



Research Article

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Received: 19 February 2023 / Accepted: 27 December 2023 / Published: 5 January 2024

Sociological Implications of the Acquisition of the Fante Language by Northern Ghanaian Immigrants in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36941/mjss-2024-0004>

Abstract

The phenomenon of language acquisition among immigrant populations carries significant sociological implications, particularly in multicultural societies where linguistic diversity is prevalent. There are lots of northern Ghanaian immigrants living and working in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The acquisition of the Fante language by the immigrants presents interesting socio-linguistic ramifications worthy of scholarly attention. Data was gathered using semi-structured interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data was processed using atlas and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The study concluded that immigrants who worked in the markets or stayed in Effiakuma acquired the language faster than those who worked in the formal sector where interaction was largely done in English. Also, the paper concluded with the observation that there are acquisition challenges with the Fante language; and that there is some sociological importance of the language to the immigrants which include commercial, security, amorous relationship and liturgical needs. It was recommended that the Sekondi Takoradi Municipality implement language learning programs specifically tailored to northern Ghanaian immigrants in Effiakuma, focusing on teaching them the Fante language. These programs should be easily accessible and provide comprehensive language instruction to enhance social integration, economic opportunities, cultural preservation, and personal security for the immigrants

Keywords: Acquisition, African Studies, Fante, Immigrants, Language, Northerner, Rural Sociology, Security and crime, Urban Sociology

1. Introduction

A considerable number of northern Ghanaians are known to migrate to the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The cultures and languages of the northern people are distinctly different from that of the host Akan group. In this study, the term 'northerner' applies to any ethnic group that belongs to the Gur languages from the Savannah belt of modern Ghana. Sekondi-Takoradi is home to a native group known as the Ahanta (Halawayhi, 2012), a group which according to Amoo (1946) is part of the ethnic groups constituting the Akan stock: Ahanta, Sefwi, Ashanti, Efutu, Fante, Brong, Nzema, Akwapim, Kwawu and Efutu. Awedoba (2002) also opined that the Akan dialects include Asante, Fante, Brong, Akyem, Wassa, etc which are mutually intelligible. The authors further opine that about 39% of the Ghanaian population speaks one of these Akan languages as a first language while 30% of non-Akans have learned to speak one of the Akan languages as a second language.

The native Ahanta language is hardly spoken in and around the Metropolis. Halawayhi (2019) observed that in Diabene, a suburb of the Metropolis, there is an adoption of Fante culture to the neglect of the Ahanta culture in undertaking certain social activities. Halawayhi added that the Ahanta language is hardly spoken to the extent that it could be described as seriously endangered. The old and the young all speak Fante in family and communal interactions. The northern immigrants who include Gurune, Dagbamba, Bimoba, Wali, Dagati, Kussasi just to mention a few, also learn the Fante language for the purposes of interactions. But acquiring the Fante language is usually a herculean task for some of them. This is as a result of the differences in the nature and forms of their Gur languages from that of Fante which is a Kwa language. Awedoba (2002) reports that the Akan language together with others such as Ga- Adangme, and Ewe constitute examples of the Kwa languages in Ghana, a linguistic description following their use of 'kwa' as prefix in day-names. Authors further explain that the term Gur was coined to describe languages which use 'gur' in their names and these include all the northern languages except Gonja and Anufo which have the features of 'kwa' languages under the Guan groupings. The Gur language speakers can be easily noticed when speaking Fante or any other language classified under the kwa group. They have always made attempts at perfection but their accents as influenced by their first languages, have always made them easily noticeable when speaking Fante.

This paper sought to find out the fluency and socio-cultural implications, economic nuances and dynamics that are inherent in the use, and acquisition of the Fante language within the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis by northern immigrants. The outcomes of this study will add to the existing body of knowledge on language acquisition and immigrant integration within the Ghanaian context. The sociological implications uncovered will provide valuable insights into the dynamics of language acquisition and its broader impact on social cohesion, intercultural communication, and the formation of immigrant identities. Furthermore, the identification of factors affecting the acquisition of the Fante language will inform policymakers, educators, and community leaders in designing effective language programs and support mechanisms for Northern Ghanaian immigrants in their linguistic and socio-cultural integration.

2. Literature Review

Language and its use are a cognition that make humans unique and special from other species. For example, baboon, birds and animals are not able to express ideas with infinite set of speech sounds and words in sentences, at best some communicate through limited number of meaningful vocalizations as with baboons (Lemetiyyenen, 2012). Within the Ghanaian space, language largely have effect on the lives of people as well as identity and even the way of life (Asafo-Adjei, Mensah, Klu, & Swanzy-Impraim, 2023). Moreover, Asafo-Adjei et al., (2023), argues that language acquisition is propelled by social motivations as in children getting what they need when they say it to parents who may understand them and provide their needs. One wonders what happens then to autistic children who may develop speech later in their childhood, a case the study fails to address since these kinds of

children also have social needs.

Children are usually seen as linguistic sponges that absorb language with ease. But a critical examination of language acquisition indicates that adults learn second languages faster except that children achieve higher proficiency in language use than adults (Zufferey, 2010). Zufferey (2010) further argues that when it comes to phonology for example, children are able to do better since at the time of development there is an ability to develop a native-like pronunciation which is part of their biological composition. This is said to be the case again when it comes to grammatical proficiency since people who learned a second language before attaining puberty are most likely to attain a native-like proficiency in grammar of that language.

Writing on the sociological importance of second language acquisition, Natalie (2021) opines that second language acquisition deepens one's cognition of cultures other than his own. This is said to be so because one's ability to speak a language other than his own fosters an appreciation of the traditions, arts, religion, and history of the people associated with that language. The appreciation will further lead to tolerance, empathy and acceptance thereby fostering peace. The author (Natalie, 2021) further holds that second language acquisition gives a competitive advantage over monolinguals as the former is always ahead of the crowd. Employers are said to prefer professionals who can communicate seamlessly to customers in the latter's languages and that the demand for bilinguals has increased exponentially between 2010 and 2015 in the U.S.A.

There are about five phases of second language learning, according to Majumda (2020), who discusses them in terms of speech emergence, receptive and reproductive stage, early production stage, intermediate language proficiency stage, and advanced language proficiency stage. The author claims that these are the stages through which language acquisition passes through until perfection is achieved. While the claims made here may be true, the study is not able to address the unique challenges that children, adults or aphasic individuals may go through in language acquisition processes. Language is a cultural element and the acquisition of one by a culturally different people who speak a language with varied linguistic characteristics should be of interest to sociolinguists. The nuances involved in the acquisition processes, and the social implications are what this current study sought to bring to the fore.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical and conceptual framework explains the path of a research and grounds it firmly in theoretical constructs (Adom, Hussein and Agyem, 2018 as cited in Mensah et al, 2020). A theory that can underpin the research on the sociological implications and factors affecting the acquisition of the Fante language by Northern Ghanaian immigrants in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis is Social Identity Theory.

Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (2004), focuses on how individuals develop and maintain a sense of identity through their group affiliations. This theory suggests that individuals strive for positive social identity by categorizing themselves into specific social groups and comparing their group positively with others. In the context of the research objective, Social Identity Theory helps explain the sociological implications of language acquisition among Northern Ghanaian immigrants and the factors influencing it.

The theory shed light on how language acquisition and use impact the social identity of Northern Ghanaian immigrants in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. It explores how learning and speaking the Fante language may influence their sense of belonging, integration, and acceptance within the local community. The theory also helps uncover the intergroup dynamics and potential conflicts between Northern Ghanaian immigrants and the local population due to language differences.

Furthermore, Social Identity Theory helps identify the factors that influence language acquisition and usage patterns. It explores how social categorization, intergroup comparisons, and perceived social norms play a role in motivating or inhibiting the acquisition of the Fante language

among Northern Ghanaian immigrants. The theory also examines the impact of social interactions, cultural values, economic opportunities, and educational access on language acquisition processes.

By employing Social Identity Theory, researchers gained a deeper understanding of the sociological implications of language acquisition and the factors that shape the experiences of Northern Ghanaian immigrants in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. This theoretical framework allows for the exploration of identity formation, social integration, intergroup relations, and cultural preservation within the context of language acquisition.

4. Methodology

This study employed an ethnography design. According to Goldstein, Grey, Salisbury, and Snell (2014), ethnography is investigating and comprehending a specific culture or social group through close observation, interviews, and immersion in their surroundings. It aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and social dynamics of the group being studied. Ethnographic research typically involves qualitative data collection methods, such as participant observation and interviews to capture rich and contextual insights into the lived experiences of individuals and communities. The focus is on understanding the social ramifications around the acquisition and use of the Fante language by northern immigrants.

The population consists of the entire group of northern immigrants in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The concepts of data saturation, rather than statistical power or degrees of significance, are what decide the sample size in qualitative research. When a researcher reaches data saturation, they cease gathering data since the fresh data are no longer producing fresh themes or insights (Braun & Clarke 2021). To guarantee that the data gathered is sufficiently comprehensive and diverse, it is generally recommended to strive for a sample size of at least 10–50 participants for ethnographic investigations (Aguboshim, 2021). For this investigation, 50 northerners in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis were selected purposively for the study. The rationale for purposively selecting 50 participants in this research is to obtain a sufficiently diverse and representative sample of northern immigrants in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the socio-cultural implications, economic nuances, and acquisition processes related to the use of the Fante language in their context.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth information about their experiences and understanding of influencing factors and social ramifications around the acquisition and use of the Fante language by northern immigrants. The interviews consisted of a set of predetermined questions and topics while allowing flexibility for participants to provide detailed responses. The researchers spent a significant amount of time immersing themselves in the community of Northern Ghanaian immigrants in Sekondi-Takoradi. They observed their daily lives, interactions, and language use in different social contexts, such as homes, markets, social gatherings, and religious events. The researchers took detailed field notes to capture observations, behaviours, and language dynamics. Again, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with Northern Ghanaian immigrants who have acquired the Fante language to explore their experiences, motivations, challenges, and perceptions related to learning and using the Fante language. They answered questions on i) factors affecting the acquisition and use of Fante language by northern immigrants in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis ii.) The social implication of the acquisition of the Fante language by northern immigrants in the Metropolis. Audio and video recording devices, with participants' consent, were used to capture the discussions and ensure accurate data transcription. Furthermore, the researcher took detailed field notes during observations, documenting relevant behaviours, interactions, and contextual factors. The period of the study spanned between October 2019 and April 2020. The languages of interaction were Dagbanli, English and Fante. Finally, the study which was qualitative in design made use of published secondary resource materials such as articles, books and newspapers.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

Thematic analysis was used to analyse each of the specific objectives starting from the Fante language proficiency and fluency of participants, factors affecting acquisition of fante language and the social implication of the acquisition of the fante language. In the context of the topic "sociological implications of the acquisition of the Fante language by northern Ghanaian immigrants in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis", thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in the data collected from semi-structured interview guide. Pseudo names for people and places were adopted to ensure secrecy and anonymity of the participants. The interactions that were done at various places and recordings on tape were transcribed into text form to aid in tracing like and unlike patterns and information.

5.1 Fante Language Proficiency and Fluency of Participants

From the 1920s to present times, northerners have been migrating to the south with the hope of getting better job opportunities, (Stephen et al. 2007). The authors concluded that the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis has been a destination for some of the migrants to do such jobs as mining or farming on cocoa plantations. Halawayhi (2012) observed that some of the northern migrants may come as professional accountants, army officers, teachers and bankers. The author further opined that an appreciable number of them enter the scrap business in the Kokompe Market while a few of them are also engaged in the sale of lumber, others are into real estate businesses. The English language has always been used for interactional purposes, but has not proven sufficient since not everybody speaks it. The non-literate immigrants are saddled with the burden of interaction even more since they cannot speak English to facilitate transaction. To lessen this problem, they quickly learn how to speak Fante much faster than their educated counterparts could do. In the following paragraphs, we would be doing an in-depth discussion of the themes that emerged in the course of the study.

Theme one: Fluency: The number of people chosen in a particular location is determined by the availability and access to people of northern origin. On the Takoradi Technical University campus for example, nine of them were present but five were accessible as the rest seemed too busy to talk to. It was realized that three out of the five could speak the Fante language well. Each of the three having stayed in the Metropolis for an average of sixteen years, still spoke with an accent that indicated their non-nativity. One of the two had spent nine years in the Metropolis, but could hardly put two comprehensive sentences together. The last one spent eleven years and could speak Fante code mixing largely with English for lack of adequate vocabulary.

Ten northerners were interacted with at Market Circle, four in the yam section close to the police station, and six in the abattoir. Fluency at the market was quite high except that three participants who had not spent more than six months in the Metropolis could not express themselves well. It was observed that they were still better than the two people at the TTU campus who had spent nine and eleven years respectively within the Metropolis. The researchers realized that the intellectuals interacted more with their kind in English and so had no interactional problem. The market people had no common language for interaction with the indigenous Akan and so Fante became the only option. They therefore had to learn it as soon as possible as it remained the sine qua non for interaction.

At the Kokompe Market, all the fifteen participants were fluent in the Fante language. Five of the participants were at a mechanical shop belonging to a Dabgamba man at Kokompe. All of them were fluent and one could only use their accent to identify them as non-native speakers. The timber market is bursting with the northern population; seven of them had a hearty chat with the researchers on matters ranging from ease or difficulty in Fante acquisition to that of its usefulness to them. There was a shed constructed with wood with pillars and benches all over its surrounding serving as resting place for timber loaders. This also became an important contact point for

interaction. Three northern Ghanaians were identified through the northern language (Gurune) in which they communicated. The team focused on the Ghanaians (other African nationals like Zambarima, Hausa, Kotokoli were there) and it came to light that they were all fluent and each had lived in the Metropolis for not less than ten years.

At the last location in Effiakuma, all the twenty participants were fluent. A driver of a Kia truck who lived close to the VIP hotel could speak Fante though he had spent only one and half years in the Metropolis. It was observed that in front of one of the popular mosques, the people communicated in Fante to the surprise of the research team. Upon interaction, it came to light that they were of different ethnicities from the north and interaction in Fante is more comfortable and easier. At Effiakuma in particular, Fante has replaced Hausa which is a Lingua Franca in Zongos (kind of slum common in West Africa), and one can see the language being used in community interactions. Fante is dominant even among the immigrants to the extent that kids who are brought into the suburb from the north acquire the language quite fast through their peers. The children use Fante in dealings with friends even if they can speak the same northern language, soon they become ineffective in articulation of their first languages. Abdul (pseudo name) from Tamale, ten or eleven years old, who had only spent three months in the Metropolis and lived near Ayigbe Compound was called by the interviewees for interaction to see how children acquire the Fante language quickly more than their adult counterparts who may take half a year to comprehend and speak the language. Generally speaking, children not more than fourteen years learn languages effortlessly. According to Chomsky (1965), it is due to an inborn Language Acquisition Devise (LAD) a mechanism facilitating the learning of language, consisting of neural wirings and brain structures unique to human beings. The author argues that a child does not need to be taught language formally, but simply needs to be exposed to adult speech.

Unlike the children, the adult who naturally have passed the critical period do not acquire language that easy, and this was observed in the longevity, fluency and ease of acquiring the Fante language by northern adults. According to Chomsky (1965), adult language learners start by transferring their native language's sounds, meanings, and word order to the second language they are learning. By doing this, a barrier to learning a second language begins to emerge because the learner starts to mix up the grammatical rules of the first and second languages, which leads to an improper method of language acquisition.

5.2 Fante Acquisition Ramifications

Theme one: Accent and pronunciation : As pointed out above, northern children in Effiakuma learned the Fante language more easily while at the same time maintaining a good accent and pronunciation ability. The adult continues to speak Fante largely with an accent influenced by their first languages. A sentence spoken by an adult northern immigrant is enough to tell the native Akan that he is or she is a northern speaker of the language. Abutalibi and Cashen's (2018), Chomsky (2018) explanation is that the adult learners continue to transfer the order of words, sound and sentence patterns from the first language to the second. It is vital to note that the development of language history has gone through a transformation from the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial eras (Oteng, Mensah, Babah, Swanzy-Impraim, 2023). The following words would be of immense help to buttress this point about accent and pronunciation challenges in speaking Fante by adult northern immigrants:

5.3 Accent and pronunciation challenges

Original Fante	Corrupt form
Effiakuma (name of a suburb)	Affiakuma
Asakae	Ashakae
Ɔkyena (tomorrow)	Akyena

Original Fante	Corrupt form
Osɛ den (he/she says that)	Oshe den
Mɔ browo(I will beat you)	Mbebuwuro
Edziban (food)	Dziban
Kyenam (fried fish)	Shenam (fried fish)
Ɔyɛ hyew (it is hot)	Ɔyɛ sew (It is hot)
Merekɔ ekyema (I am going to sell)	Merekɔ Ɔhyema (I am going to sell)

The above words are transcribed in the table below for easy linguistic appreciation.

Table 2: Transcription of words

Original Fante	Corrupt Form	Corrupt Form
Effiakuma	[ɛfiɛkuma]	[afɛkuma]
Asakɛ	[asakai]	[aɛkɛɪ]
ɔkyena	[ɔtɛɪna]	[atɛɪna]
ɔsɛdɛn	[ɔsɪdɛn]	[ɔɛɪdɛn]
Mɔbro wo	[mɔbrɔwɔ]	[mbebrɔwɔ]
Edziban	[ɛdzɪban]	[ɛɪban]
Kyenam	[tɛɪnam]	[ɛɪnam]
ɔyɛhyew	[ɔjɛɪw]	[ɔjɛɪw]
Merekɔ akyima	[mɪrɪkɔɛtɛɪma]	[mɪrɪkɔɛɛɪma]

The above tables represent the correct form of certain Fante expressions and the wrong forms of same. It can be deduced that there is a challenge with regards to certain morphemes either in prefix or infix positions. A community known as Effiakuma is noted to be pronounced as Affiakuma by the northern people within the Metropolis. Morphemes like 'kye' is most likely to be pronounced as 'sh' as in 'kyenam' (fried fish). And words like 'Asakɛ' may be pronounced as 'Ashakɛ' replacing the 's' with 'sh'.

Lots of names in the northern languages which constitute the focus of this study start with the letter A, and all-day names start with letter A in Frafra, Dagbani, Kussal etc (Awedoba & Owoahene-Acheampong, 2017). They are used to the letter A; this explains why they are likely to substitute the letter E and O for A when speaking Fante. The morpheme 'sh' is also a common occurrence when northerners speak Fante. It is observed that they are used to combinations such as 'ch', and 'sh' as in 'chema' (go), 'shema'(roast/sew) among other words. According to Oluwayemisi (2015), mother tongue-interference phenomenon is a challenge that second-language learners run into while transferring their native or indigenous language (L1) skills to their second language (L2). The author further explains that the issues can be morphological, phonological, semantic, or even syntactic (grammatical). Oluwayemisi's description of the issue of mother tongue interference is also related to the northern immigrants' usage of Fante as a second language.

Theme two: Longevity and Level of interactions: It emerged from the study that the longer the immigrants stayed, the better their fluency. Some of the immigrants were so fluent to the extent that it would only take a good observer to realize through the accent and some renditions that a language user was a non-Fante. This was common with those who lived in the Metropolis ten years and above. Hayfron (2001) also notes that language abilities develop over time in the target country due to exposure and active learning.

It was also observed that the level of interaction determined how early or long it took an immigrant to learn the Fante. In the market places, in the densely populated residence of Effiakuma Zongo, social interaction and business transaction were done through the Fante language exposing the migrants to an opportunity to learn. Though individual ability varied in their attempt to acquire the language, generally speaking, the exposure to the Fante language and the dominance it held over other languages such as English, Ewe and Hausa spoken in those vicinities, determined period and

fluency of acquisition and usage. It is also worthy of note to rehash the fact that immigrants who are into white- color jobs such as lecturers, bankers, and soldiers have low acquisition period and fluency since they are used to interacting with colleagues daily in English. It was observed that teachers at the elementary schools also acquired the Fante language faster than the lecturers the team interacted with at the University.

5.4 *Social Implication of the Acquisition of the Fante Language by Northern Immigrants in the Metropolis*

Theme One: Language Shift and Cultural Estrangement among Northern Immigrant Children: The ability or otherwise of learning and utilization of the Fante language by the northern groups held several implications. The implications are largely of positive nature and partly of negative outlook especially for children of the immigrants. Often times, the tendency of the children to speak the language of a host city or country to the neglect of their own native ones is highly probable (Bialystok, 2009). When this happens, issues of cultural estrangements may occur and that was exactly a complaint by a participant 4. He explained:

“My children’s proficiency in our own northern language is low because they are so used to speaking Fante. It’s a real concern for me. They’ve become estranged from our culture, and it’s evident in their dislike for television stations like Sagani TV and North TV (NTV) in Tamale, which broadcast in Gonja, Waali, and Dabgani. They just don’t connect with those channels because they’re more comfortable with Fante. NTV also hosts programmes in Gurune and airs films in other host of languages. Apart from the toy programmes aired after 3:00 pm on weekdays, the children do not patronize any other to the chagrin of their parents.”

Other participants also complained about their parents’ vexatious attitudes to the inability of their (participants) children to speak their languages. The children were said to be lost since for the grandparents; the children cannot well have socialised among their kinsmen. Wong-Fillmore (2000) reported that children who cannot express themselves in their local languages would always have a difficulty in their socialisation process and there would always be a negative impact on the closeness and intimacy between parents and children. After interacting with three of the children at a spot near the VIP mosque on three consecutive Sundays, the research team realised the extent of low comprehension and articulation which formed the bases for complaints by the parents of the participants. The children were Dagbanli speakers and their accent was not different from the manner in which Akans speak the language. The observation was that the children, just like Akan speakers of the Gur languages, found it difficult pronouncing the ‘a’ and ‘h’ sounds when they are found in the middle of words. Some of the words are found in the table below.

Table 3: Accent and pronunciation challenges by northern children in their mother Tongues

Original Dagbanli	Corrupt form
Buɔm(fire)	Buum
Savim(tuozafi; kind of local dish)	Saam
Pava(woman)	Paa
Sohla(yesterday)	sola
ZuNɔ (today)	Zuno
Bievni(tomorrow)	Beini
Tayiva (thief)	Tayia (thief)
Kpusina (lift and bring it)	Kpuuna
ZanNna (bring it)	Zanna
Bava (fortune teller)	Baa

Theme Two: Fante for Liturgical Purposes: During religious activities such as delivering of sermons in church and in the mosque, the Fante language has always been of immense importance. Most sermons are done in Fante thereby serving liturgical purposes. Participant 16 reportedly:

"During worship, I and several others had to endure sitting through sermons that were entirely in Fante. It was challenging for us because we couldn't understand a word of it. The preacher would go on for over thirty minutes, and we felt completely lost. It was frustrating to sit there and not be able to comprehend the message being delivered from the pulpit in Fante."

The Catholic Church (Christ the King) located in the heart of Effiakuma is predominantly attended by the northern community, yet preaching is done in Fante or English, but announcements are translated to some of the northern languages like Gurunne and Kasen. With the ability to speak and understand the language, one could be sure of benefitting from the religious preaching and admonitions done largely in Fante and partly in other languages like English, Hausa and Dagbanli.

Theme Three: Fante for Social Interactions: The Fante language is the main means of social interactions.

'If you enter someone's land, learn his language, that way, life will be good for you'; said respondent 24.

The more the immigrants speak Fante the more they feel accepted. 'Awodze, Eka hen ho' (as for you, you are with us) is a common expression that one would hear the Akans make when they hear a northerner speak the Fante language (a common experience/knowledge). Fante is the most effective means through which one can establish interaction with the local community. The inability of an immigrant to speak it can badly affect the level and smoothness of interaction within the Metropolis especially among market women and people without formal education.

5.5 Fante and commerce

It was a strong view of the participants that the ability to speak the Fante language boosted one's commercial fortunes. This is said to be so because people were more comfortable dealing with immigrants whom they could interact with in Fante than struggling with any other language like Pidgin English. So, in buying yam, or sheep and goats, the indigenous people have always tried to buy from the Fante speakers than struggling with the non-speakers.

Another commercial issue worth considering is that of security and freedom from cheating by the indigenous population. Participants held that when one is unable to speak Fante, prices of goods and services are inflated for them. This situation enjoyed a unanimous claim on the part of the immigrants saying they used to be cheated until they reached low fluency and could ask for reduction through bargains during transactions.

In talking commerce, one needs to be at the Public Works Department (PWD) Park in Takoradi during Eid Adha to see how the Fante language is of great importance for commercial activities. The sheep and goat dealers who come from the north straight away to the Metropolis are disadvantaged as the resident northerners use the Fante language to get customers. The resident northerners meet potential customers as they approach the kraals to woo them into buying from them using the Fante language. It must be made clear here that the sellers who come from the Upper East or West Regions do not necessarily speak the same language, some of the Northern or North East regions, who arguably form the majority of the Muslim population in the Metropolis making Fante the common language for interaction. The Fante speaking animal dealers make the best of sales as the non-speakers look on hoping against hope that some sales will come their way too.

It was also observed that the northern Fante speakers do lots of needs assessments in order to provide the goods that the native Fantes need in the Metropolis. For example, items like dawadawa, shea butter, beverages and even animals are provided to meet the needs requirements of the natives, thereby indicating the overarching importance of the language for commercial purposes.

5.6 Fante and amorous relationship

It was the opinion of the young immigrants that the Fante language helps them to befriend Fante girls with ease. They believed that if one chats the girls up, use romantic words including being nice, then they easily fall for one. Coping mechanisms are more psychological than physiological and genetic (Quansah, Mensah & Yeboah, 2022).

'Don't you have a wife? Asked a researcher. 'Me? I have, but I need to add. I want a Fante woman'. 'Eii Baba! The researcher exclaimed calling him by the title the northern men are addressed with mostly by Akans. Laughing heartily, the respondent said 'Etwɛ kor kɔtsi'.

This sent everybody laughing heartily with the women looking shy and embarrassed. What he meant was that 'one vagina kills the penis', a popular Fante proverb which men use to support polygamous relationships. For the men therefore, the ability to speak the Fante language increases one's opportunity to relate with the indigenous Akan girls amorously.

5.7 Security and wrongful identity

The likelihood of non-Fante speakers, especially people of northern origin being mistaken for Nigerians is very high. In an era where children and women trafficking is rife as was experienced in the Metropolis in the late 2018 and early 2019, especially with Nigerians allegedly at the centre of the crime, the life and security of the northern Ghanaian immigrants is on the peril. Their ability to speak and communicate in the Fante language would set them aside from the Nigerian nationals who generally do not speak or try to learn the language, but rather communicate largely in English. Participants saw their ability to speak Fante as not only patronizing their Ghanaian Akan brethren but also pushing an agenda of ensuring security for themselves and their kinsmen. In a scene where alleged thieves are arrested, and you do not understand 'come- to- be slaughtered', how can one exonerate himself? A participant quizzed, in his attempt to tell the research team that when one does not understand anything in Fante or in fact any other language (expressed as come to be slaughtered), the likelihood of the fellow falling as victim of wrongful identity is high). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become important tools in today's knowledge-based society and has an important role to play in the language space (Ennin & Mensah, 2022).

6. Conclusion

The study concluded that immigrants who worked in the markets or stayed in Effiakuma acquired the language faster than those who worked in the formal sector where interaction was largely done in English.

It is evident that northern children in Effiakuma learn the Fante language more easily while maintaining a good accent and pronunciation. However, adult immigrants continue to speak Fante with an accent influenced by their first languages. This suggests that adult learners tend to transfer the order of words, sounds, and sentence patterns from their first language to the second language, affecting their accent and pronunciation in Fante. the study highlights that the longer the immigrants stay in the Metropolis, the better their fluency in Fante becomes. Fluency levels vary among individuals, but those who have lived in the area for ten years or more demonstrate a high level of fluency. The level of interaction also plays a significant role in language acquisition, as immigrants who engage in social interactions and conduct business transactions in Fante, particularly in marketplaces and densely populated areas like Effiakuma Zongo, have more opportunities to learn the language. Conversely, immigrants in white-collar jobs, such as lecturers, bankers, and soldiers, who predominantly interact in English, have a lower acquisition period and fluency in Fante.

Furthermore, the ability to learn and speak the Fante language has a profound impact on the

social integration, economic opportunities, cultural preservation, and personal security of northern Ghanaian immigrants.

7. Recommendations

Since immigrants who worked in the formal sector had slower language acquisition rates due to limited interaction in Fante, it is recommended to implement language learning programmes within workplaces. Employers and organisations can encourage language exchange programmes, language classes, or provide resources for employees to develop their Fante language skills. This will facilitate better communication, enhance social integration, and create a more inclusive work environment.

Language learning programmes and resources should be developed to address the specific needs of adult immigrants in improving their accent and pronunciation in Fante. Language courses or workshops that focus on phonetics and pronunciation exercises can be designed to help immigrants overcome the challenges they face due to the influence of their first languages. Also, efforts should be made to encourage long-term residency and immersion in Fante-speaking communities for Northern Ghanaian immigrants. Promoting community-based integration initiatives, such as cultural exchange programmes and community events, can provide increased opportunities for interaction and language practice, leading to enhanced fluency and integration.

Implement language learning programmes specifically tailored to northern Ghanaian immigrants in Effiakuma, focusing on teaching them the Fante language. These programmes should be easily accessible and provide comprehensive language instruction to enhance social integration, economic opportunities, cultural preservation, and personal security for the immigrants.

8. Suggestion for Further Studies

1. Investigate the experiences and challenges faced by Northern Ghanaian immigrants in language learning programmes and initiatives in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. This study could explore the effectiveness of existing language education approaches, identify barriers to language acquisition, and propose strategies for enhancing language learning experiences and outcomes for immigrants.
2. Investigate the experiences and challenges faced by Northern Ghanaian immigrants in language learning programmes and initiatives in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. This study could explore the effectiveness of existing language education approaches, identify barriers to language acquisition, and propose strategies for enhancing language learning experiences and outcomes for immigrants.

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