2006, pp. 78-79) include

- 1. The previous policy of using a Ghanaian language as medium of instruction in the lower primary level was abused, especially in rural schools. Teachers never spoke English in class, even in primary six.
- 2. Students are unable to speak and write 'good' English sentences even by the time they complete the Senior Secondary School (High School).

- 3. The multilingual situation in the country, especially in urban schools, has made instruction in a Ghanaian language very difficult. The source added that a study conducted by the Ministry of Education showed that 50 to 60 percent of children in each class in the urban area speak a different language. "It is therefore problematic if we insist that all the children be instructed in Ga, Twi, or Dagbani depending on whether it is Accra, Kumasi or Tamale".
- 4. There is a lack of Ghanaian language teachers specifically trained to teach content subjects in the Ghanaian language. The minister added "merely being able to speak a Ghanaian language does not mean one can teach in it".
- 5. There is no standard written form of the Ghanaian languages.
- 6. Since English is the lingua franca of the state, all effort must be put in to ensure that children acquire the right level of competence in both the spoken and written forms of the language.

The situation in both Nigeria and Ghana is replicated in other West African countries. The general effect therefore is a commitment to the promotion of the English language based on factors that include

- 1. The need for the choice of a national language among the various indigenous languages in the community. In Nigeria, for instance, it is on record that there are more than 450 language groups in the country. The mutual suspicion among these ethnic nationalities, especially the big three, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, makes it difficult to adopt any of them as the national language.
- 2. The perceived need for national integration among the various ethnic nationalities within the community.
- 3. The choice of a language that will be a permanent national symbol, thereby serving as the language of wider communication.
- 4. Non-codification and standardization of the indigenous languages.
- 5. Lack of trained personnel who can effectively handle the teaching of indigenous languages.

This fact is corroborated by Bamgbose (2006, p.646), in whose opinion the hegemony of the English language in language policy decisions in West African countries is a result of the fact that

only a minority of the population may be said to be proficient in English... It is truer to say that in Nigeria, as in all other former British colonies, English remains a minority, but powerful, language used by an elite. Given the fact that literacy in English is acquired through formal

education, and that a sizable percentage of children have no access to formal education, it is not surprising that the English-using population is not a large one. However, what English lacks in numbers, it makes up for in prestige, status and functionality. Hence, language policy discourse in these countries revolves around its role as an official language.

The scenario presented by the language situation in the whole of the sub-region is a product of the colonial experience of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa which served as the historical antecedent of the English language in West Africa. Though these policies may be largely unwritten, they are, nevertheless, indicated in the decisions and actions of government towards language practices.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Highlight the various issues usually considered in the formulation of an exoglossic language policy among West African countries.

# 3.3. The Future of English Language Policy in West Africa

The multilingual nature of West African communities provides a fertile ground for the English language to continue to thrive and dominate policy decisions with regards to finding a common language that can foster national unity and enhance regional integration. In spite of sentiments usually expressed about the desirability and effectiveness of the mother tongue as a tool for personal and national development, the fact remains that issues of mutual antagonism among the various indigenous languages advise that an exoglossic policy of adopting the English language will serve pragmatic interactional and communicative purposes.

It is indeed undeniable that an effective language policy has to be inclusive, in the sense that it caters not just for a minority, but also for the generality of the population. However, in the light of the socio-political and economic developments around the globe, the policy that almost totally excluded the indigenous languages from national life will remain preferred.

Factors that will encourage the perpetuation of English in West Africa include the following:

There is an absence of political will on the part of those in government to pursue an endoglossic policy that will encourage the promotion of an indigenous language;

The inability of indigenous languages to cope (at least in their present form) with modernisation and the emphasis on globalization, information and communication technology;

The need for a language of wider communication;

Lack of commitment to the development of indigenous languages;

Mutual suspicion of dominance among the various ethnic groups

It must be on record, however, that a multilingual policy would certainly have more appeal when it is considered that even if not all children of school-going age can make the transition to secondary level, a meaningful bilingual education policy will ensure that those who complete primary education are at least able to absorb and transmit information either in their mother tongue or in a combination of their mother tongue and English.

It must similarly be realised that the rational for a language policy must be what it can contribute to the overall cultural, human, and socio-economic development of a country. It is therefore not enough to place emphasis on globalization, information and communication technology and the need for a language of wider communication to the detriment of the first language through which most of the population can participate and make any meaningful contribution to national development.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What in your own opinion is the future direction of language policy in West Africa?

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

In concluding this unit, the dominance of English is an inescapable fact that language policy and planning must come to terms with. In so doing, this dominance must be so managed as to produce maximally favourable outcomes. In 'Outer-Circle' countries, in particular, a proper definition of language roles should minimize the incidence of exclusion. Researchers in world Englishes cannot turn a blind eye to the problems of educational failure or unfavourable language policy outcomes. The research activity must contribute to language policy discourse, insofar as it relates to the role of English. Such a contribution must be informed by an understanding that, although the English language is one major, global and powerful resource in the world today, its role can only be complementary to that of other languages in a multilingual and multicultural context.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, effort has been made to identify the definition that encapsulates the nature and types of language planning and policy. You have learned that status, corpus and acquisition planning characterise attempts to adopt a language policy. You have equally learned that the language policies of West Africa states are largely incoherent and not properly articulated leading to the hegemony of the English language as the official language for conducting government business. It also serves as the dominant language of educational instruction, politics and the press.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write a 3-page essay (A4, 1.5 spacing) on the problems and prospects of adopting an exoglossic language policy in Anglophone West Africa.

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## MODULE 3: THE NATURE OF ENGLISH IN WEST AFRICA I: PHONOLOGY

Unit 1 The English Segments and West African Languages

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1The English Segments and West African Languages
  - 3.2 What is transcription?
    - 3.2.1 The English segments
  - 3.3 The articulatory process
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

As you are already very much aware, the English language is the official language of all Anglophone West African countries which were once under the political control of Britain. But the case of Liberia is different to a large extent in that the country was actually established as a territory for settling diverse peoples of black African origin who had been shipped across the Atlantic during the slave trade era that spanned over four hundred years. Most of these resettled peoples were brought in from the United States of America, particularly as the initiative was largely an American one. Consequently, the English language as spoken in Liberia bears a lot of resemblance to what some scholars have described as Black English Vernacular (BEV); more significantly, however, English as spoken in Liberia largely reflects the phonological character of the mother tongues of the different ethnic nationalities which constitute that country. Nevertheless, one can easily identify a broad, distinct Liberian accent in the spoken English of most Liberians. An accent, as you may also be aware, is a way of speaking a variety of a language which is common to people of more or less the same social class or culture.

In the case of other West African countries like Ghana, the Gambia and Nigeria, however, while the influence of the mother tongue is always discernible in both spoken and written English, the general tendency is for you to find their English being tailored towards the British variety of English. But you should also note that the case of Sierra Leone is very similar to that of Liberia.

With this background you should now be able to better appreciate why the English spoken in West Africa invariably reflects the phonological patterns of the first language of its speakers. In this unit, therefore, you will be taken through the English segments and

the many topics tied to it; thereafter, you will be shown instances of some West African languages operating on them.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- differentiate between English sound segments and the sound segments of West African languages;
- explain how the knowledge of the English sounds can help the development of meaning;
- discuss how the English sound segments show differences in the meaning of the sounds of West African languages.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

## 3.1 The English Segments and West African Languages

In the field of phonetics and phonology, a segment refers to an individual, distinctive unit of sound in the pronunciation of a language. To put it in another way, you may think of a segment in the pronunciation of a language as the equivalent of a letter of the alphabet in the spelling of a word. In some languages you will find that the way words are spelt is very close to the way they are pronounced; such languages are said to have a phonetic spelling system. On the other hand, you may also have noticed that some languages hardly reflect any correspondence or similarity between the pronunciation of words and their spelling. English - the language in which you are reading this material - is one of such languages; little wonder that most users, both native speakers and non-native ones alike, tend to have difficulty with spelling and pronunciation. For example, the word SPINACH, you would assume, should be pronounced thus: /spinitʃ/ /spinætʃ/ or /spinæk/; but it is in fact pronounced thus: /spinitʃ/

# 3.2 What is Transcription?

In giving you the transcriptions above, I have perhaps jumped the gun since you are yet to be introduced to the English segments, otherwise called phonemes. I shall shortly do so, but that exemplification was necessary at that point. I shall also like to tell you right away that the term 'transcription' in phonetics/phonology refers to the process or an instance of using special symbols to represent the way a word in a particular language should be pronounced. Depending on whether the transcription is a phonemic or phonetic one, the degree of pronunciation detail provided will be relative. For instance, the [p] in the word [pot] may not sound the same as the [p] in the word [spot], and only a phonetic transcription can indicate that distinction; thus a phonemic transcription provides less

pronunciation detail than a phonetic one. Phonemic transcriptions are put within slants while phonetic transcriptions are enclosed within square brackets.

We will now proceed to the English segments/phonemes.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. Define transcription in your own words.

# 3.2.1 The English Segments

As in the English alphabet system, the English segments are categorised into vowels and consonants. In the spelling system the letters of the alphabet are twenty-six in all, made up of twenty-one (21) consonants and five (5) vowels; in the transcription system, however, there is a lot of complexity to grapple with as some experts argue for the existence of twenty vowel sounds and twenty-four consonant sounds, just as others argue for more or less these figures. At this stage we shall try to keep the discussion as simple as possible, and so we shall avoid such controversial details. As part of keeping our discussion intelligible, we will be using the terms orthoepy and orthography to describe the pronunciation and spelling systems of language respectively.

### **VOWEL PHOINEMES**

### **BRITISH**

/I/ as in 'pit'

/e/ as in 'pet'

/æ/ as in 'pat'

/ʌ/ as in 'cut'

/ɒ/ as in 'cot'

/ ʊ / as in 'put'

/ə / as in 'potato', upper'

## **AMERICAN**

/ I / as in 'pit'

/e/ as in 'pet'

/æ/ as in 'pat'

/ʌ /as in 'cut'

LAX

/u/as in 'put'

VOWELS

/ æ / as in 'potato', 'America'

### **BRITISH**

/i:/ as in 'key'
/a:/ as in 'car'
/ɔ:/ as in 'core'
/u:/ as in 'coo'

#### **AMERICAN**

/i:/ as in 'key'
/a:/ as in 'father' LONG/ TENSE
/ɔ:/ as in 'caught' VOWELS

/3:/ as in 'c<u>u</u>r'

/eɪ / as in 'bay'

/ai/ as in 'buy'

/oɪ/ as in 'boy'

/æo/ as in 'low'

/əʊ/ as in 'how'

/Iə/ as in 'here'

/eə/ as in 'there'

/və/ as in 'moor'

as in 'boat' DIPHTHONGS

## **CONSONANT PHONEMES**

/p/ as in 'pea' /b/ as in 'bee'

/t/ as in 'tea' /g/ as in 'go'

/f/ as in ' $\underline{f}$ at' /v/ as in ' $\underline{v}$ at'

 $/\theta$ / as in 'thin' /ð/ as in 'that'

/s/ as in ' $\underline{sip}$ ' /z/ as in ' $\underline{zip}$ '

 $/\int/$  as in 'ship' /3/ as in 'measure'

/h/ as in 'hat'

/m/ as in ' $\underline{\mathbf{m}}$ ap' /l/ as in ' $\underline{\mathbf{l}}$ ed'

/n/ as in 'nap /r/ as in 'red'

 $/\eta$ / as in 'hang' /j/ as in 'yet'

/w/ as in 'wet'

/tf / as in 'chin' /dʒ/ as in 'gin'

**Source:** Daniel Jones - Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary, 17<sup>th</sup> edition (2006)

The illustrations above capture the orthoepy of English at the phonemic level in a manner that is accessible to every user of the language up to this level. You should, therefore, have little or no difficulty with them. What may, however, be more demanding is what Peter Roach (2000) has called 'the pattern of occurrence' of each symbol; in other words, the particular spelling configurations that are likely to realize or give rise to certain pronunciations, as typified by the symbols used. As you have already seen with the word 'spinach', of course, English is by no means a predictable language in this regard. You are, therefore, advised to have as your constant companions a pronouncing dictionary such as the Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary originally authored by Daniel Jones and any good conventional dictionary which also provides transcriptions immediately after any given headword. This way, you will more easily and quickly familiarize yourself with pronunciation details alongside the meanings of words.

Because phoneticians and phonologists have successfully studied the phonemes of human language and identified a universal systematicity to them, they have been able to provide very general and also very specific information about how phonemes behave. They have done this by specialising in the articulatory, auditory, acoustic and instrumental branches of phonetics. Some of the results of their work reflect in their ability to group consonants, for instance, according to place and manner of articulation and phonation process (that is whether the vocal cords vibrate or not when a particular phoneme is being realized: you can determine this for yourself by placing your forefinger and middle finger on your Adam's apple when pronouncing, for example, the voiceless and voiced consonant pair of /f/ and /v/. With the former sound there should be no such vibration and so this is a voiceless sound, but with the latter, vibration should occur and so this is a voiced sound. Both of them are fricatives with respect to the manner of articulation, and are also both described as labiodental sounds regarding their place of articulation). On account of such 'scientific' classificatory schemes, then, it is even easier for phonological issues of interference between English and West African languages to be explained more objectively. In the following diagrams, you will see how phoneticians and phonologists have made the task of speech classification less forbidding. First, you will find a simplified diagram of organs in the human head down to the abdomen which participate in speech production; subsequently, classifications of the phonemes follow.

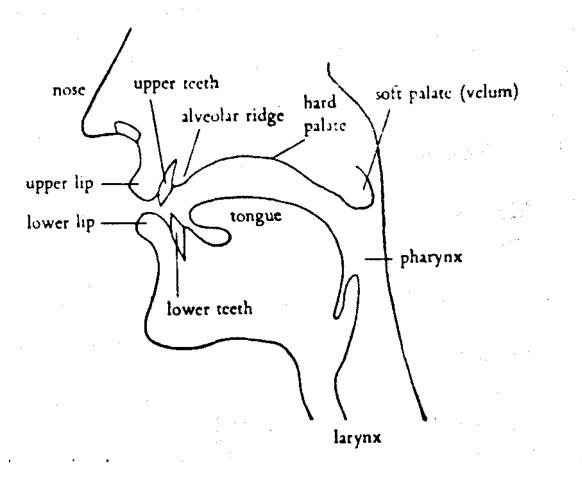


Fig. 2: Diagram of Organs Involved in Speech Production (Peter Roach 2000, p. 8; Adetugbo, p.15

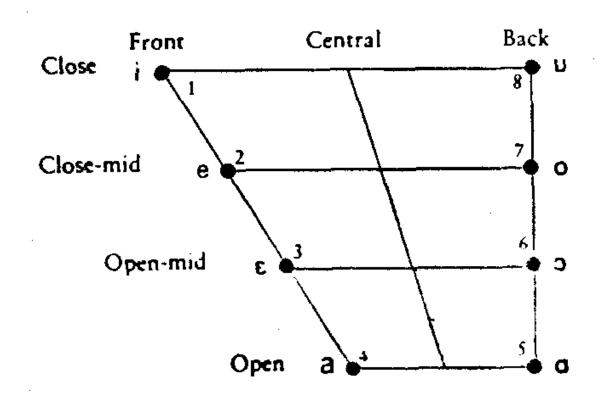


Fig. 3 Diagram of Simple Vowels of English

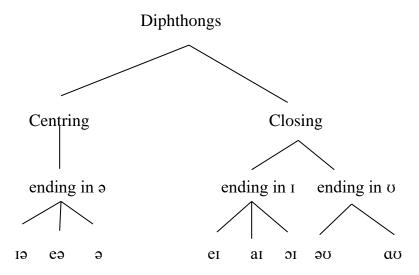


Fig 4 Diagram Showing English Diphthongs

### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Study the speech organs in Fig. 2 and explain how the basic sounds in English are different from those of indigenous West African languages.
- 2. Describe the English segments.

## Relevance of the Diagrams

All the illustrations, which the above diagrams provide, are significant not only to your understanding of how words in English are pronounced but also how West African languages are pronounced. The business of pronunciation or articulation of the segments is achieved through different airstream mechanisms of which the pulmonic egressive airstream mechanism is the most common. This airstream describes lung air pushed out under the control of the respiratory muscles. What happens in this case is that the lungs expand within the rib cage when we take in air, with our breathing being controlled by various muscles of the rib cage, the diaphragm and the muscles of the abdomen. What causes the lungs to expand upon breathing in is the contraction of the diaphragm - the diaphragm being the dome-shaped muscle that separates the chest from the abdomen. On the other hand, when we breathe out, the rib cage moves downward and the lungs rise; and this released air flows upwards and outwards from the larynx, pharynx, nose or mouth. Thus, the kind of sound produced in terms of place of articulation depends on the ultimate point of discharge of the pulmonic egressive airstream; that is why we describe one segment as pharyngeal and another as nasal (nose) or oral (mouth). All languages of the world use this pulmonic egressive airstream mechanism, but other airstream mechanisms are used to a greater or lesser extent in very many languages as well. These other airstream mechanisms are the pulmonic ingressive, glottalic/pharyngeal egressive, glottalic/pharyngeal ingressive, velaric/oral egressive and velaric/oral ingressive airstream mechanisms. Unlike in the egressive airstream mechanism, what happens in the ingressive airstream mechanism is that segments are articulated with air sucked into the organ involved, rather than air pumped out of it. Linguists specialising in phonetics/phonology have provided detailed data on sounds produced via these other mechanisms -for example, glottalic in Arabic.

# 3.3 The Articulatory process

A major point to note regarding the interaction between the English segments and West African languages - diverse as these may be - is that, owing to interference of the mother tongue with the second language, phonological issues invariably arise with respect to phonation process and manner/place of articulation of English consonants and the quality/quantity requirement in the articulation of the vowels. This is why, if you have conversed with native English speakers, you may have observed that some salient intelligibility issues come up between you and your interlocutor. For example, I once had to intervene in a matter of pronunciation between my white boss and a Nigerian counterpart with whom he was conversing on the phone. In trying to describe his address

my white boss kept pronouncing the word Marina /mə'ri:n/ as he clearly knew no other way of doing so as a native speaker of English - a Briton who had been naturalized as an Australian. In the first syllable of that word the schwa vowel /ə/ was rightly not articulated as a full vowel - the full vowel would have been, say, /æ/ or /a:/. Now, in most West African languages, notably Yoruba and Igbo, every syllable would be pronounced fully as they lack a reduced vowel like the schwa. Thus, a speaker of any such West African language who was not exposed to the nature of English pronunciation would expect to hear the word pronounced as /'mæ'rinæ/ with its three syllables accented or stressed equally. Apparently, the interlocutor in question was in such condition, and this no doubt was the reason why recognition only struck after I intervened and pronounced the word 'properly' to the man, even though the street in question is well-known in Lagos. In the same vein, my white boss was equally 'guilty' of mispronouncing the Yoruba name Fatai as /fo'tai/ in reducing the invariably full vowel in the first syllable to the status of a schwa; he was also incapable of pronouncing the Igbo name Amaechi without noticeably weakening its first syllable. What this shows you, without the complications of technicalities, is that once hardened the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) will continue to influence any new language that an adult learns.

Certainly the effects of the hardening of the LAD in a mother tongue to target language situation are most prominent in the area of pronunciation, and this is why, for instance, it should be easy to instantly distinguish the speech of a Nigerian speaker of English from that of their Ghanaian counterpart assuming that both were brought up on the national standard of the language in question. This 'problem' of pronunciation in second language situations has been the source of substantial research in linguistics, for example the work of David Jowitt (1991) on what he called Popular Nigerian English PNE). According to Quirk et al (1973 p.3):

Pronunciation is . . . the type of linguistic organization which distinguishes one national standard from another most immediately and completely. . . . [It] is the least institutionalized aspect of Standard English, in the sense that, provided our grammar and lexical items conform to the appropriate national standard, it matters less that our pronunciation follows closely our individual regional pattern.

Our concern in this unit, of course, is with the effect of English on West African languages, which are so many that we would have to limit our attention to only a few of them. In David Jowitt's work he observed that, even in the supposedly standard variety of PNE, there is little or no vowel differentiation, leading in most cases to lack of intelligibility in international communication. Probably the most comprehensive and most meticulous single-author book-length publication on Nigerian English, David Jowitt's material furnishes us with rich insight on the many phonological processes involved in the production of distinctly Nigerian ways of pronouncing English.

In the following paragraphs you will be introduced to some of the more representative examples of how West African languages interfere with the way the English segments are pronounced by mainly West Africans who rely on endonormative standards in their English usage. By endonormative standards we mean the models of language use in a second language situation where the users have agreed on national parameters by which they judge the intelligibility and acceptability of a language not native to them but which they have, voluntarily or involuntarily, found themselves using. Thus, to speak of endonormative standards - rather than exonomative ones — in West African English usage is to speak, for instance, of standards set by Nigerians or Ghanaians themselves regarding their English usage, rather than looking up to the ideal of Standard British English (SBE). In this sort of instance, you will no longer come across terms like 'English in Nigeria' or 'English in Ghana' but those such as 'Nigerian English' or 'Ghanaian English' (Omoniyi, 2006, p.172).

Due to the possibility that we generalise on the phonological phenomena in question, you may feel fairly confident that the examples following, drawn from the West African English-speaking world, will account for the broad nature of phonological interference between the English segments and those of African mother tongues highlighted here. In David Jowitt's (1991) work - and this is equally true of the efforts of previous scholars like Ayo Banjo, Ayo Bamgbose, Efurosibina Adegbija, Brosnahan, etc. - we find that West African speakers of English invariably fail to utilize the full range of English vowels, leading to a situation where important vowel distinctions are unable to be made. In this regard, you could hardly expect a Yoruba or Igbo speaker of English to accurately reflect the difference between the words SIT and SEAT, pronounced /sit/ and /si:t/ respectively. However, before proceeding, it is important to let you know that Jowitt cautioned that what he called Popular Nigerian English (PNE) "is a collection of differences from SBE, not the possibly stable features of a clearly distinct variety." You should also be aware that, because of the sheer number of languages and their dialects in Nigeria, Jowitt was constrained to limit his comparisons to Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa – the languages assumed to be most constitutive of Nigerian English on account of their number of speakers. For the sake of simplicity, therefore, the table below summarizes Jowitt's work in this regard and synthesizes it with those of others.

#### Vowels

- 1. /i:/Generally shorter in Nigeria English, though Hausa speakers fare better in pronouncing it.
- 2. /ɪ/ Southern speakers do not distinguish it from the above, so words like LIVE /IIv/ and LEAVE /li:v/ are pronounced the same. Hausa speakers fare better since their mother tongue has /i:/.
- 3. /e/ Hausa speakers sometimes make it  $\partial$  or /3/ while some Yoruba/Igbo speakers may be heard saying /eɪ/

- 4. /æ/Not found in Nigerian languages just like /a:/. Thus, pairs like MATCH MARCH and PACK PARK may be confused in speech and writing.
- 5. /^/ Not found in Nigerian languages, hence the spelling tends to dictate the specific pronunciation, but it is mostly realized as /o/.
- 6. /a:/ Vowel length never indicated in popular speech. In terms of vowel quality, this sound gets the form of the closest vowel to it in any of the mother tongues.
- 7. /ɔ/ Southern speakers produce it with less openness and more roundness.
- 8. /ɔ:/ Not found in Nigerian mother tongues. Southerners therefore find it hard to distinguish the pairs PORT POT and CAUGHT CUT, or the series SHORT SHUT SHOT; northern speakers realize the closest vowel.
- 9.  $/\sigma/$  In English the words PULL and POOL are realized by Vowels (9) and (10) respectively.
- 10/u:/ However, Nigerian mother tongues lack this distinction; thus, even in educated usage, the phonemic difference between FULL and FOOL may not be produced.
- 11. /3:/ Not found in Nigerian mother tongues, but the realization is frequently determined by the spelling. The pattern of occurrence includes spelling forms 'ur', 'or', 'ir', 'ear': how do you pronounce these in your own speech?
- 12. /ə/The schwa, a vowel which occurs only in unstressed syllables in native-speaker English, invariably gets realized as a full vowel in most West African English speech. This phenomenon is so widespread and ingrained that it sometimes gets in the way of intelligibility. Its pattern of occurrence includes 'or' (doctor), 'er' (teacher), 'ure' (nature) and other instances that non-native speakers might consider unlikely) eg. 'a' in 'marine' or 'e' in 'open).

13. /eɪ/	Speakers of Nigerian mother tongues tend to make the second element
14. /əɪ/	longer compared to RP speakers in producing these diphthongs, as
15. /ɔɪ/	reported by Jowitt. (Received Pronunciation (RP) used to be held as the
16. /ə/	standard for British English. Generally speaking, interferences relating to
17. /a/	place and manner of articulation are some of the phonological processes
18. /ıə/	that mark West African Englishes.
19. /eə/	
20. / a/	
21. /ɔɪ/	
22. /aɪə/	These triphthongs are frequently realized as diphthongs: FIRE /farə/becomes
23. /faja/	and POWER /pauə/ becomes /pawa/.

## **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. differentiate between diphthongs and triphthongs
- 2. Describe the processes of producing vowel sounds.

#### Consonants

- 1. /p/ Hausa speakers frequently pronounce this as /f/ owing to interference, while southern speakers generally have little problem with this consonantal sound.
- 2. /b/ Most Hausa speakers realize /v/ as /b/ while some Yoruba speakers make it /f/, probably because the sound is not found in both languages. Thus, it is possible to hear Hausa speakers say /beri/ instead of /very/ just as some Yoruba speakers may fail to distinguish the pairs  $SA\underline{F}E SA\underline{V}E$  and  $BELIE\underline{F} BELIE\underline{V}E$
- 3. /t/ Igbo speakers make this sound more dental than RP speakers would. Generally, final /t/ is often pronounced as /d/ where spelling suggests so: e.g. 'kicked /kikd/ instead of /kikt/. This also leads to pre-final voicing in, for example, 'increased '/inkrizd/ instead of /inkrist/: voicing happens when the vocal cords vibrate as in the pronunciation of /z/ in 'increased' instead of /s/.
- 4. /d/Since /t/ and /d/ are articulated at the same point, it follows that similar phonological processes affect them.

- 5. /k/ Most Southern speeches realize this accurately, particularly in syllable- initial positions. However, Hausa speakers have a tendency to labialize it, that is, pronounce it as if followed by /w/ which consequently causes lip-rounding to occur.
- 6. /g/ Same as above, since both are articulated at the velum.
- 7. / tf/ Some Yoruba speakers pronounce this as /ʃ/, thus reducing this affricate to a fricative: CHOP / tfpp/ becomes SHOP /fpp/, for instance. But more recent research shows that some Igbo speakers and speakers of some Niger Delta communities also tend to do so (see Mabel Obakwe, 2005). /tf/ does not occur in Yoruba.
- 8. /dʒ/ The notable exception here is with Ibibio/Efik speakers, who realize it as /j/ as if John /d3on/ were /jon/. .Ijaw and Urhobo/Isoko speakers tend to realize it as /z/ and /3/ respectively (See Mabel Ojakwe, 2005).
- 9. /f/ Refer to /p/ at No. 1.
- 10. /v/ Refer to /b/ at No. 2.
- 11.  $/\theta/$  This dental fricative and its voiced counterpart  $/\delta/$  do not occur in Nigerian mother tongues. Southerners therefore realize them as /t/ and /d/ respectively: thin  $/\theta$  and tin /t in/ and then  $/\delta$  en/ are frequently not distinguished. Jowitt notes that Hausa speakers realize both as /s/ and /z/ respectively.
- 12.  $\partial$  Refer to  $\theta$  at No. 11.
- 13. /ʒ/ Nigerian speakers generally have no problems with this sound, except when issues of voicing/devoicing occur in inflected words (see No 14 below).
- 14. /z/ This is the voiced counterpart of /s/. It does not occur in Yoruba, hence its speakers' tendency not to distinguish between price /praɪs/ and prize /praɪz/, for instance. Generally, Nigerian speakers fail to effect voicing in the final segment of words like feels and farmers which have been inflected for plurality, leading to /fi:ls/ and /fəməs/ rather than /fi:lz/ and /fa:məz/. Conversely, voicing occurs in certain instances where devoicing is appropriate :/inkri:z/ rather than /inkri:s/.
- 15.  $/\int/$  This is realized as /s/ in those Yoruba and Igbo dialects that lack  $/\int/$ . Some Ijaw speakers also reflect this interference.
- 16.  $\frac{7}{3}$  Because this sound is hardly found in Nigerian languages, it may be realized as anything from  $\frac{7}{3}$  or  $\frac{7}{3}$  to  $\frac{7}{3}$  depending on the speaker's first language.
- 17. /h/ Yoruba speakers tend to have a problem with this sound, dropping it when they should not and inserting it when unnecessary and even when the spelling has an 'h', e.g. pronouncing EYE /aɪ/ as /haɪ/, HONOUR /ɔnə/ as /hɔnɔ/. This is also noticeable in some Ijaw speech. Nigerian speech and RP generally coincide in this regard.

18. /m/ 19. /n/ 20. /ŋ/

Generally, the southern accents realize this as /n/ in syllable-final positions, e.g. FIGHTING /faItin/. In spelling patterns '-ng' the tendency is to realize it as /ng/, e.g. /song/ where RP would have it as /son/. In singing it is realized as /singin/ rather than /sɪŋɪŋ/ in RP. However, Ibibio/Efik speakers tend to approximate RP in this regard since the segment occurs in their mother tongues. Hausa speakers, Jowitt reports, tend to have fewer problems with this sound.

- 21. /l/ The most common problem here is in mother tongues where "there is no phonemic distinction between /l/ and /r/", e.g. Tiv, Idoma, Ebira, some dialects of the Igbo spoken in Anambra State, as well as some Urhobo/Iroko speech of less educated speakers. It would seem to be the case, that most Nigerian speech fails to reflect the syllabic /l/ and that speakers insert a vowel between it and the preceding consonant (e.g. /teɪbul/ rather than /teɪbl/); it does not seem to be a feature of only Yoruba speakers, as Jowitt suggests).
- 22. /r/ This sound has allophones, that is, slightly different ways of pronouncing it depending on its position of occurrence in the syllable, but Nigerian speakers of English normally pronounce it correctly, that is, those whose languages distinguish /l/ from /r/. Once this distinction is known to a user, there is no likelihood of their being misunderstood no matter the allophonic variant they select.
- 23. /j/ In Southern Nigeria it is perhaps only Efik/Ibibio speakers who substitute /dʒ/ for /j/: YOUNG /jʌη/→ /dʒ/. Correspondingly, they replace /dʒ/ with /j/: /dʒæks∂n/
- /jaksin/. Otherwise, Nigerian speakers have little problem with the articulation of /j/.
- 24. /w/ Nigerian speech corresponds with RP here.

Other phonological interference issues that Jowitt identifies are insertion of vowels between consonant clusters in order to simplify their pronunciation as well as nasalization, germination, pharyngealization, and the use of glottal stops.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. Explain the differences between consonant sounds and vowel sounds.
- 2. Discuss the special features of the consonant sounds in some West African varieties of English.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

In multilingual societies as we have with countries in Anglophone West Africa, it is unavoidable that we would have mother-tongue interference with the English language at every level of linguistic analysis. At the level of phonology, West African variety of English adopts a lengthening or shortening of vowels (as the case may be) or an outright substitution of the English vowels to the extent to which the mother-tongues can accommodate them. Linguistically, this can be assumed to be a shortcoming on the part of the language user; however, from a sociolinguistic point of view, a local inspection for intelligibility and acceptability may approve these mutations as characteristics of the West African variety of the English language.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we studied the various English segments- their features and articulation – as against what is available in the languages of the Anglophone West African sub-region. We also present the English segment with instances of their occurrence in speech from both the native and non-native speakers' perspective. A vital point that was raised in this unit is the prospect of encountering intelligibility issues, especially when a native-speaker of English is interacting with a non-native speaker. It was, however, advised that non-native speakers should make an effort in distinguishing English sounds from their indigenous counterparts by utilising a pronunciation dictionary.

#### 3.4 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- 1. Discuss linguistic interference in the speeches of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo-speakers of English at the level of phonology.
- 2. Why do we have mother-tongue interference among speakers of English as a second language?
- 3. Outline the vowels and consonants in the English language that are likely to be mispronounced and give reasons for this occurrence.

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## Unit 2 The English Suprasegments and the West African Languages

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
  - 3.0 Main Content
    - 3.1 Stress in English and the West African Languages
    - 3.2 Deviant Stress Placement
    - 3.3 Causes and Implications of Prosodic Deviance
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, our focus was the English segments, otherwise called phonemes, and how their realisations frequently affect the English speech of West African users of the language drawing our examples from a few languages from the continental sub-region. Unlike the segment studied under segmental. In phonology, the suprasegments extend a cross individual sounds and contribute significantly to the intelligibility or otherwise of English as spoken by non-native users of the language. Of course, the suprasegments also depend on the segments for their proper realisation, but our particular concern in this unit is with how the suprasegments distinguish most West African English from other world Englishes. Indeed, the suprasegments are frequently responsible for our ability to mark out, say, an Igbo speaker of Nigerian English from, say, a Yoruba one. For instance, a typical Igbo speaker of English may pronounce the word impossible with very heavy emphasis on its first syllable, while a typical Yoruba speaker may say it with such emphasis being placed on the last syllable, similarly, the Igbo speaker may pronounce 'LIMIT' with unusual force on both syllables while their Yoruba counterpart would likely say it with significant breath effort on the second syllable only.

Guiding comparatively, more breath-effort, particularly in terms of loudness and length, to a syllable within a disyllabic or polysyllabic word is what philologists describe as stress marking. Stress is a major suprasegmental or prosodic feature of English and many European languages. English stress is particularly unpredictable and there have been different suggestions to non-native speakers on how they can learn to stress their words properly. But it seems most practicable to learn the stress marking of a word at the same time as you learn its meaning, since most dictionaries supply that information usually right after the word. This is probably why learning diligently prepared rules of English stress, though very helpful indeed, may sometimes lead you astray: English stress can often be so erratic that not all word classes and their inflections can be accounted for under these rules. You should note, however, that stress is not the only feature of suprasegmental phonology that affects West African English but you have been

introduced to it first because it is probably the most distinguishing factor in the marking out of non-native speech that has developed on end normative standards.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discover the unique nature of English suprasegments
- understand that West African languages do not have the same suprasegmental features as those of English, and
- observe that using the knowledge of West African languages at the level of suprasegments to treat the English language would lead to distortion of meaning in spoken texts.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

# 3.1 The English Suprasegments and the West African Languages

Once you start to observe what happens in the interaction of two or more phonemes, you have gone into the level of the syllable; from the syllable you then move on to the foot and tone group and, at this level, the citation forms of words may lose their individual characteristics (Peter Ladefoged, 2006), especially in rapid speech. Ladefoged (2006) notes that in the following utterance:

"Mary's younger 'brother wanted 'fifty chocolate 'peanuts"

that each of the two-syllable words would bear first-syllable stress if in citation form. In this inference, however, you will observe that the words 'Younger', 'wanted' and 'chocolate' have not been marked for stress owing to what philologists call the isochronicity of stress having in English. This means that stress in English is leading to the need to take about the same time to move from one stressed syllable to the next, hence the need to avoid observing stress in the words in question. This is the natural way that the average native speaker would say the utterance and it is very likely that a West African speaker of English who has not been exposed to, say, Received Pronunciation (or standard British English, roughly speaking) would certainly pronounce the utterance differently, and as you learned in the previous unit, most West African English speech tends to give equal emphasis to all the syllables in an utterance.

Beyond stress, therefore, as this above utterance has shown, suprasegmental phonology is constituted by elements such as intonation, rhythm, foot, the tone group and pitch. This is because in that utterance we have actually been dealing with what is called sentence stress, which depends on these other elements, according to Adetugbo.

As to sentence stress, tone groups and tone units are set up to account for the distinctive sequence of pitches in an utterance. To understand what a tone group or tone unit is, one

will have to start with its constituent, the foot, a unit made up of one or more syllables. A foot consists of all unstressed syllables up to the stressed syllable.

If we apply this definition to the utterance,

## Go/to the DOOR/ and CALL / JOHN

we have four feet as indicated by the three vertical line breaks. We may also apply it to our centre utterance

"Ma/ry's younger 'broth/er wanted 'fif/ty chocolate 'pea/nuts.' In this case we see that the feet cut into words, unlike the situation with 'Go to the door and call John; but is largely so because of the grammatical words ('to', 'the', 'and') which occur in that utterance. What counts is that there is some sort of regularity with the procession of the utterance; this regularity is captured by the nation of rhythm in English phonology. Roach (2000, p. 134) has explained that English has stress-timed rhythm. That implies that English syllables are stressed and in rapid speech the timing of the stressed syllables determine the rhythm of the speech. Nevertheless, Roach offers the cautionary statement that it might be mistaken to suggest that all English speech is stress-timed, observing that varying speakers tend, in reality, to speak with different degrees of rhythmicality (p.137).

Information is certainly another significant aspect of suprasegmental phonology which depends preponderantly on pitch, the variation of the voice in speaking. Generally, people may make utterances in low and high tones at the same time. This is how, for instance, statements may be distinguished from questions when they take the same grammatical form. Consider the following:

### it was you

If said with a low pitch on 'you', we hear it as a statement but if said with a high pitch on 'you', we hear is as a question; in which case the interlocutor mentally supplies a full stop after the first and a question mark after the second. Intonation has been given extensive treatment in phonology, with the result that its many complexities have been elaborated upon. However, what is important to us in this unit is the observation that non-native English of which West African English speech is a part do not utilise the full ranges of intonational variations that native speakers are capable of. This can often lead to intelligibility problems in interaction between native and non-native speakers of English, for example when a native speaker's tone suggests finality and the non-native speaker fails to grasp this and tries to continue the conversation. Simply put, English one-word intonational possibilities are level, falling, and rising. The possibilities are far more varied and complex and could involve high level, low level, fall-rise, rise-fall, fall-rise-fall and rise-fall-rise.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. Discuss the suprasegments of English in relation to West African English.
- 2. Explain features of West African languages that separate standard English speech from other variants.

Much work has been done on stress as a suprasegmental feature of the Nigerian variety of English (Kujore 1985; Jowitt 1991). Therefore, since pronunciation – of which stress is a crucial part – is the quickest index to the regionalisation of English speech, we will examine some of the stress patterns in this regard that are severally typical of most Nigerian, Ghanaian/ Sierra Leonean pronunciation of English.

### 3.2 Deviant Stress Placement

The following examples illustrate instances of deviation from RP in stress placement in West African English (Adetugbo, 1993p.135) - stress placement being indicated by capitalization of the syllable affected.

RP (SBE) (WAE)

CALculator CalcuLAtor

MAdam madam

TElevision television

MAINtenance maintenance

Tribalism tribalism

DISparate disparate

CIRcumference circumference

individual individual

photographer photographer

assimilate assimilate

FORtunate fortunate/fortunate

success success

Educate educate

Faculty faculty

MEAsurement measurement/measurement

On his own part, Jowitt has tried to be more systematic in his compilation, breaking down his cases into groups (1991 pp.89-92)

# 1. Disyllable Words or Compounds

SBE

aCUTE aCUTE/Acute

adVICE advice/Advice

BATHroom BATHroom/bathroom

BROADcast BROADcast/broadcast

CHAllenge challenge

Cockroach cockroach/cockROCH

FIREwood firewood

FLOrence FLOrence/FloRENCE

MAUreen/MauREEN

PERfume perfume

PLANtain plantain

Salad salad

TEAspoon TEAspoon/teaspoon

TRIbune tribune

- 2. Single Words of More Than Two Syllables
- 1. Verbs (including regularly inflected parts), and words and adjectives derived from them by the suffixes or, er, -we, etc.:
- a) Verbs ending in ate

SBE

ConGRAtulate congratulate

Investigate investigate

Radiator radiator

# b) Verbs ending in – ize or –ise:

Advertise advertise

Analyses analyses

Civilized civiLIZED

# c) Verb: ending in -y (/a:/):

Modify modify

Occupies occuPIES

Satisfied satisfied

# d) Verbs ending in –ish:

disTinguish distinguish

esTablished established

CApitatism capitalism

Nationalism nationalism

Nepotism nepotism

## **3:** Medical trade Names:

Aspirin aspirin

PANadol panaDOL

# **4:** Other Common Examples:

AEroplane AEroplane/aeroPLANE

Agriculture Agriculture/agriculture

Anthony AnTHony

ARCHitecture ARCHitecture/archiTECture

Businessman businessman

CHRIstopher ChrisTOpher

Committee committee

COCTribute/contribute contribute

Develop develop/develop

Embarrass embarRAss

EuroPEan EuROpean

Extravagant extravagant

Influence influence

Kerosene Kerosene

OTHerwise otherWISE

PREferable/preferable preFERable

Telephone Telephone/telePHONE

TIMEable TIMEtable/timeTABLE

TYPEwriter TYPEwriter/typeWRIter

# 2. Hyphenated and open compounds of more than two syllables

SBE

SITting – room siTting-room/sitting-ROOM

GRAMmar school GRAMmar school/grammar SCHOOL

Water Board/water BOARD

EYE hospital EYE hospital/eye Hospital

Motor cycle Motor-cycle/motor cycle

TAXi driver TAXI driver/taxi DRiver

## 4. Noun phrases with multiple premodification

SBE

Post-GRAduate level post-graduate LEVel

State InDiciary system state Indiciary SYStem

Nigerian Medical Association Nigerian Medical Association

Patent Medicine vendors patent medicine VENdors

National Electric Power - National Electric Power -

Authority AutHORity

Yalwa Secondary School Yalwa Secondary School

DeVElopment fund Development FUND

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Provide examples of stress patterns of some English words and phrases.

### 3.3 Causes and Implications of Prosodic Deviance

It is apparent that, considering the remarkable prestige that English continues to enjoy in postcolonial societies such as we find in West Africa and the access to political, economic and social power that this implies therein (Oha, 2004), West African speakers of English would only be too happy to be able to use the language as efficiently and effectively as the best of its educated native speakers. Unfortunately, however, it is obvious that there exists a natural impediment to their ability to so use the language. If you recall, in the previous unit it was mentioned that the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) – a mental tool lodged, of course, in the brain and which controls and influences the ability to absorb language - would have hardened by the time most adults start to seriously learn new languages. Thus, except they are born and raised in a native-speaker environment, second language learners could not hope to achieve full mastery of any language that is not their mother tongue.

This is why many linguists like to describe the proficiency or otherwise of such second language learners across a continuum which accounts for the least to the most proficient competency in the target language, allowing for the certainty that it is probably impossible to find a speaker who could justifiably claim complete native-speaker competency based on endonormative standards. It is, therefore, a

linguistic/sociolinguistic fact that the apparent deviations noted in the suprasegmental features of English as spoken by West Africans are indisputably the result of ingrained mother tongue interference at the phonological level. Nevertheless, in the light of current attitudes in the sociolinguistics and sociology of language where all language varieties (including pidgin, creoles and so-called sub-standard forms) are now viewed as validly serving the purposes for their emergence and no language is universally believed to be inferior to any other, such divergences are now being viewed in terms of the ratification, domestication or indigenisation of English to their new home environments. Therefore, from a political standpoint, linguists and governments involved in language planning policies are now more concerned with efforts aimed at producing second language enclaves where both national acceptability and international intelligibility are at once achievable.

#### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. Describe prosodic deviance.
- 2. Provide explanations to the reasons for prosodic deviance in English.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The influence of indigenous languages on the use of English in West Africa is not limited to segmental phonology. The suprasegments of English have shown considerable potential to being affected by the overwhelming presence of indigenous languages in West Africa. It is not unexpected that local languages will hold a more concentrated pressure on the language situation of the sub-region as they originated from there. Stress-placement, by second-language speakers of English has undoubtedly been an area of focus for phonologists as most West African indigenous languages are not stress-timed but syllable-timed. This difference has been known to affect mutual intelligibility, especially between a native-speaker of English and an average West African.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we studied the suprasegments of English and how they are realised by nonnative speakers of English in the West African environment. We also viewed deviant stress-placement as a form of interference and, finally, we investigated the causes and implications of prosodic deviance.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

- 1. How is the Language Acquisition Device a debilitating factor in the learning and acquisition of a second language for students in tertiary institutions?
- 2. Differentiate between a stress-timed language and a syllable-timed language.
- 3. What are the causes and implications of prosodic deviance?

### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## Unit 3 Speech in English in West African Languages

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The English Language in the Public Domain in West Africa
  - 3.2 Domains of English Usage in West Africa
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    - 3.2.2 The Educational Sphere
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    - 3.2.4 The Religious Sphere
    - 3.2.5 The Business/Commercial Sphere
  - 3.3 Speech in English As Skilled Work in A Non-Native Context
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last two units we were concerned with issues in the phonetics and phonology of English and how these affect the English spoken by people who have West African languages as their mother tongue, leading to often distinctly national/regional ways of utilizing the resources of English. In those units, too, we saw how the clash between both the systems of English and these West African languages might sometimes lead to intelligibility problems for interlocutors - the people engaged in any communication exchange – when native speakers of English are in communication with second-language users of the language. Now, however, we will turn our attention to a more general aspect of the use of English in West Africa, that is, to the way in which English is used in carrying out, say, the business of governance/politics.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the role of English in West African public situations
- discuss the nature of listening and speaking in English
- explain the domains of speech making in English within the West African English speaking communities.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

## 3.1 The English language in the Public Domain in West Africa

In Anglophone West Africa it has become both a fact of social and political life that the English tongue is inevitable and indispensable. This is because, since most of the nations constituting the region are fortunate/unfortunate enough to be composed by peoples speaking diverse languages and dialects, public communication must necessarily depend on English to be carried out among people of different ethnic nationalities in order to avoid what has been described as linguistic subjectivity (Oha, 2004). You must note, in fact, that the term 'nation' as used here is heavily charged with politics, particularly politics as viewed from 'the discourse of patriotism'; there are many commentators on West African political life who believe that the word 'nation' is a misnomer when applied to the states found therein. A nation is a more or less natural grouping of people who speak a common language and, consequently, share a common culture and worldview. What this means, therefore, is that nations are less bedevilled by the politics of competition for scarce resources, since they do not have situations in which they feel themselves to be in rivalry with people different from them. A nation is thus an ideal in the political configurations of the modern world. However, it seems to be the case that all countries in West Africa lack this kind of political and cultural cohesion that is required for nationhood; instead, what we find is that these countries are made up of different, diverse peoples whose political, cultural and socio-economic interests are so divergent that they are sometimes thought never to be capable of being reconciled and synthesized. And it is perhaps for this reason that political scientists tend to see the countries that make up Black Africa in the more formal light of statehood. A state is usually typified by the presence of a valid government, a determined geographical boundary (a territory), a people, as well as the political and constitutional sovereignty that allows its government to exercise political power and authority both over the people and in relation to other states. Countries in West Africa seem to definitively belong in this category but, all the same, because of the need to emphasize a sense of political and cultural unity in these countries, the term 'nation-state' has often also been applied to describe them. According to Mark Seliger (1976, p.11), "A nation-state (more commonly called a state or country) is a tangible entity. It has territory, people, organization, and other reasonably objective characteristics." Nevertheless, in the light of what transpired at the Berlin Conference of 1885 during which the 'Scramble for Africa' was given an apparently amicable resolution by the then Western and imperial powers, it may indeed be hard for us to accept that Black African states are also indeed nations, considering the colonial fact that what proceeded from that partitioning of Africa was the forcible coupling together of many disparate ethnic nationalities without due regard for natural boundaries. This is why there are also not a few political analysts who believe that most modern states are artificial constructs that would soon collapse when subjected to the real pressures of true nationbuilding. Yet, "the nation-state is the ideal joining of nation and state, the notion of a unified people in a unified country," which can come into being in either of two ways: (i) a state is created by a nation that wishes to govern itself independently (ii) once-diverse

peoples within a state learn to identify with one another and with the country in which they reside (Seliger, p.134). However, if you consider these two criteria more critically, you may have good reason to argue yourself that Black African countries are probably more of states than nation-states considering the circumstances that birthed them. Having noted the above, you may now see more clearly why former colonies, willy-nilly, have to adopt the languages of their erstwhile political overlords -whether in Anglophone, Francophone, or Lusophone Africa. English, therefore, in the relevant West African experience, becomes the inevitable lingua franca of its purported nation-states. A lingua franca is simply a common language that is used in communication among people who have different mother tongues but who have to interact constantly. In the case of Nigeria, English is the lingua franca of people who have Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and the over 400 languages spoken in the country as their mother tongue; but there is also a sense in which English seems to be emerging as the world's lingua franca, although this situation is now being challenged by the growing international influence of the Chinese as well as the increasing assertiveness of some European powers who equally want to spread their reach over other parts of the world -for example, the French and Germans are now pushing harder for their cultural centres to make deeper inroads to their host cultures. Indeed, English in West Africa, rather than diminishing in prestige, is in fact growing significantly in that regard, such that a lot of pride now seems to be taken in being able to use the language with a native-speaker kind of accent; in short, the language permeates public life.

# 3.2 Domains of English Usage in Public Life

It is hard to find any aspect of public life that does not depend partly or wholly on English language competence. In the next few paragraphs we will focus on the most significant spheres for this public enactment of the rites of English.

# 3.2.1 The political sphere

By the political sphere, you should take note, it is meant not only the activities of politicking alone but also the whole gamut of the political process. The political process used to be thought of as involving only the organisation and operation of institutions which make and enforce law and which settle controversies arising from different interests and various interpretations of the law. You may have observed that this describes the three traditional arms of government: the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary. In more recent times, however, the political process has been expanded to also include the activities of political parties and interest groups who help in disseminating a political culture so that the democratic ideals of transparency, just elections, rule of law, party openness and adequate, critical media coverage, for instance, can be more easily achieved. In the same vein - democratic deficits, manifested in the way that political systems organize politics such that voters are unable to contribute to policy development or to making governments accountable - may also be minimized within a political process

that allows diverse interests to come into play (Washbourne, 2010). Considering the situation of post-colonial African societies, with the multiplicity of tongues that define them, the political sphere would naturally be a site for different discourses to play out, most of this largely done in English. In Nigeria, for example, the 'discourse of marginalization' gained currency at one point, when Southern minorities argued, with strong reasons, that they had for too long been alienated from the governance of their country. To secure power, therefore, individuals and political groups frequently have to execute their campaigns in English, including even when they are running for elections at the local council or state levels. This is so because, particularly in the more commercially active states, the potential voters invariably never form a monolithic language group. Accessibility to the resources of English, then, as Oha has argued, might be the next most crucial index to gaining political power after popular support and final muscle. This is because language is the single most important element for securing the voluntary cooperation of others, and to be able to use language effectively for persuasion is to be skilled in the art of rhetoric. This pervasive relevance of English in Nigerian political life is certainly reinforced by the ascendancy that the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) - from which Nigeria has borrowed, at different times, the parliamentary and presidential systems of government - wields over world politics. English, then, is the medium in which virtually all government business is conducted, including the integral work carried out by the Civil Service.

## 3.2.2 The legal/constitutional sphere

Closely related to the political sphere, and possibly giving life to it, is the legal or constitutional sphere. You will recall that we had earlier observed that every valid state must have a constitution; it is this constitution that guides or regulates both the political process and civic life. While the executive and legislature derive their powers from it, the judiciary is the arm of government saddled with interpreting its provisions, particularly in cases of conflict. This document, being the product of an imported system of governance in West Africa, is inevitably written in English, and you may have had cause to wonder sometimes whether some conflicting clauses in your country's constitution might not be traceable to language usage. It is in this regard that some people are now arguing for writing constitutions in the mother tongues as well. Certainly, the relevance of English in this sphere is signalled by the requirement that prospective lawyers get sound training in both English and Literature-in-English, in second-language situations.

## 3.2.3The educational sphere

Apart from the Quranic/Arabic schools in Northern Nigeria, there is probably no Western-styled school in West Africa which does not place a premium on English proficiency. In addition to English being taught as a school subject, all other subjects – except other language subjects like Yoruba/Hausa/Igbo and Akan/Ewe/Twi in Nigeria and Ghana respectively – are equally taught in English. This gives rise to a situation where English gets preponderant attention in the linguistic repertoire of an Anglophone West African child.

This situation is itself the product of the constitutional provisions in the affected countries, and some of these countries have at different times experimented with the issue of what should be a child's language of instruction in the first few years of life/schooling. Some have wondered whether to raise the child on only one language at this stage, or whether to introduce two at least - the mother tongue and the second language - so that the child may eventually turn out a very competent coordinate bilingual who would be versed in both the languages and cultures being learnt. From the kindergarten through the nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, therefore, it seems to be English all the way. Not only is this the case; it also appears that many parents prefer to have their children and wards speak English at home, in the possibly mistaken belief that this is the sign of true education. This has, unfortunately, given rise to what might be described as a sociolinguistic pathology in which children are becoming Reversed Asymmetrical Bilinguals (RAB). This simply describes a situation where the young speakers of two languages find themselves to be more competent in what is the second language rather than in the first language or mother tongue. Put in another way, such young language learners happen to become more proficient in the other language which is not that of the culture which produced their parents. In other words, for example, if a child born to Wolof-speaking parents ends up being more competent in English than in Wolof (a West African language spoken across The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Senegal and Mauritania), then we would say that such a child is a reversed asymmetrical bilingual, since the child would normally have been expected to be more capable in their mother tongue. Thus, the lack of symmetry (or balance) between the child's competence in both languages takes the unnatural pattern.

The long-term implications of the above would be to eventually cause language death, in sociolinguistic terms, to such West African languages which now seem to be genuinely endangered. Yet, it is important to note that even the national variety of the 'prestige language' (English in this case) which these children learn/acquire may often lack international intelligibility owing to cultural and linguistic interference; this is so despite the increasing globalization of technology which now allows for more fluid communication across transnational boundaries such that kids in places as distant to each other as Sydney and Accra can share common codes of communication on social media, which have now become integral to not only the lives of the youth but also of older generations. As you can see, then, the sphere of education is only one of the many spheres in which English features in public life in Anglophone West Africa, but it is probably the most significant one. This is why governmental language planning policies usually begin from there, apart from that sphere's being a largely government-regulated institution.

### 3.2.4 The media sphere

With the phenomenal growth of the social media, which are by-products of the Internet Age, traditional media like radio and television have become even more relevant, rather than wane in status. Consequently, these traditional media have become more inclusive as

their operators have recognised the need to blend online resources with their on-air schedules. Of course, you must be aware that the bulk of the communication that goes on via these media is conducted in English; this therefore confers even more prestige on English as the language of the technologically savvy youth. Already, new language paradigms are beginning to emerge as a result of these developments. But what may perhaps have struck you at this point, if you have been monitoring the media, is that there seems to be a conscious effort to speak English with a native speaker-like accent. This is particularly so with the privately owned radio stations, and it appears to give the impression that the closer the speech of on-air personalities is to an American accent, then the better its acceptability to the target audience. Considering that most West African countries officially seem to prefer being identified with Standard British English, we will need to watch out, in the nearest future, for what this contributes to the final character of, say, Nigerian English. This is against the backdrop of recent sociolinguistic observations suggesting that American English is already permeating British English because of the pervasive spread of American pop culture not to talk of its massive military might.

## 3.2.5 The religious sphere

It is certainly significant that one of the two dominant religions in West Africa – Christianity – was implanted on the region by native speakers of English; but it is perhaps more significant that, in the continued propagation of the religion, Anglophone West Africans still have to rely heavily on English as a result of the demands imposed by the region's multi-ethnic nature. Although translation of its sacred scripture into hundreds of languages has been achieved, Christianity has also fostered the unrelenting spread of English in the postcolonial world giving birth to its own unique discourses. Inevitably, too, for its own purposes of proselytization, Islam also gets disseminated in English alongside Arabic when a mass audience is involved.

### 3.2.6 The business/commercial sphere

In the business/commercial world English no doubt plays a crucial role, particularly in the formal sector of the Anglophone West African economy. In the informal economy, however, there is a lot more latitude with regard to linguistic choice, although this freedom itself tends to be circumscribed within the English interlanguage continuum such that trading activities may be conducted along the lines of pidgin to broken English.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

- 1. List the different spheres at which English is used in speech forms
- 2. Discuss the contrast between each domain of speech making and the functions of English in West Africa.

# 3.3 Speech in English as Skilled Work in a Non-Native Context

By now you may have come to the conclusion that the whole enterprise of language use is meant to help humankind achieve immediate and remote ends, and you may think of this in terms of how you use language, for instance, to have the salt passed to you at table or how your parents' talk to you over the years has helped them to realise their vision for the kind of successful adult life which they always wanted you to have. Much work in sociolinguistics (e.g. Hudson, 1996) has been done to show that the speech process is an integral part of human life which, being a skill that people have varying levels of success at acquiring depends upon unwritten rules and norms which society has developed over thousands of centuries. Thus, whether you are just using language for functional communication or for phatic communion, your ability to achieve your purposes will depend a lot on your understanding and willingness to exploit those linguistic conventions which your own society sanctions. Speech can therefore be viewed as a form of social interaction which requires skill to achieve and you may wish to ask yourself whether or not you have had cause to suspect that your failure to have a request/favour granted by your parent or friend was not because of your choice of language. This suggests that though language is the chief means by which we get things done, we do this successfully only by understanding that language is just a part of other social conventions. Some discourse analysts, in discussing the links between language and power and ideology, have suggested that language is a part of society, that language is a social process, and that language is a social process conditioned by other parts of society (e.g. Fairclough, 2001, p.15). When we then take this conclusion to the context of English speech in Anglophone West Africa, we see a whole range of issues which are germane to the proper learning of the four major language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The first two – oracy skills – depend on our auricular and vocal faculties, while the literacy skills (reading and writing) are features of literate societies. Considering the problems we have identified with regard to English usage in West Africa, you would be right to be puzzled at the myriads of challenges with these language skills that West Africans would have to grapple with in attempting to expertly use a language that derives from a completely alien culture and worldview. In reality, therefore, West Africans bring into the productive skills of speaking and writing all they derive from the receptive skills of listening and reading.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

- 1. What is phatic communion?
- 2. Explain the advantages of the 'receptive skills' in developing good speech in West African English.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

In every language, it is pertinent that the skills of listening and speaking are developed as various oral traditions have been passed down through these processes. In Africa, for example, generations of people have been able to sustain their culture through the process

of memorisation and recitation. In present-day West Africa, the skills of reading and writing have proven to be processes that have helped the development of languages, especially those that are almost becoming extinct because of the absence of orthography. The English language has been able to thrive in the West African sub-region as a result of the emphasis placed on processes of listening, speaking, reading and writing. A good public speech in the English language is developed from these processes, irrespective of whether English language is an alien language in the environment or not.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we were able to discuss the place of developing the four basic skills in language- listening, speaking, reading and writing. We also viewed how these skills can be utilised in various spheres of social interaction.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

- 1. How can listening and reading develop a non-native English speaker's competence in the said language?
- 2. Study the various domains of English usage in public life and discuss how the four basic skills in language can be utilised in these domains.
- 3. What are the problems that are likely to be encountered with public speaking in English for a second-language user of English?

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# Unit 4 Teaching and Learning English Phonology in West Africa

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Saussaure's Competence vs. Performance Perspective
  - 3.2 Impediments to Effective Teaching/Learning in Phonology
    - 3.2.1 The Natural problem
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      - 3.2.2.1Dearth of Expertise
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      - 3.2.2.3Poor institutional Support
  - 3.3 Improving the Teaching/Learning of English Phonology
- 4.0 Conclusion 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Some units have dealt with separate aspects of the phonetics and phonology of English in West Africa and our examples have been drawn from real situations to illustrate the nature of this interesting linguistic experience. This final unit in this module examines some issues in the teaching and learning of English phonology in West Africa.

When we start to write about issues of teaching, learning and the curriculum, we go into the realm of pedagogy - the science or profession of teaching (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999). It is remarkable that teaching has been defined as a science, suggesting that a definite measure of precision, more or less, can be expected if any teaching methodology must be deemed effective. However, it must seem clear to us all that, just as there are eggs and there are eggs, some teachers are certainly more effective than others even when they received the same training and work within the same system. Why might this be so? We might suggest here that one reason is that there is a sense in which talent and creativity comes into play in the teaching process, but we will not be going into argumentation here.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the problems of learning and teaching English sounds
- discuss the specific problems learners of English as a Second Language in West Africa face

• use the knowledge of the problems associated with learning and teaching phonology to develop teaching strategies for ESL in West Africa.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

## 3.1 Saussaure's Competence vs. Performance Perspective

Our focus should be on how pedagogy contributes to the processes involved in West Africans utilisation of the resources of spoken English, considering the fact that English is one language where there is hardly letter-to-sound correspondence and that most learners of English encounter the language more frequently in formal situations. It is also significant that West African users of English, being second-language learners, do not acquire the language in the same manner that native speakers do and thus lack a LANGUE (or system) which serves as a source for their PAROLE (or performance), to use the terminology made famous by Ferdinand de Saussure's post-humous publication. The langue is, in short, the whole body of systematic knowledge, consisting of cultural norms/attitudes and the total grammatical understanding of the language (semantics, syntax and phonology), that the native speakers of any language acquires in the course of growing up and, of course, communicating in a particular speech community. The parole describes the actual ability of any such native speaker to reflect that complete understanding of the langue in instances of their language use. Indeed, it has been discovered that it is the rule, rather than the exception, that actual conditions of usage often constrain language users' ability to perfectly match competence with performance, particularly in the spoken form of language, which is held as naturally occurring and therefore the truly valid source of data for linguistic analyses (note that while de Saussure used the terms 'langue' and 'parole', another structuralist, Noam Chomsky, invented the terms 'performance' and 'competence' to describe the similar phenomena briefly discussed above. You may also wish to find out differences between linguists who describe their work as *structuralist* and those who describe theirs as *functionalist*.)

To return to the discussion, the matter of langue and parole is an important one not only in native-language contexts but also in second-language ones, for it goes to the heart of the differentiation between *communicative* and *linguistic* competence. Let us site an example outside English. Recently, a university don who has Yoruba as his mother tongue but teaches French, lost his mother. On his return to the office from the burial ceremony, a female student of his who speaks the same mother tongue found it impossible to put together the Yoruba words that would signal her expression of her condolences; she just kept struggling with the words until she finally gave up. What that scenario reflected was the probability that the student in question, though a Yoruba person, lacked the grammatical/linguistic competence in the language to express her emotion appropriately, though she understood the perhaps universal need to condole with someone who had lost a loved one. She could therefore be said only to partially know what the language demands of her. This conclusion, if you recall highlights of the

previous unit, perhaps makes it even clearer that the student in question is probably a reversed asymmetrical bilingual, who would most likely have preferred to simply say, in English, *Accept my condolences on your mother's passing*, for instance. In any case, can such a student legitimately consider herself a native speaker of English? Does she not risk ending up being without either langue? These are important questions for us to consider particularly in the light of teaching and learning the phonology of English.

Another weighty question to consider in regard to the langue/parole distinction has to do with the nature of English and West African languages like Ewe, Hausa, Wolof, Fon, Malinke, Soninke, etc. By 'nature' here, you should have in mind the pattern of acquisition of the two sets of languages and the differing levels of competence and performance ascribed to educated and non-educated users of the languages in nativespeaker contexts. You may have noticed from your readings in sociolinguistics that it is the case in places where English is mother tongue that it is only educated people who are held to use the most prestigious variety of the language, while the uneducated are described as using substandard ones. By the same token, however, you may also have found that ability to expertly use West African languages has little or absolutely nothing to do with being literate or educated: in fact, the best users of West African languages are without a shadow of a doubt those people who live in the villages and hamlets, and are closest to the cultures and tradition of the land in addition to being custodians of its worldview. Thus, the closer you are to the city the farther you seem to be from the authentic language, leading your so-called mother-tongue to sound more like the language - in this case English - of your immediate environment both in phonology and grammar. It will be useful to conduct a research into how much accents differ between, say, people who speak Yoruba in Saki, Oyo State and those in Ikoyi, Lagos. A quick example on this language/parole distinction is still in order at this point. Anyone brought up in the English (European?) culture would understand the expression "break a leg" as a good luck wish, especially in a theatre context, just as they would the idiom, "touch wood". Understanding both these expressions would certainly not involve having school education for the native speaker, who naturally acquires such insight growing up in the culture. For a non-native speaker, however, who learns the language in a formal setting, such understanding has to be attained by conscious effort to match the expression with the idea it signifies in the real world.

The import of the discussion so far is that any programme for the teaching and learning of English phonology in West Africa must take into account the langue/parole or competence/performance distinction. First, however, we should examine a few factors that must be tackled before this.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Discuss the nature of pedagogy in relation to the teaching and learning of English phonology in West Africa.

# 3.2 Impediments to Effective Teaching/Learning in Phonology

The problems encountered in the teaching and learning of phonology in West Africa may be grouped into two categories: the natural and the physical/environmental.

### 3.2.1 The natural problem

The langue/parole binarity makes it clear that people in second-language situations aiming to master a target language frequently encounter cognitive obstacles to their learning of the new language; this is as a result of the failure of their language faculty to readjust completely to the demands being made of it. Recall the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) proposition made by Chomsky which we mentioned in Unit 2. Thus, learners of a new language inevitably face the uphill task of properly articulating the sounds, particularly when they are situated in a non-native speaker context. Think, for instance, of the differences in the phonetic/phonological competence in English of Akanspeaking children raised in an interior Ghana village and those raised in the core of London. Particularly with regard to the vowels and the dental fricatives, you can expect those children raised in London to outperform their peers raised in Ghana even if their actual grammatical competence is the same. Without a doubt, therefore, the most obvious problem with regard to teaching and learning of English phonology in West Africa is to do with the natural impediment constituted by the fossilized language faculty of people striving to learn a new tongue.

# 3.2.2 The physical/environmental problems

The physical/environmental factors that might inhibit the teaching and learning of English phonology in West Africa should be obvious to anybody familiar with the general problems bedevilling the educational sectors of West African countries. We highlight some of the more prominent ones below.

### 3.2.2.1 Dearth of Expertise

Teaching English phonetics and phonology requires considerable expertise which is invariably achieved through prolonged periods of intensive and extensive training. The result of this situation is that those qualified to teach this aspect of English competently are few and far between, even at the university level. Obviously then we can expect the situation to be far less impressive at the secondary and primary/nursery school levels. Yet, it has to be noted that the phonics trend of teaching at nursery school level, especially in the private schools where emphasis is placed on teacher effectiveness, is a commendable attempt at preparing pupils for bigger challenges in English language learning. All the same, we must worry about who teaches/trains the teacher, in the light of the observation made about dearth of expertise in the field. If native speakers can no longer teach pupils and students directly, the alternative would be to expose the trainers themselves to native-speech experts.

### 3.2.2.2Dearth of language learning facilities

A twin problem to that of dearth of expertise is probably the complete absence of language learning facilities at public institutions. Such facilities include language laboratories fitted with sophisticated tools for detailed analyses of spoken language. Recall that in the first unit of this module we identified four broad areas of phonetics: articulatory, auditory, acoustic and instrumental. Specialized machines are needed to undertake ground-breaking work in all these areas as they relate to the interference between West African languages and English, but these are hardly ever available.

### 3.2.2.3 Poor institutional support

It is perhaps an irony that, in spite of the pride of place handed English in official circles in most West African states, government fails to provide the requisite funding for not only the provision of facilities but also the appropriate legal framework that ensures public institutions offer nothing below the minimal standards set by its own language experts for the teaching and learning of the more technical dimensions of English phonetics and phonology.

### Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Critically examine the problems of teaching and learning of English in West Africa.

# 3.3 Improving the teaching/learning of English phonology

Having made the above observations, we may also recall some of the issues raised in earlier units where we identified the divergence between the ways that native speakers pronounce English segments and how West Africans articulate them on account of influences (technically called interference) from their individual mother tongues. Recall, also, that we noted the problems non-native speakers have with the suprasegments such as stress and intonation. Some of these problems are so severe that they could sometimes affect intelligibility in interaction between native and non-native speakers, and for this reason it seems wise to suggest investing significant effort and resources in designing more effective teaching strategies in the phonetics/phonology of English. While it may be very easy to suggest that many of these problems can be overcome by the individual learner if they pay serious attention to word stress/utterance stress and intonation, the real work will be in actually developing a teaching model whose validity can be tested. It is therefore not enough to note, for instance, that the dental fricatives "are absent from many West African languages" (Adetugbo, 1997 p.145) or that English diphthongs are not fully articulated by speakers of West African languages, or that /h/ insertion and deletion are features of the English speech of some Yoruba speakers. A successful teaching methodology ought to be developed that can more or less definitively eliminate

these problems. Otherwise, we surrender to their apparent inevitability as part of the features of English in West Africa. But can we afford to do so?

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The disparity in the langue-parole dichotomy is evident in the use and learning of English in L1 and L2 situations respectively. This, therefore, is pertinent to teaching and learning English phonology in West Africa. Moreso, this pedagogic exercise is subject to the aforementioned natural and environmental factors.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have established the langue/parole or competence/performance distinction in acquiring and speaking the English language. We also identified and examined the problems encountered in teaching and learning English phonology in West Africa. We also learnt that these problems can be overcome with the development of a teaching methodology, the failure of which would prove disastrous to the use of English in West Africa.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- 1. Highlight the distinctions between langue/competence and parole/performance, using viable illustrations.
- 2. How do you think the physical/environmental problems can be surmounted?
- 3. Develop a teaching methodology that can eliminate the impediments to effective teaching and learning of English phonology in West Africa.

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### MODULE 4 THE NATURE OF ENGLISH IN WEST AFRICA II: GRAMMAR

UNIT 1 A Brief Description of West African English Grammar

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Contents
  - 3.1 Meaning of grammar
  - 3.2 Peculiar Usages in West African English
  - 3.3 Prepositional Usage in West African English
  - 3.4 West African English vs World Englishes
- 4.0 Conclusion 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further reading.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Grammar is an important element in every language of the world. This is so because day-to-day conversations are expected in every language. And every language of the world has its own rules which make up the expectations and standards in that language. People who use the language are then expected to confirm with these rules, which are often described as a deviation from the non-standard form of the language. Daily usage could either be spoken or written but conformity to standard is expected in both media of usage. One's inability to do this is termed ungrammaticality.

The English language that is spoken in West Africa has its own grammar, though fashioned after the standard British English and in some cases standard American English, yet different from it in a number of ways. This is so because the English language has changed home and, as a result, should be ready to adapt to whatever errand the new users are willing to send it. This new errand and the language's ability to do it effectively is what some linguists call home grown English, nativised English, acculturated English and so on. As a result of this new sense of acceptance, that is, the English language being seen as a home grown West African English, the West African English can, therefore, be said to have developed its own grammar; and that is the focus of this unit.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define grammar
- identify West Africa English grammar
- identify the peculiarities in West Africa English grammar
- identify Prepositional usage in West African English
- differentiate between West African English and standard British English.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Meaning of Grammar

It may be difficult to capture the central role played by grammar in the structure of language. We can do this by using a metaphor such as framework or skeleton. Thus, grammar can be seen as the framework or skeleton of any language. In the word of Crystal (1987, p.88)

Two steps can usually be distinguished in the study of grammar. The first step is to identify units in the stream of speech (or writing, or signing) – units such as 'Word' and' sentence'. The second step is to analyse the patterns into which these units fall, and the relationships of meaning that these patterns convey.

From what Crystal is saying above, there cannot be a meaningful study of grammar without looking at the grammatical units of English, from the morpheme, which is the smallest unit, to the sentence, which is the largest unit hierarchically, and other units falling into place as they are composed.

We can, therefore, say that a grammar of a language is an account of the language's possible sentence structures, organized according to certain general principles. For example, we can say that morphemes, being the smallest grammatical unit, give us words which are the unit immediately above it; words give us phrases (groups in systemic functional grammar) which is also the unit above the word, groups will give clauses which are the unit above the group and clauses will give us sentence which is the unit above the clauses and the largest in that order. Chomsky (1957, p.11) writes that a grammar is a "device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis, and that the sentence produced must be grammatical ones, acceptable to the

native speaker. According to Chomsky, emphasis is placed on the native speaker (competence and performance), but modern grammar has de- emphasized this and emphasis is thus placed on grammaticality.

With the above, it then behooves of every region where the English language is spoken to develop its own Standard English which is a deviation from the non-standard variety, which will be used in the region as a standard. This is exactly the case in the West Africa sub-region, where both supranational and national varieties have been proposed. In the words of Crystal (1995, p.361)

The English used in many of the constituent countries has now received some degree of investigation, and a series of separate varieties has been suggested using such headings as Gambian, Nigeria and Ghanaian English. However, authors typically do not provide information about whether the features they have observed in their own county, and think to be distinctive, are also to be found in others.

### Crystal goes on to say that:

The answer is not always obvious. Some of these features are unlikely to have supranational distribution, perhaps because a local language is used only within one country, and wan – words from that language into English are therefore less likely to be found elsewhere .Some of the words, moreover, are bound to identify national institutions or practices. But in many case, there is extensively international overlap (p. 361).

Some usage in this region may be seen as sub-standard expressions or ungrammatical usages when compared with the standard British English or other world standards. We do not intend to make a jest of such usage but to present them the way they are used in the regions. In the words of Dolphyne (1995, pp. 31 - 32):

The national newspapers in Ghana very often use the expression 'tend to', in which 'tend' is very often spelt turn without the final 'd' because that is how it is pronounced.

# Other examples include:

torchbearer for torch bearers

12years-old boy instead of 12year-old boy

In the *boot* of a car instead of in the *booth* 

Come and support a worthy *course* instead of *cause* 

(Culled from Dolphyne (1995)

In Nigerian English, we have similar expression and some of them are cited below:

The food is too sweet (very delicious)

He asked me that where was he going?

He died of stoke

I bought guardian this morning.

I washed my pant in the sink

Thus far, we see that grammar in West African English is alive as it is used in its raw sense to depict the thought of an average West African.

### Self-assessment exercise

1. Discuss the main features of grammar and relate them to the regional variations of English in West Africa.

# 3.2 Peculiar Usage in West African English

Peculiar usages in West African English may not conform to certain grammatically rules in terms of word Englishes, but they are demonstrate what linguists in this region have called peculiar West African usage. For example, terms like Nigerianisms. Ghanaianisms, among others, are used to refer to such peculiarities. In other words, by peculiar usage, we mean, expressions that may not be accepted in World Englishes but which form a fundamental component of the described variety. Many of these expressions are acceptable in the region concerned. Examples that can be classified as peculiar usage in West African English are cited below; they may be seen as Nigerianisms or local idioms.

Cut your coat according to the size of your clothes

One tree cannot make a forest

What is good for the goose is equally good for the gander.

The children have gone for their <u>lesson</u> (for extramural class).

He was employed in the company as a gateman (for gate keeper).

The above examples and more abound in the English of West African speakers.

They are to be classified as peculiar usage and nothing more.

### 3.3 Prepositional Usage in West African English

The prepositional usage in West African English demonstrates similarities with both the English and American Englishes. This is because these two varieties of world Englishes have so much influence on the English Language in use in West Africa, especially the preposition. There is a mixture of African English prepositions and British English prepositions as well as peculiar preposition usage which may be found among West Africans and some of which linguists may classify as incorrect or ungrammatical.

Some examples include:

The students were <u>on</u> the queue when he saw them instead of in the queue. (SBE)

I met my wife <u>in</u> the bus yesterday. (Instead of <u>on</u> in SBE)
The thieves bolted <u>away</u> with my money. (Instead of <u>bolted with</u>)
Let us pay attention <u>on</u> the difference. (Instead of <u>to</u>)
She is pregnant <u>by</u> him (Instead of <u>for</u>)

Examples where both the British and American Englishes prepositions are used incude:

It's five <u>after</u> eight  $\rightarrow$  <u>past</u>
I'll see you <u>over</u> the weekend  $\rightarrow$  <u>at</u>
Monday <u>through</u> Friday  $\rightarrow$  <u>to</u>
They live <u>on</u> x Street  $\rightarrow$  <u>in</u>

Self-assessment exercise

1. Explain the methods that can be adopted to ensure good use of preposition.

# 3.4 West African English vs. World Englishes

West African English is an abstraction for the English Language that is spoken in the West African Region. It could be seen as a conglomeration of Englishes in the West African region. It could exhibit some individual differences; all the same, it is still English as should be spoken the world over. It is a blend of some West African Languages. It is a variety of world Englishes spoken by the West African people, so, it should not be seen as a substandard variety of world Englishes. It has continued to grow and it should be described on its merit. We have described its grammatical features in this unit.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

A good way to conclude in this unit is to emphasise the fact that the English language which left its native domain for a relatively unknown and alien territory is gradually becoming the toast of the West African people. It is gradually becoming the official language of the Anglophone West Africans. This is due to the fact that no one language in the region is capable of being accepted the way the English language has been accepted. And also, no one language in the region is capable of fostering peace and unity the way the English Language has done without any form of opposition coming from the speakers of the relegated language. Its grammar is also being learnt and used with ease by West African since the English language as the official language of the region is the language of instruction in schools. This then means that one's ability to be seen and respected as an international figure depends in this region, to a large extent, on one's effective use of the English language.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have looked at the meaning of grammar and how it relates to the West African region, peculiar usage in the West African English which has given the English language in this region a sense of purpose and belonging, especially as the language has been perfectly blended with some local usage in the region, thereby resulting in a brand English common only to the region in terms of grammar and prepositional usage. This brand of English is gradually taking the world by storm and with time people will come to appreciate it.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

- 1. What is the meaning of grammar?
- 2. Mention five examples of peculiar usage in West African English.
- 3a. Is there anything like West African English?
- b. Buttress your claim with examples from the text.
- 4. Mention five examples of prepositional usage in West African English.
- 5a. Is West African English grammar different from world Englishes grammar?
- b. Give examples from the text.

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# Unit 2 Morphological Issues around West African English

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Morphological Issues around West African English
  - 3.1 Meaning of Morphology
  - 3.2 Peculiar usage in West African English Morphology
  - 3.3 The Lexis of West African English
  - 3.4 Word Formation processes in West African English
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Morphology is that branch of linguistic that studies the shape of words. In other words, it looks at how words are structured, and the permissible sequence of such letters that can be combined to produce an acceptable word in any given language. It is an interesting part in the study of any language as it concerns itself, with the different shades and shapes a word is capable of having. In every morphological study therefore, morphologist are interested in little things as morpheme to some other larger chunks as lexis.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define morphology
- identify peculiar usages in West African morphology
- identify the lexis of West African English
- identify word formation processes in West African English Morphology

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

# 3.1 Meaning of Morphology

This branch of linguistics studies the structure of words. Mathew (1974, p.12) describes morphology as a branch of linguistics which is concerned with the forms of words in different uses and constructions'. In other words, morphology accounts for the internal structure or forms of words which are studied as morphemes. In the following list, all the words except the last can be divided into parts which make them have some kind of independent meaning.

Encouragement en-courage-ment

Dislocation dis-locat-ion

Unhappiness un-happi-ness

Tables table-s

Singing sing-ing

Yes yes

From the above examples, we can see that all the words except 'yes' have internal grammatical structure, hence they can be analysed into acceptable morphemes. But yes has no internal grammatical structure. It cannot be broken or analysed into morpheme except into its constituent sounds, /j/, /e/, /s/ with each of these having no significant meaning in isolation. By contrast, however, courage, locate, happy, table and sing have a meaning as do the elements attached to them. For example, 'un' has a negative meaning; 'ness' indicates a state or quality; 's' expresses plural; while 'ing' expresses a sense of duration. In the words of Crystal (198, p.90)

The smallest meaningful elements into which words can be analysed are known as morphemes; and the way morphemes operate in language provides the subject of morphology.

It is important to point out that not all words can be analysed to their morphemic components as easily done above. For example, some irregular verbs: take \_\_ took\_\_come\_\_came, and irregular nouns: foot\_\_feet, \_\_\_tooth\_\_teeth cannot be easily analysed into their different morphemes since we cannot tell how to identify plural nouns and past tense verbs in this regard.

Two main fields or types can be recognized within morphology and these are inflectional morphology which studies the way in which words vary (or inflect) in order to express grammatical contrasts in sentences, such as singular / plural or present / past tense. For

example, **girl** and **girls** are two forms of the same word while the choice between them is a matter of grammar, and this is the interest of inflectional morphology. The second type of morphology is derivational morphology and this studies the underlying principles governing the formation of new words, without considering the specific grammatical role of such a word in a sentence. For example, **inaction** form **act**, **drinkable** from **drink**, **encourage** from **courage**, we see the formation of different words with their own grammatical properties from this process.

# 3.2 Peculiar usage in West African English Morphology

Peculiar usage is a common feature of West African English morphology. Some of the usage by West Africans have gone out of the normal or ordered word formation processes. Some have been classified by linguists as unacceptable and incorrect. All the same, these expressions are classified as peculiar usage in West African English morphology.

In this new system, words which traditionally are a particular word class now play the role of other word classes. In the words of Okoro(2004),

What is involved here is the naturally recurring linguistic process of category shift in which a word gradually comes to be used as a part of speech other than the one it previously belonged to. It is through this process that nouns like red card, broker, foul, factor and many more have come to be used as verbs in standard native – speaker English (p.178).

In the standard English, **red card** (a noun), **broker** (a noun), **foul** (a noun) and **factor** (a noun) are now used as verbs as in the examples below:

- (a) The captain of the team has been **red-carded** by the referee.
- (b) The United States has been trying to **broker** peace in the Middle East.
- (c) Ronaldo has been **fouled** inside the eighteen.
- (d) I didn't **factor** these unexpected delays into my calculations. (Culled from Okoro, 2004)

In the same vein, some words have been used to change their traditional class of words in West African English Morphology, some examples are listed below:

- (a) He **horned** to attract her attention- $\rightarrow$  horn.
- (b) Come and let's **dialogue** together  $\rightarrow$  Dialogue.
- (c) Where do you **source** your material→ Source
- (d) We invite you to come and **showcase** your products at the trade fair <del>></del> Showcase
- (e) Don't just courier. DHL it. (Use DHL a postal agency)
- (f) He **Xeroxed** the document  $\rightarrow$  Xerox.
- (g) She **flitted** the room  $\rightarrow$  Flitted (culled from Okoro, 2004)

From the above, we can deduce that some of the examples above are not common in the general English morphology but are noticeable in the morphology of West African

English. They are thus classified as peculiar usages in the morphology of West African English.

#### Self-assessment exercise

- 1. Identify the peculiar uses of English in West Africa
- 2. Write a critical essay on the peculiarities and explore means of establishing standard usage.

## 3.3 The Lexis of West African English

The lexis of a language can be defined as all the items in a language which a dictionary attempts to list giving their meanings in an alphabetical order. Thus, we can say that all the operational words or items in a language are the lexis of that language.

Though there is no dictionary of West African English, there still exist special lexical items (words) in West African English. Some of these words have become fused with some other West African language to give a meaning different from the native meaning. In the words of Firth (1957, p. 11) cited in Osuafor (2002, p.28),

Words change their manners when they change their country. These manners, which incorporate intention, values, emotion, tone, feeling, sense and so on are all embodiments of culture.

The meaning of the above is that the words of West African English now reflect the culture of West Africans either as "a whole way of life or otherwise. Culture then becomes essential in the use of language. In the words of Adekunle (1986, p.362) cited in Osuafor (2002, p. 28):

Culture is a complex whole made up of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits that man acquires as a member of a society. It consists of implicit and explicit patterns of behaviors acquired and transmitted in society and its essence in the traditional ideas and values which are at the same time a product of action as well as a conditioning element of further action.

Culture, as we all know, is seen as the way of life of a group of people and it inevitably finds expression in language – that is, it is expressed in language. We shall, therefore, divide this section into two: (a) Errors in usage and (b) Creative usage.

# (a) Errors in usage:

We can find such in spelling and preposition. Some of the wrongly spelt words are:

occasion	instead of	occasion
delibrate	instead of	deliberate
seperate	instead of	separate
whereabout	instead of	whereabouts
questionaire	instead of	questionnaire

pronuonciation instead of pronunciation resturant instead of restaurant.

The wrong usage of preposition is seen in the following examples:

comprise of instead of *comprise*condole instead of *condole with*start from the scratch instead of *start from scratch*request for instead of request

The creative usages in the lexes of West African English are listed as follows:

I am going to the market instead of I am going shopping.

Speak through the nose for Speak indistinctly.

Play on someone's intelligence for take someone for a ride.

Transport money for Money for the fare.

She has home training for she was brought up well.

Exchange ideas for discuss things.

She is putting on lace for she is wearing lace.

# 3.4 Word formation processes West African English

Word formation in linguistics is the formation of new words. Every language allows new words and expressions to satisfy the linguistic needs of the users. Some of the common word formation processes in West African English are: conversion, compounding, affixation, reduplication, chipping, blending, acronymy; etc.

(a) Conversion: This is a process where a word charges its word class without any affix. For example;

Horn (a noun) is used as a verb Jealous (adjective) is used as a verb Eyeing (eye a noun) is used as a verb.

(b) Compounding: This is a process of bringing two or more base words to form another word. Some of the new words could be written together some others are separated and others are hypherated. for example:

gate fee –admission fee motor park –bus station bad bele- begrudge someone head tie- scarf cash madam- a rich and influential woman long leg- an influential person running stomach- dysentery long throat- a greedy person

(c) Reduplication:

This is a process were words are repeated for emphasis. For example;

5050-equal - percentage well-well- very well small small- easy does it now now -immediately before before - long time ago.

(d) Chipping: this word formation process has to do with removing of some parts of a noun; the removal could be at the beginning, end, and in some cases at both. But the chipped form is informal. for example;

academic- acada youth corper –corper

refridgerator - fridge

(e) Acronymy: An acronymy is a new word made from the combination of the first letters of an existing word. for example;

FC T- Federal Capital Territory

 $NDDC-Niger\ Delta\ Development\ Commission$ 

 $NITEL-Nigerian\ Telecommunications$ 

ASUU – Academic Staff Union Of University

NAFDAC- National Agency for food administrative and control etc

(f) Coinages: The following are some coinages West Africa English

Khaki boys \_\_\_\_\_ soldiers

Kaduna mafia \_\_\_\_\_ A group of influential politicians and soldiers from northern Nigeria.

National cake – Federal government revenue

Yellow fever- Traffic warden

Ghana must-go \_\_\_\_\_ A kind of travel bag

Politicians – Politicians whose aim is to loot the treasury

Tokunbo (1) - Imported, but fairy used

Tokunbo (2) – A woman who is no longer a virgin

Wazobia – fifty naira

Green -twenty naira.

Bullet proof – condom

Raincoat- condom

Fownbike- prostitute

Man-igion-man – An established personal relationship.

Son of the soil- An indigene of a place.

Area boys- social miscreants

Settlement- bribe

Kola- bribe

A fast guy- A fraudulent person

Four-one-nine – A fraudster

God-father – An influential relation guardian

Original – of superior quality

Bottom power – Female influence through sexual gratification

Fun – Sexual intercourse (culled from Adeyanju, p. 2007)

### Self-assessment exercise

- 1. Describe the lexical nature of West African English.
- 2. Write a critical review of the English lexis in West Africa.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

It has been demonstrated that the English language in West Africa is an important language in the region. From the analyses of the morphological issues, we discovered that word formation processes in West Africa English is similar to the processes of generating new words in linguistics generally. We can, therefore, conclude that the English spoken in West Africa is still in touch with the English language spoken all over the world. Though some of these issues look ungrammatical, they are no doubt examples of the English language usage in West Africa.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we attempted a definition of the term 'morphology'. We understand that students have taken at least a course of study in morphology at preceding levels; hence, we only took a cursory look at the subject. We expect that the solid foundation for a course of this nature would have been laid at the undergraduate level.

We also looked examples some of peculiar usage of the morphology in West African English. Some of these have root in the general English. This is not surprising, considering the bearing that the language has with the native speakers and the other varieties the world over. We also took time to look at the lexis as well as the world formation process in West African English.

We found out that these processes are the same; only that the end results, that is, the new word generated are slightly different from the generated words in other varieties. This has to be so in the sense that culture plays a role in all of these and each variety of the English Language has the culture of its immediate users to look to for new dimensions.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

- 1. What is morphology?
- 2. Mention five examples of peculiar usage in West African English morphology.
- 3. Discuss five errors in usage in West African English lexis.
- 4. What do you understand by creativity in the lexis of West African English?
- 5. Discuss five word formation processes in West African English.

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Unit 3 Some Problems of Use of English

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Problems in Word Classes
  - 3.2 Problem in Concord
  - 3.3 Problem in Sentence Construction
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The problems that we shall be looking at in this unit are problems arising from non-native speaking environment and errors arising from incompetence on the part of the second language environment of the English language. We shall focus mostly on the word classes and their antecedent problems to West Africans. Word classes catch our attention in that they serve as the foundation of grammatical units in English. Words, as we know, are likened to blocks with which a bricklayer builds a home. Words are important in the grammar of a language as they serve as the foundation upon which a grammatically correct sentence relies. If words are not carefully chosen and properly used, one's sentences could tilt towards ungrammaticality. We therefore lay claim to the fact that good words and properly used ones for that matter make good clauses which in turn make good sentences.

Sentences, which are the end result of words, cannot stand if words which are the bedrock for them are in a wobbling state. This will also affect agreement as the poor user will fail to apply the rules governing such, either in spoken or written English. This is the reason we want to look at the word classes first before moving on to other broad areas.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- identify problem areas in word classes;
- identify problem areas in concord /agreement;

- identify problem areas in sentence construction.
- explain the solutions to these problems

#### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Problems in Word Classes

In this section, we do not intend to teach word classes. We assume that students know what they are. What we intend doing is to identify and discuss each of the word classes and their problem areas.

### **Nouns**

- (a) The use of non-count nouns in the same way as count nouns: Non-count nouns should not occur with the following
  - i. the plural ending -s;
  - ii. the indefinite article a or an;
  - iii. the numerals one, two, three, etc.;
  - iv. quantifiers such as many, few, several.
- (b) The omission of determiners, especially articles, before singular nouns: A determiner should always precede the singular form of a count noun. But many West Africans frequently omit such determiners, especially articles (a, an, the), as in the following examples:
- i. He asked me to have  $\acute{Q}$  seat. (... to have a seat.)
- ii. We were asked to fill  $\acute{O}$  from (... to fill in a form)
- iii. The teacher gave us  $\acute{Q}$  assignment (... gave us an assignment.)
- iv. We are writing  $\acute{O}$  first term exam (...our first term exam)

#### **Pronouns**

- (a) Failing to make the pronoun agree with its antecedent in case: The following sentences are all grammatically wrong because the highlighted pronouns violate the rule of agreement in case: each occurs in the wrong case. (The correct pronoun is enclosed in brackets after each sentence.)
- 1. \* The teacher sent Olu and *I* to the bookshop. (*me*)
- 2. \* It was **me** who sent for you. (**I**)
- 3. \* I hate *him* snoring so loudly at night! (*his*)

4. \* Musa invited my friend and myself to go out with he and his financee. (me; him).

Using reflexive pronouns in the place of reciprocal pronouns: Reflexive pronouns (b)

indicate that someone has acted on him/herself while reciprocal pronouns indicate that the action is mutual among two or more people. Therefore, sentences such as the

following, which are very common indeed, are all wrong. (The correct forms are enclosed

in brackets after each sentences.)

\* Amina and her roommate have not been talking to themselves since they 1.

quarreled. (each other)

2. \* Ladies and gentlemen, let us get together to know ourselves better. (one

another)

(c) Using pronouns without antecedents: The antecedent of a pronoun should always

be present in the context of its use. The exceptions are indefinite pronouns, which can be

used without antecedents. The sentences are therefore faulty.

1. \* Listen, *they* are calling you

2. \* *They* asked me to bring two bottles (patient to nurse at a clinic)

\* Nurse, I have come for my injection; they wrote five injections for me. 3.

Who is calling you? Who exactly asked the patient to bring two bottles? Who wrote (prescribed) five injections for the patient? We do not know because they in each sentence has no specified antecedent. When the antecedent is unknown or unimportant, it

is better to recast the sentence:

1 (a) Listen, you are being called.

2. (a) I was asked to bring two bottles.

3. ....Five injections were prescribed for me. (a)

Using the plural "they" for singular antecedents: This is a carry-over from many (d)

West African Languages, in which our culture of respect for elders admits the use of they

in reference to an individual. But this is not permissible in English. Consider the

following short dialogue:

Pupil: They are calling you, sir.

Teacher: Who?

Pupil: The Principal, sir.

The pupil's first sentence contains two faults. Can you identify them?

(e) Using the contracted form "it's" for the possessive pronoun "its": *It's* is the contracted form of "it is" or "it has". If any of these makes sense in the context, then the correct form is *it's*. If none makes sense, the correct form is *its*. Consider the following sentences:

Correct: We know that *it's* not true. (We know that *it is* not true.)

Correct: He reported that it's been done. (He reported that it has been done.)

Incorrect: The dog lost *it's* bone. (\*The dog lost *it is / it has* bone.)

Correct: The dog lost *its* bone.

Self-assessment exercise

1. Evaluate the problems of usage associated with the English word-classes.

# **Adjectives**

Adjectives are a relatively easy word class to use, but the following problem still arise

- (a) The erroneous use of double comparatives and double superlatives: You should avoid writing sentences such as the following:
- 1. \* The point is *more* cleare*r* now. (double comparatives)
- 2. \* It is much *more* easier when you take shortcuts. (double comparatives)
- 3. \* It was the *most* happi*est* day of my life. (double superlatives)
- (b) The grading of non-gradable adjectives: Non-gradable adjectives name absolute or extreme qualities that should never be expressed in degrees. Sentences such as the following are therefore grammatically unacceptable:
- 1. \* It was the *most fatal* accident I have ever witnessed/
- 2. \* This material is *more superior* to that one.
- 3. \* It was a *very ghastly* accident.

This is because *fatal* and *superior* are absolute: fatal means resulting in death, whether of one or one thousand, while *superior* means of the highest quality. *Ghastly* itself indicates

an extreme degree of unpleasantness and should therefore not be further graded. Other non-gradable adjectives are *terrible*, *horrible*, *vicious*, *inferior*, *unique*, *genuine*, *fake*.

### **Determiners**

Determiners are a small group of words that qualify nouns, just like adjective. The full range of determiners in English is as follows:

articles - the (definite); a an (indefinite)

possessives - his, her, your, our, my its

demonstrative - this, that, these, those

quantifiers - some, many, few, a few, little, a little

numerals - one, two, three; first, second, third

In West African English sentences listed below, there are some problems

- (a) The use of possessive and demonstrative determiners together before the noun that they modify: Avoid sentences such as:
- 1. \* I saw *that your* friend yesterday
- 2. \* *This our* English teacher is very strict!
- 3. \* Can we hear *that your* suggestion again?

# Instead, you should write:

- 1 (a) I saw *that* friend *of yours* yesterday
- 2 (a) This English teacher of ours is very strict!
- 3 (a) Can we hear *that* suggestion *of yours* again?
- (b) The use of two different quantifiers together to modify the same noun: These include:
- 1. \* I went to the supermarket to buy *some few* things.
- 2. \* There are *some certain* things you do that I don't like.

This is because two determiners from the same sub-class cannot be used together, as one of them will clearly be redundant. To correct each sentence, simply drop one of the determiners, e.g.,

- 1 (a) I went to the supermarket to buy *some* things; or
- 1 (b) I want to the supermarket to by *a few* things
- (c) The use of "few" in the place of "a few" when the word "few" is used to mean 'some', it must occur as *a few* and not as \* *few*. Sentences such as the following are therefore clearly wrong and should be avoided:
- 1. \* The accident occurred *few* kilometers after Damaturu.
- 2. \* The dog was knocked down *few* metres down the road.
- 3 \* Few days after he flew into the country, he was arrested by the police.

### Verbs

- (a) The addition of "ing" to state-of-being verbs: Verbs that denote states rather than action should not occur with -ing. This is because -ing means "action in progress". So it is contradictory to indicate action in progress where no action at all is taking place! The following sentences are example:
- 1. \* We *are* not *hearing* you at the back, Sir!
- 2. \* I' m knowing you for the first time
- 3. \* I am not seeing the board clearly from here
- 4. \* Remember you're still owing me two hundred naira
- 5. \* The problem has *been existing* for two years now.
- 1. We can't hear you at the back sir.
- 2. I **have known** you for the first time
- 3. I **can't see** the board clearly from
- 4. Remember; you still **owe** me...
- 5. The problem **has existed** for two years now.
- (b) The use of transitive verbs intransitively: Luckily, you are able to use the majority of transitive verbs correctly because they sound so obviously incomplete and wrong when their objectives are omitted. For example:

The boy *killed* ... (killed what?) The police *arrested*...(arrested whom?)

However, there are a handful of transitive verbs that do not sound incomplete when their objects are omitted. As a result they are frequently used erroneously by many West Africans without the mandatory objects. These verbs include *assure*, *discuss*, *disturb*, *enjoy* and *prostrate*. The following sentences are all wrong because these verbs occur in them without objects.

- 1. \* The Principal *assured* that the matter would be looked into. (.... assure us...)
- \* I met him and we *discussed* for a long time. (...discussed the matter ...)
- 3. \* Go away from here you're *disturbing!* (...disturbing us!)
- 4. \* If you work hard, you will *enjoy* in the end! (...enjoy the party...)
- 5. \* Children must *prostrate* before their elders. (...prostrate themselves...)
  - (c) The misuse of phrasal verbs: The misuse of phrasal verbs falls into four categories, namely: (i) The substitution of wrong particles for the right ones; (ii) the redundant insertion of particles; (iii) the omission of particles; and (iv) the omission of the lexical verb itself. A few examples:

# Substitution of wrong particles:

- 1. \*The anniversary celebration was *rounded up* with a cocktail. (*rounded off*)
- 2. \* Kindly allow me space in your widely read newspaper to *voice out* my views. (*voice*)
- \* Permit me to air out my opinion. (air)

### Omission of particles:

- 1. \* Driver, please drop me here. (drop me off)
- 2. \* I will pick you at ten o'clock. (pick you up)
- 3. \* We were asked to *fill* some forms. (*fill in*)

# Omission of the lexical verb:

- 1. \* Remember to *off* the television before you leave the room. (*switch off*)
- 2. \* Please, on the light for me. (switch on or turn on)
- \* Moslems are supposed to *off* their shoes before entering the mosque. (*take off*)
- (d) The confusion of the perfect and the progressive forms in certain irregular verbs. The following pairs of verbs are frequently confused by many students: *been / being, given/giving, taken / taking,* as in:

1. \* Your complaint is been attended to. (is being)

2. \* Have you taking pains to investigate the matter? (*taken* pains)

Note that the-en form of the verb is usually preceded by have, has or had (e.g have been, has given, had taken), while the -ing form is usually preceded by an appropriate form of be (e.g., is being, was giving, were taking). It is only in passive sentences that the -en form can be preceded by be, e.g., "He was taken to the hospital."

(e) The faulty application of tense:

We cannot delve in detail into the complexities of tense. So we will single out for mention only the problem of handling tense in reported speech. The important point to note is that in reported speech, each tense generally takes a step backwards, e.g.,

Direct speech: I will do it.

Reported speech: She said (that) she would do it.

Direct speech: *I saw* him yesterday

Report speech: He said (that) he had seen him on the previous day

#### **Adverbs**

Adverbs as modifiers are relatively easy to use. They are a highly mobile class of words, meaning they can occur in different parts of sentence. But be careful here, because the position of the adverb also often affects the meaning of the sentence. Consider the following example.

*Curiously*, he read through the book. (His act of reading the book was curious.)

He *curiously* read through the book. (He himself was curious.)

He read through the book *curiously*. (His manner of reading was curious.)

The main reason for such meaning changes is that modifiers in general, including adverbs, relate to the *nearest* modifiable word. So the usage problem to watch out for is *misplacing* the adverb. Consider the following examples:

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- 1a) \* I was so hungry that I *almost* ate all the food.
- b) \* The disease *nearly* infected the whole village.
- c) \* He *nearly* lost everything he owned in that fire disaster.
- 2a) \* I advised him *always* to do what was right.
  - \* Obi's father encouraged him *frequently* to study

# **Prepositions**

Three distinct categories of common problems can be identified here, namely:

- (i) the substitution of some other prepositions for the right ones:
- (ii) the insertion of prepositions where they are redundant; and
- (iii) the omission of prepositions where they are needed.

# Let us look at some example:

*Substitution (The correct preposition is inserted in brackets after each sentence):* 

- 1. \* The meeting started promptly **by** 2p.m. (at)
- 2. \* The robber was shot *on* the leg as he tried to escape. (in)
- 3. \* We waited until the bus arrived, but he was not *in* it. (on)
- 4. \* She is the wife *to* our principal. (*of*)
- 5. \* The quarrel resulted *into* a fight. (in)

Redundancy (each preposition is unnecessary and should be dropped):

- 1. \* I was contemplating **on** what to do next when he arrived.
- 2. \* Our village has been denied **of** its fair share of social amenities.
- 3. \* The demanded **for** their own share of the money.
- 4. \* The beggars were soliciting **for** alms
- 5. \* He ordered **for** more beer,
- 6. \* We requested **for** more information.
- 7. \* They were discussing **about** the matter when I entered the room
- 8. \* He is advocating **for** a two-party political system

Omission (with the omitted preposition in brackets after each sentence):

- 1. \* My Friend, what are you talking  $\acute{Q}$ ? (about)
- \* We reached there oldon e exactly 4 O'clock. (at)
- \* They did not reply  $\acute{O}$  our letter. (to)
- 4. \* I knocked  $\acute{O}$  your door in the morning, but there was no response. (on)
- 5. \* I bought that book  $\acute{O}$  five hundred naira. (for)
- 6. \* I want to get  $\acute{O}$  Abuja by 3 O'clock. (to)
- 7. \* The president arrived  $\acute{O}$  the airport  $\acute{O}$  Tuesday morning. (at; on)

# Conjunctions

The following are common conjunction problems

- (a) The use of double conjunctions: Note that only one conjunction at a time is necessary to link up two sentence parts. So, avoid such double conjunctions as *still yet*; so therefore; although... but, though... but; although ... yet, should in case; as in:
- \* You committed the offence, *so therefore* you must suffer the consequences!
- \* Although she looked for the money everywhere, but she did not find it.
- (b) The use of \*moreso" for "moreover": The expression \*moreso is not even an English word and so should be avoided completely. It should not be confused with instances where the word more is followed by the different word so, as in: "The man was angry and his wife was even more so." (That is, the wife was even angrier than her husband.)
- (c) The use of "both ...and" for more than two: This correlative conjunction conjoins only two components, no more:

We invited *both* John *and* Many.

Not: \* We invited both John, Peter, Janet and Mary.

(d) Failure to make conjoined sentence parts parallel: Note that when you join sentence parts with a coordinating or correlative conjunction, the connected elements must have parallel (i.e., similar) grammatical structure, e.g.,

She dressed and fed the baby. (verb + verb)

Choose the orange or the apple (noun + noun)

She's *not only* beautiful *but also* intelligent. (adjective + adjective)

But the following sentences are wrong because the combined parts lack grammatical parallelism:

- \* Nosa has talent, imagination, *and* is willing to work hard. (noun + noun + verb)
- 2. \* He is *not only* lazy *but also* tells lies. (adjective + verb)
- 3. \* Amadi is poor *but* with a great desire to help others. (adj. + prep. Phrase)

The correct forms of these sentences are:

- 1a Nosa has talent, imagination *and* a willingness to work hard.
- 2a He is *not only* lazy *but also*\_untruthful
- 3a Amadi is poor *but* eager to help others.

# **Interjections**

We bring this section to a close with a brief mention of interjections. An interjection is simply an expression of strong feeling, such as Oh! Gosh! Good grief! Damn! Ouch! Interjections are not usually part of the grammatical structure usage problems.

If you must use interjections, take care not to overuse them!

### **Other Common Pitfalls in Sentence Construction**

The following are common problem found in the speech of West African English speakers:

### Faulty parallelism

The word and joins sentence parts of the same kind. These may be nouns, adjectives, prepositional phrases, infinitive phrases, and so on, Identical sentences so joined are parallel. Faulty parallelism occurs when unidentical sentence parts are joined e.g.

- 1. Everyone needs <u>sympathy</u> and <u>to be noticed</u>. (noun+phrase) (...<u>sympathy</u> and <u>attention</u>)
- 2. The hostess asked us to remain seated and that we refrain from smoking (infinitive + clause) (...to remain seated and reframed from...)

# **Omission of Important Sentence Parts:**

- (i) Omission of that introducing a noun clause, e.g,

  The coach could see  $\acute{O}$  the team he had worked so hard to prepare was getting rattled. (that)
- (ii) Omission of parts of a verb: If two verbs, different in number and tense, are used in the same sentence, the parts of both verbs are needed for clarity, e.g.
  - 1. The house was broken into and several items  $\acute{Q}$  removed. (were)
  - 2. The soldiers <u>were lined</u> up and the signal  $\phi$  given (was)
  - 3. The guests were seated and the curtain  $\acute{Q}$  lifted. (was)
- (iii) Omission of parts of a comparison:

In making a comparison, use all the words needed to make your meaning clear, e.g.,

- 1. Ade is one of the oldest  $\acute{Q}$ , if not the oldest boy, in the class. (boys omitted)
- 2. This test is as hard  $\acute{O}$  or harder than last week's test. (as omitted)
- (iv) Omission of words in an idiom:

Occasionally, when two idioms are used in the same sentence, there is the temptation to omit a necessary word (the particle) from one of them. This kind of omission leaves the meaning of the idiom in question incomplete, e.g.,

# Wrong Placement of Modifiers;

Be careful where you place adverb modifiers as their position in the sentence can alter meaning or result in ambiguity. Consider:

Wisely, he refused to spend his money

He refused to spend his money wisely.

The following modifiers are clearly misplaced in the sentences:

- 1. The woman was arrested for drug trafficking by the police. (...arrested by the police for...)
- 2. The disease <u>nearly</u> infected the whole village. (...infected nearly...)
- 3. We observed a flock of migrating birds <u>from the balcony.</u>

- (... observed from the balcony...)
- 4. <u>At the age of ten,</u> my father took me to England. (...took me to England at the age of ten)

# **Uses of Dangling Modifiers**

A modifier is said to dangle when there is no word in the sentence for it to modify sensibly, e.g.

- 1. <u>On getting home</u>, the burial had already taken place. (Who got home?)
- 2. <u>Entering the front door,</u> the chapel looks enormous. (Who entered ...?)
- 3. While playing football, his knee was hurt. (Who was playing ...?)
- 4. <u>To succeed in life</u>, hard work is necessary. (Who succeeds ...?)

Note that the word to be modified usually occurs right next to the modifier. So, when it is missing in the sentences, the dangling modifier then appears to refer to the next available word.

### **Needless Shifts**

Any unnecessary shift in point of view can be confusing for the reader. Let us examine three kinds of needless shifts:

- (i) Shifts from active to passive, e.g.
  - 1. The doctor <u>listened</u> to my heart, and my temperature <u>was taken</u>.
  - 2. The police <u>examined</u> the car and the garage <u>was also searched.</u>
- (ii) Shift in tense. This occurs especially in reported speech, e.g.,
  - 1. He <u>told</u> us that he <u>will</u> attend the meeting.
  - 2. The President noted that the economy is gradually recovering.
- (iii) Shifts in person and number, e.g.
  - 1. If <u>one</u> wants to go to university, <u>you</u> better start planning ahead. (shift from 3<sup>rd</sup> person to 2<sup>nd</sup>)
  - 2. The team <u>does</u> not have <u>their</u> usual fighting spirit (shift in number)

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Thus far, we have looked at some problems of use of English in West Africa. We understand that West Africans use the English language as a borrowed language and as such, they are bound to be confronted by a series of usage problems ranging from word classes, through concord to sentence formation.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we looked at usage problem. Some of the problems are listed below: pluralization and other misuses of non-count nouns; omission of determiners, especially articles, before singular nouns. What we did is to examine all the word classes with a view to discussing some of the challenges / problems West African speakers are likely to have.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

- i. Discuss three problems associated with pronouns.
- ii. Discuss with examples the problem of use of double comparatives and superlatives of the word class adjective.
- iii. Discuss four problems of verb usage in West African English
- iv. Discuss the problem of omission of prepositions where they are needed.
- v. Discuss the problem of the use of double conjunction in West African English.
- vi. Discuss with two examples each the omission of important sentence parts and dangling modifiers in West African English

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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### MODULE FIVE: RESEARCHING ENGLISH IN WEST AFRICA

Unit 1 Colonial and Postcolonial Debates on English in West Africa

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Colonial and Postcolonial Debates on English in West Africa
  - 3.2 The Nature of English in Colonial West Africa
    - 3.2.1 Language Contact
    - 3.2.2 Pidginisation
  - 3.3 The nature of English in Postcilonial West Africa
    - 3.3.1 Decolonisation
    - 3.3.2 Mutation
    - 3.3.3 Nativisation or Indigenisation?
  - 3.4 The English Language: Friend or Foe?
  - 3.5 The English Language vs. Indigenous Languages in Education
  - 3.6 West African English
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The discussion in this unit deviates slightly from the one in Module 1, Unit 1. You are introduced to the concept of viewing West Africa from two contrasting periods: colonial and postcolonial. The attitude to the English language in the colonial period is different from the nature of the language in the postcolonial period. You must also note that the factors that make each period unique have some effects on the nature of English in West Africa. This unit therefore introduces you to the debates on the periods and how that has evolved varied ideas on the description of English.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- to have information on the scholarly debates on English in West Africa
- explain the technical terms used in the discourse of West African English
- make contributions to the debate on West African English

#### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

# 3.1 Colonial and Postcolonial Debates on English in West Africa

Colonial Anglophone West Africa was known to be the era during which the British dominated the region through government, commerce, education and religion. The language of communication was inevitably English as the ruling elite (colonialists) saw the need to assert their authority in virtually every sector. Although, indigenous languages existed during this era, the 'colonised' were educated in mission schools that were presided over by British clergy. Consequently, the English language thrived, not particularly within the rural areas, but among the educated West Africans. During this period, competence in the English tongue automatically placed a person within the ranks of the elite. It may have been expected that independence would have brought along with it a sense of autonomy, especially as it related to language when the erstwhile colonies decided to do away with the language of colonisation. However, the English language has gained and sustained the status of being the official language of these countries as well as influencing their lingua-francas.

Postcolonial Anglophone West Africa, over the years after independence, has produced scholars and researchers that are raising questions as to whether West Africa has truly moved beyond the colonial era to being indeed autonomous by attempting to sever ties that are linked to any past subjugation and subtle autocratic governance by the colonialists. Efforts have been made to decolonise erstwhile British colonies by encouraging the use of indigenous languages, over the choice of the English language, in government, education and literature. Behrent (1997) points out this attempt when she states that:

the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues that to rid African literature of the legacy of colonialism, African writers must begin writing in their native languages and that literature written by Africans in a colonial language is not African literature, but "Afro-European literature". He argues that using European languages inherently makes African literature, the literature of an elite class of Africans ("Right from its conception it was a literature of the petty-bourgeoisie born of the colonial schools and universities. It could not be otherwise, given the linguistic medium of its message.") which cannot relate to the majority of African peoples who do not necessarily speak or read European languages, but rather speak a variety of indigenous African languages.

This gesture has not succeeded completely as a determination to discard the English language altogether placed Anglophone West Africa at a disadvantaged position internationally. While the indigenous languages in West Africa are well equipped (as a means of communication) to cater for the interaction needs of their users, we should not be quick to forget that these Anglophone West African countries are multilingual in nature and a single language that bridges this linguistic gap is required. The English

language has been able to achieve this role considerably, especially among the educated. Nevertheless, some scholars hold the opinion that the presence of the English language in West Africa poses a threat to indigenous cultures and languages. It is viewed as being alien in expressing the West African thoughts and experiences. Such an outlook has been disproved on its negligence to consider the fact that there exist varieties of English in West Africa and functional English-based Pidgins that have helped foster national unity in a multilingual milieu. The varieties of West African English that exist reveal the flexibility of the language to be able to be manipulated to suit the linguistic needs of its users. The users also portray their linguistic potential as they adapt this alien language to express their indigenous experiences.

Presently, in postcolonial West Africa, there is a mutated form of the English language that is intelligible locally but traipses on the precipice of unacceptability internationally. An example of such a hybrid is the Nigerian English. Ajani (2007) confirms this when he states that

the issue of intelligibility has also been variously dealt with. The most representative opinion on this, however, is that NE is indigenous to Nigeria and its most basic usage is intra-national, which it does well. (www.scientificjournals.org/journals2007/articles/1084.htm)

As in the case of Nigerian English, the English language spoken in other Anglophone West African countries has been localized on the basis of the contact the language has with indigenous cultures and languages. Adekunle (1985, p.86) agrees with the above quote when he further explains that

The English language has, as a result of many years of active use in the Nigerian speech community ...become part of Nigeria's contemporary environment and behaviour. [...] It is an artefact whose foreign derived components have in the process of its evolution combined with native Nigerian elements to make it local.

When viewed from both opposing sides, the question of whether the English language should be done away with or will present to us answers that are tenable and convincing in themselves. However, the fact that has presented itself to us in reality is that the English language is one of the few global languages in the world. An attempt to discard its use in Anglophone West Africa as a direct attack against neo-colonialism may be detrimental to this region's relations with the world at large.

### Self-assessment exercises

- 1. Evaluate the ideas that dominate the debate on colonial effects on English
- 2. Discuss the means by which the postcolonial West Africa has been shaped by the English language.

# 3.2 The Nature of English in Colonial West Africa

When the colonialists came into West Africa, it was inevitable that the medium of communication was to be the language of imperialism. Of course, it would have been fool-hardy and outright impossible to completely discard the use of indigenous languages. Consequently, the natives are encumbered with the task of learning the language of imperialism; this they were able to achieve through language contact and pidginisation.

# 3.2.1 Language Contact

According to Bello (2001), languages are said to be in contact when they are used alternately by an individual. With colonisation came western education as we know it. An educated West African is fundamentally bilingual; therefore, there lies a possibility that this same educated West African is liable to transfer elements and habits from his/her first language to the second language (which in this case is the English language). With language contact, there is a tendency for language transfer or linguistic interference to occur. Language transfer entails the superimposition and application of the knowledge of a local language to the second language. Usually, this transfer occurs because the African does not possess the native-level competence required to speak the English language. Language transfer does not necessarily hold a negative connotation for the West African as it is expected that the features of the local languages will reflect on the colonial language. Linguistic interference occurs at every level of linguistic analysis.

At the level of phonology, Weinreich (1974) states that four basic kinds of interference can be detected:

- Under-differentiation- two speech sounds, that are minimal pairs in the English language cannot be told apart because one of them does not exist in the local language. E.g. /s/ as in sift and /ʃ/ as in shift. For a native of Ogbomosho, it may be a task to differentiate between the above two sounds, as the sound /ʃ/ does not exist
- Over-differentiation- a single speech sound is interpreted as more than one speech sound. This is usually the case with the /ə/ sound. For example, in the Yoruba language of West African Nigeria, the /ə/ sound is severally misinterpreted as /a/, /ɔ/, /i/, /e/.
- Reinterpretation- here, a speech sound in the local language is given a different interpretation entirely when transferred over to the second language.
- Substitution- a distinct speech sound is substituted for another distinct speech sound. This is usually the case with the sounds  $\theta$  and t with the Yoruba speaker of English.

At the lexical level, Weinreich (1974) states that lexical meanings are transferred from (or borrowed) from the English language to the local languages. Meanings of lexical items in the English language, when transferred to the indigenous languages, either expanded or gave a completely different meaning from what it stands for in its original language. For example, the lexical item 'uncle' in the Nigerian context does not

necessarily mean 'my father's brother' or my mother's brother' but goes on to accommodate any male considerably older than the language user.

It is expected that language transfers or linguistic interference could cause some semantic problems when this variety of the English language is used on a wider spectrum, especially within the English speaking international community. Some may hold the opinion that such transfers are inevitable and duly expected, however, the challenge of intelligibility and acceptability still hangs over this mutated form of the English language. Questions can be raised as to the effect of language transfer on the notion of acceptability within the international English-speaking community.

# 3.2.2 Pidginisation

In colonial West Africa, the Pidgin was a medium of communication between West African natives and the colonialists. It was a simplified form of both languages with the bulk of the vocabulary coming from the English language. The Pidgin could be suitably called contact language as it was pertinent that communication took place between these two distinct linguistic groups. During this era, the pidgin was used as a supplementary language, bridging the linguistic gulf between the colonialist and the colonised. Subsequently, especially in West African multilingual societies, the Pidgin is noted for its functionality as a lingua-franca.

An issue that is frequently raised as regards the structure and formation of the Pidgin is the possibility of the language being considered a variety of the English language. Self-assessment exercise

- 1. Discuss the role of language in the evolution of English in colonial West Africa.
- 2. Examine the impact of pidginisation in the shaping of English in West Africa.

# 3.3 The Nature of English in Postcolonial West Africa

Postcolonial West Africa experienced a period of awakening, when African leaders began to realise that the absence of the colonialists from Africa did not necessarily mean the end of colonialism. It is believed that language serves as a strong factor in determining who exactly exerts the most authority. The use of the English mostly in government and education significantly points to the position that the British are still in control of the affairs of Africa. Nevertheless, the English language has been recognised to serve a functional purpose in multilingual Anglophone West Africa. Certain strategies have been employed to mould English into a form that is considerably African yet English.

### 3.3.1 Decolonisation

The idea of decolonising the English language is to basically give autonomy to the foreign language within an African milieu. Here, pidginisation, transfers and linguistic interference come to play. Every element of colonialism is stripped off the colonialists' language so that what is left is, though fundamentally English, essentially African. West

African English (WAE) as a variety of world English is aiming towards achieving this decolonised form of the English language. However, a point that needs to be foregrounded here is that the emphasis on a decolonised form of the English language in Anglophone West Africa may affect the acceptability of the variety within the international community.

### 3.3.2 Mutation

As a result of the foreign environment the English language has found itself in West Africa, the tendency for some lexical items in the language to develop new features that are not directly linked to their former state is inevitable. A lexical item in the English language that has adhered to this change is the word *celebrant*. It has taken a completely different meaning within the Nigerian context from what it initially stands for in the English language. The process of linguistic mutation is not occurring at a rapid rate. Nevertheless, its inevitability is apparent in that the English language is bound to succumb to the influence of the environment in which it is grafted.

# 3.3.3 Nativisation or Indigenisation

The English language in the West African region has undergone considerable changes after the colonial period that can be attributed to the influence of local languages. The English language in West Africa has garnered features that have made it distinctly West African. These features are the consequent result of the process of indigenisation. The process of indigenisation is not necessarily the amount of native background language words in the language but also in speakers' creative strategies within the English language itself (Anchimbe, 2006). At every level of linguistic analysis, the English language has been nativised to cater for the linguistic needs of the English-speaking African living in Africa. However, linguistic nativisation, at the phonological level of analysis, may not be considered a positive nativisation as the speech sounds of the English language are essentially English, and a change or substitution of these sounds may be seen as errors on the part of the language user.

# 3.4 The English Language: Friend or Foe?

Presently, in postcolonial West Africa, we cannot ignore the influence globalisation has on the region. The insistence to make indigenous languages the official languages in West Africa may isolate the region from the rest of the world. Although the decision to make indigenous languages more prominent than the English language may have been reached out of good intentions on the basis of promoting the culture of these nations, we should point out here that most of these Anglophone West African countries are multilingual. The idea of raising one of the local languages to the status of official language may encourage unnecessary superiority of one ethnic group over another. The English language, so far, has served as a unifying language in this situation.

Conversely, the English language has been observed to be the language of the educated few. The use of this medium of communication as an official language may cut out a large percentage of the population of this region, as they neither speak nor write in the English language. The question that is, therefore, raised here is: Should the English language be encouraged to cater for the communication needs of the region, especially in an official capacity even though only an educated few is competent in its use or should indigenous languages be given a chance even though there is a diverse number of ethnic groups?

# 3.5 The English language versus Indigenous languages in Education

The language of instruction in Anglophone West African schools is English. According to Obanya (1996), the English language was chosen based on the countries' colonial background, political evolution after independence and the linguistic diversity of the erstwhile British colonies. During the colonial era, the powers that be imposed its own language on the colonised through imperial education and the policies that ensured the colonial language was thoroughly entrenched in the educational system.

At independence, the reality of the erstwhile British colonies is that education (consequently, the English language) was accessible only to a relative few and the need to increase the access was paramount on the agenda. Therefore, reforms were set up to adapt formal education to the nation's realities. There was the desire to promote local languages as the language of educational instruction. However, the reforms were not developed as Africans were reluctant to do away with the English as a medium of communication and instruction in schools.

Using Nigeria as a case in point, the Postcolonial Era has witnessed the introduction of local languages as languages of instruction, at least, within the first three years of education. The local language is expected to be the pupil's First Language. So far, this practice has proven successful as English is continually being established as the Second language of pupils in Anglophone West Africa. It is important to state here that there still exists a problem of instructing a child in his first language in a class consisting of pupils that come from different ethnic groups. Maintaining that one of the three major indigenous languages (as the case may be) be used as the language of instruction for a child of Kanuri ethnicity living in Abeokuta, a town in western Nigeria may pose a problem for this educational policy. Perhaps, The English language as the main language of instruction in schools at every level in a multilingual society as Nigeria has its function after all.

### 3.6 West African English

West African English (with the short form WAfrE or WAE) is referred to as the English exclusively used as the official language of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leaone, Gambia and Cameroun (although, Cameroun is no longer considered a part of West Africa. West African English is typically acquired as a second, third or fourth language, especially in a multilingual countries of West Africa. WAE variety is mutually intelligible among the countries that constitute it as there are just a few differences that mark the varieties apart.

WAE is recognised as a variety of the Standard British English; however, there is still a question of acceptability at the international level. Locally, there is still a debate as to whether WAE is a standard variety or continuum within which evolving varieties are striving to move towards global intelligibility and acceptability.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Colonial and postcolonial debates on the English language in West Africa are still an ongoing activity. The questions that are asked persistently are: "Is the English language adequate enough to express the West African indigenous thought and experiences?" "Can the Language of the former colonialist be done away for good or is it here to stay?" "Is there a future for West African English at the international level?" Perhaps, these debates may reach conclusions that are functional for the West African language situation.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this module we were able to view the arguments that have emerged on the basis of the language situation in colonial and postcolonial Anglophone West Africa. We investigated the factors responsible for the status of English as an official language as well as the language of instruction in West African schools. Furthermore, we viewed the possibility of the existence of West African English as a variety of the Standard British English.

### 5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- 1. Compare the nature of English in Colonial West African with what is obtainable in postcolonial West Africa.
- 2. Discuss the place of English as against indigenous languages in Education in Nigeria.
- 3. Is the English language a code that indicates the persistence of colonialism in postcolonial Africa or an inevitable but functional lingua-franca?
- 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING
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# Unit 2 A brief Sociolinguistic Survey of English in West Africa

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 A Brief Sociolinguistic Survey of English in West Africa
    - 3.1.1 Language and Culture
    - 3.1.2 Pidginisation and Creolisation
    - 3.1.3 Nativisation
  - 3.2 Functional Classification of Languages in West Africa
    - 3.2.1 First Language/Mother Tongue
    - 3.2.2 Second Language
    - 3.2.3 Foreign Language
    - 3.2.4 National Language
    - 3.2.5 Official Language
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In every society, the use of language plays a crucial role of representing fundamental facets to social behaviours and human interaction. This particular notion rests within the domains of sociolinguistics. Essentially, sociolinguistics studies the effects certain aspects of society have on the way language is used. In the context of this study, we view language in relation to the cultures existent in West Africa, the divergent regions that make up the geographical divisions and the social responses of speech communities to an alien culture. We also examine the roles the languages present in West Africa perform in different contexts.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand that the study of English in community is a task in Sociolinguistics
- discover the methods of sociolinguistic study
- discuss the functional classification of languages using sociolinguistic variables

#### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

# 3.1 A Brief Sociolinguistic Survey of English in West Africa

According to Bello (2001), sociolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and culture, language and society, languages in contact, bilingualism, language interference, code-switching, attitudes toward language, language planning and language standardisation. The linguistic situation in erstwhile British colonies in West Africa displays the above-listed relationships; and within this study, we examine how these correlations define the linguistic nature of postcolonial Anglophone West Africa. Akindele and Adegbite (1999) further buttress the above view when they point out that sociolinguistics is an aspect of language study that assigns functions to various languages that exist in a community. The countries that make up Anglophone West Africa are not monolingual communities. They are multilingual societies within which more than two indigenous languages coexist in addition to the English language. As a result, there usually is a need to distinguish how these languages function in society, albeit politically induced. In multilingual speech communities as we have in West Africa, it is rather unavoidable to have certain attitudes and behaviours toward some languages as a result of their function over other languages.

## 3.1.1 Language and culture

In contemplating the relationship that exists between language and culture, one should be able answer a fundamental question: Can language exist independent of culture? It is universally known that language cannot exist in a vacuum. When language is used, we express what we know or what we have experienced; and what we know or have experienced mostly reside within our local settings, our interactions, our beliefs and customs. Akindele and Adegbite (1999, p.6) confirm this when they point out that "language expresses culture. It is the only way by which the social experiences and values of a group of people are perceived and understood".

From one perspective, we cannot readily say the countries that make Anglophone West Africa are a speech community, as the diverse indigenous languages are not mutually comprehensible to members of these countries. In fact, we have within a country hundreds of indigenous languages that do not share features that can tag them as varieties of a single language. However from another perspective, Anglophone West Africa may be called a speech community to the extent to which the English language, as lingua-franca in this region, is used in interaction. Even with this seeming similarity, differences can still be detected in the way the English language is used in these countries along the lines of geographical divisions; hence, Nigerian English as against Ghanaian English.

Intra-nationally, distinctions in how the English language is used and what variety of the language is used, say in Nigeria, can be detected along the lines of ethnicity (e.g. Yoruba English, Hausa English, Igbo English, etc.) and social status. In relation to ethnic groups, distinctions can be made in the use of *indigenised* English in the use of borrowed lexical

items from native languages into the target language (English). In terms of social status, educated native West Africans are likely to make use of the internationally acceptable and comprehensible variety of English. Such varieties are what we know as the British standard, "BBC" English and Correct English. The uneducated speakers of English tend to go for the variety of English that is laden with Mother-Tongue interference (Interference English), Pidgin and English-based Creoles.

However, in a multilingual society, where the English language is not an indigenous language but is used either as a lingua-franca or an official language, it may be a little untidy to conclude that the language indeed expresses typical West African thoughts and values. The English language emanates from a completely different cultural background from that of Africa. Perhaps, an attempt to graft the language into another background that is distinct and separate from its original location may result in the creation of a language that does not necessarily express a clear thought. The English language, among other languages in the world, has enjoyed a global acceptance; and this has been achievable due to the flexibility of the language to be manipulated to accommodate non-English thought. The process of manipulation can be viewed through the processes of pidginisation, nativisation or indigenisation and creolisation.

## 3.1.2 Pidginisation and Creolisation

The English pidgin is by definition a non-standard form of the English language that is spoken when speakers of different languages with no common language try to interact in a male-shift language. Usually, majority of lexical items in the English pidgin come from the English language, however, the structure of pidgin is basically derived from native languages. According to Matras (2009), pidgin is "a cover-term for languages that arise from situations of semi-communication among a population of potential interlocutors who have no single language in common". In the case of Anglophone West Africa, the pidgin has become a mode of interaction that cuts across ethnic disparity and, in less formal contexts, status and education.

The pidgin spoken in West Africa developed from what is designated as West African Pidgin English (WAPE) or Guinea Coast English. It was the language of trade during the slave trade era along the Coast of West Africa. Presently, in the countries that make up the West African sub-region, we observe this sub-standard form of the English language being used as either a lingua-franca or creole. In Nigeria, the pidgin is used as a lingua-franca, especially in metropolitan areas. It is functional in the area of bridging the communication gulf that is liable to diminish communication success among people from differing ethnic groups. The point may be raised that the English language is apt to mitigate communication break-down in such a situation, however, English is virtually accessible to people who are considerably educated. It is easier for an educated person to communicate in pidgin than for an uneducated person to communicate in English.

In Sierra Leone, we have the Sierra Leone Krio, which is spoken by about ninety-seven percent of Sierra Leone's population and serves to unite the different ethnic groups in the country, especially in trade and social interactions. An important point to note here is that in Sierra Leone, generally, Krio is spoken as a lingua-franca, which has not been elevated to an official status. However, Krio is also used more exclusively as a distinct language among the Krios of Sierra Leone- a community of descendants of freed slaves living in Freetown. Majority of the vocabulary of Krio is derived from English, while its sound system, structure and grammar are essentially African-based, especially the Yoruba language. There is also Aku, a variety of Sierra Leone Krio, which is primarily spoken by descendants of the Krio people living in the Gambia. According to Lothar and Wolfe (2001), there is no West African Pidgin English used as a lingua-franca in the Gambia (unlike in other Anglophone West African countries). Rather, the lingua-franca used in the Gambia is Mandinka, which constitutes the majority in the country.

### 3.1.3 Nativisation

The English language in West Africa has undergone a considerable amount of modifications to accommodate culture-specific lexical items that cannot be truly replicated in the English language. The manipulation of English to express African indigenous thought and values is what is called nativisation. For the English language to thrive in an environment where it is alien, it is expedient that it possesses the means to express the environment's native idiosyncracies, since language, as a concept is culturebased. Bamgbose et. al. (1995) explain that there are three aspects to the indigenisation or nativisation of English. Linguistic nativiastion allows for the infusion of indigenous lexical items (that have no corresponding signifiers in the English language) into English. There is also allowance for semantic shift and expansion. This is realised in the expression of kinship terms and colour identification. Pragmatic nativisation is realised in the African's way of expressing gratitude, in greetings and showing respect. West African speakers of English have also been known to manipulate the English language, creatively, to reflect the African experience. Creative nativisation allows for coinages that depict African experiences that are not common in England. Usually, these creative coinages are not particularly tagged as internationally comprehensible; nevertheless, they are acceptable and mutually intelligible in the West African context.

### Self-assessment exercise

Write an essay on the sociolinguistic features of English in West Africa.

## 3.2 Functional Classification of Languages in West Africa

# 3.2.1 First Language/ Mother tongue

This is the native language of the West African. Afolayan (1988) states that the language is acquired naturally. Besides, it meets all the linguistic needs of the language user. For a bilingual or multilingual language user, the first language or the mother-tongue is

essentially the language spoken primarily in his or her immediate environment. This language identifies the language user as a member or participant in a native culture and this language, consequently, adequately expresses his or her native thought. Adegbite and Akindele (1999) explain that the language is a variety which has the sociocultural function of serving as the instrument of nationalism.

# 3.2.2 Second Language

Although the West African multilingual has an impressive intuitive knowledge of his or her first language, a second language functions as the code with which he or she conducts his or her everyday activities, particularly in a metropolitan environment. In Anglophone West African countries, the English language is the second language of language users in this sub-region. In the West African environment, English is a variety of the mother-tongue standard used in Britain. Primarily, the English language is acquired in Africa through formal education and it is used in government, law and education.

# 3.2.3 Foreign Language

A multilingual is exposed to two or more languages, of which he or she has intuitive knowledge of, at least, one of them. A foreign language is one of the languages a multilingual uses to conduct specialised activities such as conferences and teaching in a formal classroom. Adegbite and Akindele (1999: 7) explain that a multilingual has partial linguistic facility of the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in it. Therefore, this language type relies mainly on performance rather than on competence. A West African, living in a part of West Africa and speaking in a language that is foreign to the environment he is residing may have consciously learnt how to use the language, but he may not be able to speak it intuitively. The English language in West Africa is not a foreign language. It has made contact with indigenous languages for hundreds of years and it has been domesticated to the point of it, to a considerable extent, expressing the African thought.

# 3.2.4 National Language

The National languages of the countries that make up the Anglophone West African subregion are essentially indigenous languages. Each of these countries has diverse ethnic groups that run into hundreds in number. Usually, a national language is selected by official decree on the basis of how it can express national identity. A national language is expected to cut through the whole sections of society in its use. Nevertheless, in some West African countries, like in Nigeria, there exist more than one national languages that do not particularly cut across the entire sections of society.

# 3.2.5 Official Language

The official language of Anglophone West African countries is the English language. It is the language of government, commerce, law and education. It is not necessarily a language of wider communication as it is mostly accessible to the elite and educated in society. This consequently disqualifies English from being a lingua-franca. The English

language as used in West Africa is mutually comprehensible and acceptable to member-countries of the sub-region; although there are certain features that set one country apart from the other. There are peculiar features that distinguish West African English from the Standard British English:

- Phonological features that reflect in rhotic nature of /r/ and the substitution of English speech sounds for near equivalents in the indigenous languages.
- Grammatical features, which reflect in, e.g. the omission of function words, 'the', 'a' and 'an'.
- Lexical features, which reflect in semantic expansion, semantic shift and coinages;
- Discourse features, which reflect in the expression of inquiring into a fellow interlocutor's well-being and gratitude.

#### Self-assessment exercise

- 1. Discuss the various aspects of the functional classification of English in West Africa.
- 2. Show the differences between English as Second Language and Foreign Language.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The English language has proven its functional worth on the international scene as a global language. In Anglophone West Africa, it is known to function as the language of government, law and education. For the bilingual, it is a second language. In a multilingual environment, it serves well as a lingua-franca, bridging the communication gap in metropolitan societies.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we examined sociolinguistics- how language is influenced by the workings of society. We also studied the relationship that exists between language and culture, how one concept is expressed by the other. Furthermore, we viewed how the English language has been domesticated to fit into the West African milieu, the various classifications of languages in West Africa and the features that distinguish English spoken in West Africa from the Standard British English.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT1.

- 1. Is the English language a successful code for inter-ethnic communication in West Africa?
- 2. Why does a country need a National Language?
- 3. Discuss the place of West African English in the global scene.

### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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