

## Language Use in Winneba - Some Preliminary Observations<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** Efutu, Fante, Kwa language, language use, language documentation language development, language attitude

### 1. Introduction

This paper primarily attempts to answer one main question, namely, “to what extent is Efutu used in its speech community?” In addition, the paper briefly touches on two issues: (i) the linguistic attitudes of people, especially, speakers, towards their language and (ii) language development activities in the community.

Efutu is reported to be threatened within its speech communities such that members speak a second language, Fante, which is a dominant language in southern Ghana, very fluently (Abaka, 2006; Welmers, 1973). Indeed it has been observed that in Winneba one rarely hears Efutu spoken unless one visits the fishing beach area where the fishermen and their families use it regularly (Abaka, 2006). This claim was confirmed through personal observation during linguistic fieldwork in the Winneba community. During the fieldwork it was observed that Fante is the main language spoken in the inland part of Winneba, while Efutu is reserved for the suburbs along the coast, including the fishing beach. It was observed that out of about forty suburbs in Winneba, only about twelve (located along the coast) speak Efutu, with the rest (the inland part) speaking Fante.

This study is therefore conducted to explore the current state of Efutu in relation to other languages, especially Fante, in the areas near the fishing beach where people still speak the language on a daily basis. Four domains of language use - home, basic education, Christian religion, and traditional religion - were selected for the survey. The domain of home is stretched to cover the fishing beach, the fish market and the streets in these places where the fishermen and fish sellers spend most part of the day. Through interviews and participant observation, certain groups and individuals in the community were identified and interviewed. Their responses inform the discussions presented in this paper. The paper is structured as follows: section two presents sociolinguistic background information on Efutu. Section three discusses methods employed in the survey for data/information gathering. Section four discusses findings from the survey. Section five summarises and concludes the paper. Throughout the paper, the term ‘Efutu speakers’ is used to refer to persons whose mother tongue (MT) or first language (L1) is Efutu.

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the GILLBT Conference on Language, Culture and National Development, 13-14 April, 2012, Legon, Accra, Ghana

## **2. Sociolinguistic background of Efutu**

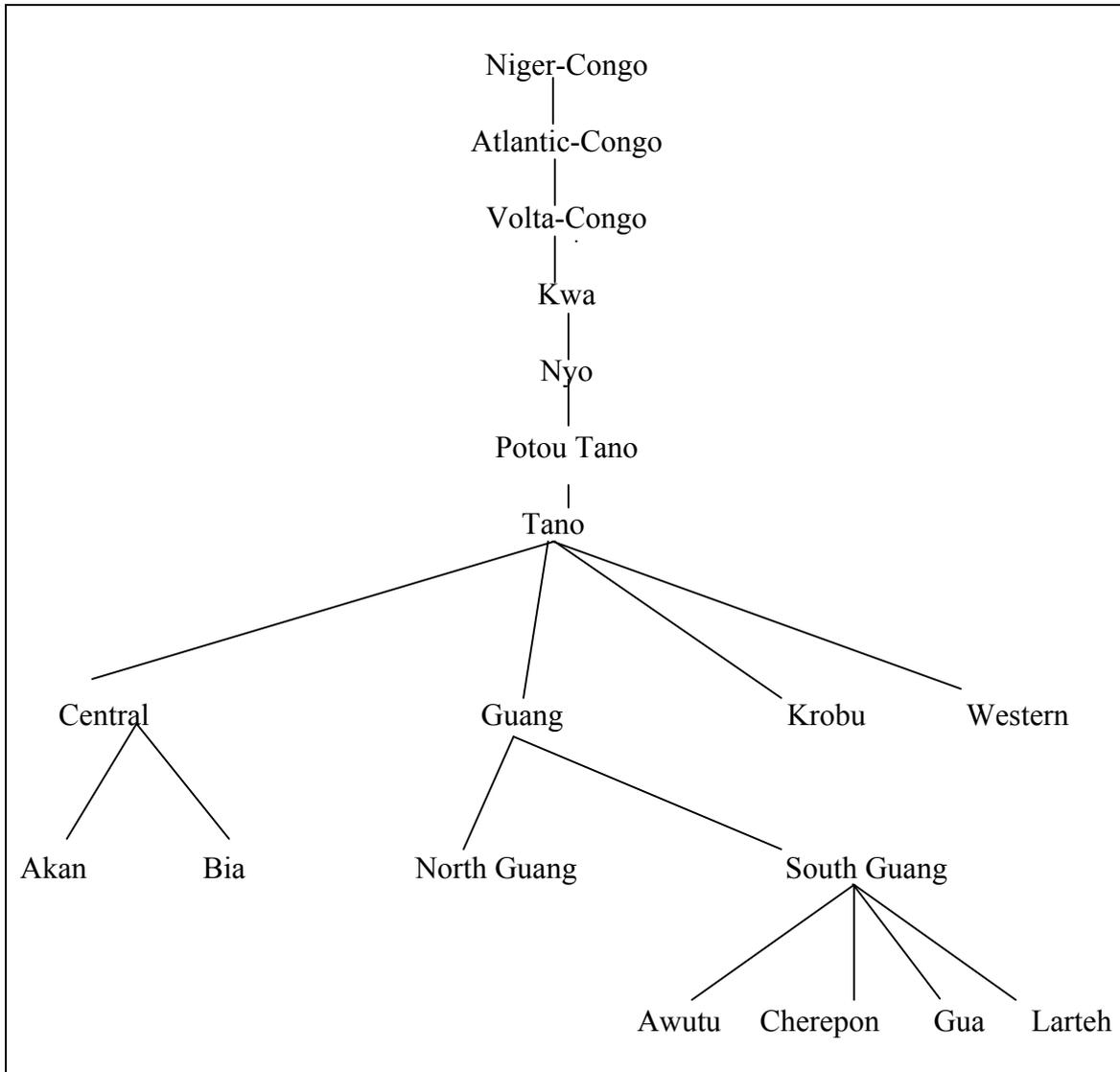
Efutu is spoken in Winneba, a coastal town in the central region of Ghana with a population of about 68,597 (2010 Housing and Population census).<sup>2</sup> It is located in the south coast of the country, about sixty-five kilometres west of the capital, Accra. Other surrounding villages where Efutu is spoken include Osebompanyin, Ekroful and Ateitu. Absolute number of speakers is not known, however, in Winneba, it is only a fraction, just about a third or less of the population<sup>3</sup> that actually speak Efutu. Lewis (2009) lists Efutu as one of three dialects of Awutu, with Senya and Awutu proper as the other two dialects, and classifies the Awutu language as follows: Niger-Congo > Kwa > Guang > Southern Guang > Awutu (see figure 1 below). The immediate linguistic neighbours of the Awutu dialects are Ga and the Fante dialect of Akan.

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<sup>2</sup> The population figure represents people living in the entire Winneba or Efutu district which includes other villages in addition to Winneba.

<sup>3</sup> The population of Winneba town, not the entire Winneba district.

Figure 1: Linguistic classification of Awutu following Lewis (2009)



A language map of Ghana in figure 2 presents Awutu vis-à-vis other languages of the country. Awutu, numbered 11 on the list of languages, is shown to be one of sixty-seven indigenous languages, and it is indicated on the map as being spoken in two small locations adjacent to the capital of the county, Accra. In relation to the other languages of the country Awutu could be described as a minority language in Ghana.

Figure 2: Language map of Ghana



The 2003 population and housing census in Ghana put the Awutu-Efutu-Senya district population at 180,000 (Lewis, 2009). However, the District has recently been divided into the Awutu-Senya district and the Efutu (also known as Winneba) district. In the 2010 population and housing census, the Awutu-Senya district recorded a population of 195,306. Absolute numbers of speakers of the individual dialects are not known. According to Boafo, Hatfield and Kehl (2002), the Efutu and Senya varieties are highly mutually intelligible with minimal differences in pronunciation and they are distinguished mainly for political identification. The Awutu variety however, is said to be less intelligible with the other two. Other ethnic groups found in the Awutu-Efutu-Senya area include Ga, Dangme, Fante, Gomoa, Ewe and Hausa (Boafo, Hatfield and Kehl, 2002).

The Efutu variety could be described as being threatened in the sense that although Winneba is identified with Efutu, that is, Efutu is the native language of Winneba, close observation reveals that only a fraction of the population actually speaks the language. The dominant language in Winneba is the Fante dialect of Akan, which happens to be geographically adjacent<sup>4</sup> to the Awutu-Efutu-Senya dialects, and also is spoken as a second language by the Awutu-Efutu-Senya community. Welmers (1973, p.11) long ago predicted the likelihood of Fante replacing Efutu (cited in Abaka, 2006). A more recent study by Abaka (2006) points out that it is possible to live in Winneba for a year or more without hearing anybody speak Efutu if one does not go to the fishing area.

The Efutu speakers are mainly fishermen and crop farmers, though a few of them are engaged in other profession such as petty trading, carpentry, masonry and teaching. In an address at a gathering of the Guan Congress (1991), it was revealed that Winneba has one university, three senior high schools (SHS) and sixteen basic schools, twelve of which have a junior high (JHS) division.<sup>5</sup> Religions practiced in the community include Christianity, and traditional religion (Hagan, 2000). There are health facilities in the community, including a municipal hospital.

### **3. Method of survey**

Methods employed in this survey include interviews and participant observation. Ten suburbs in Winneba, (including Wonsom, Yepimso, Sakagyaano, Penkye, Aboadze and Ponko-ekyir, all located near the fishing beach) were involved in the survey. As mentioned in the introduction, four domains of language use - home, basic education, Christian religion, and traditional religion – were chosen for the survey. These domains were selected because it is anticipated that they constitute a representative sample that can produce responses/data that reflects an accurate (or near accurate) linguistic state of the community. People interviewed included school teachers, church leaders, traditional practitioners and several other individuals from the community. Details of the survey methods are described below.

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<sup>4</sup> Ga is another geographically adjacent language, also spoken by some Efutu speakers as a second or third language.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Hagan (2000).

### **3.1. Participant observation**

Eleven months of fieldwork allowed me to participate in many activities in the community and to personally observe the linguistic behaviour of community members. During the fieldwork, I had the opportunity to observe linguistic behaviour of families and household members in their homes. I also observed the linguistic behaviour of people at the beach where fishermen carry out their day-to-day activities, with women coming to buy the catch, children playing around and swimming in the sea, and hawkers - especially food and water vendors - roaming with their merchandise. Other places where linguistic behaviour was observed are the fish market where the women sell fish and other food items and interact with each other and with customers/shoppers, and the streets near the beach and the fish market. I also observed linguistic behaviour in school compounds during visits for interviews. Remarkably, I participated in a celebration of one major festival, the Petu festival, which afforded me the opportunity to observe linguistic and other performances at the festival. During observation questions were asked where necessary.

### **3.2. Interviews**

In addition to participant observation, I visited selected schools and churches to interview people on the linguistic terrain in their institutions. I also interviewed two leaders involved in traditional religious practice. In addition, I visited a community radio station where a program is broadcast in Efutu once a week, and I interviewed one of the programme presenters. Finally, I interviewed several other individuals in the home domain.

The interviews took the form of discussions with one person or a maximum of two people interviewed at a time. There were no questionnaires, meaning the interviews were not structured (in the technical sense). Nonetheless, questions were jotted down to serve as a guide and as stimuli for responses and discussions. Most of the questions were open-ended, which allowed respondents to produce as much feedback as they could. In most cases, their responses prompted further questions which were in turn discussed. Duration of the interviews ranged between thirty minutes and one hour. Most of the interviews were audio recorded when permission was granted. In places where permission for recording was declined, notes on salient points of the interview were taken on paper. The language of interview was Akan – the interviewer spoke the Asante dialect while interviewees responded in the Fante dialect.

#### **3.2.1. Interview with schools**

Currently, the basic education system in Ghana consist of two years of kindergarten (KG), six years of primary, and three years of junior high (JHS). The primary level is divided into two: lower and upper primary. It must be mentioned that not all schools have a KG. Some schools, especially private schools, have an additional nursery level which admits children from age two. The recommended age for the start of KG and primary are four years and six years, respectively. In effect, children complete basic

education at the age of fifteen. The basic education system in Ghana is represented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Basic education system in Ghana

Level	Number of years	Recommended start age
Nursery	2	Age 2
Kindergarten (KG1-KG2)	2	Age 4
Lower primary (P1-P3)	3	Age 6
Upper primary (P4-P6)	3	Age 9
Junior high (JHS1-JHS3)	3	Age 12

For this survey, four basic schools were visited - two public schools and two private schools – all located near the fishing beach. The visits took place during school hours, which allowed me to observe activities personally, especially linguistic behaviours of both teachers and pupils in the school compound, in addition to the interviews. In each school the head teacher and one or two other teachers were interviewed. In total nine teachers were interviewed. Questions asked include:

- linguistic background of children in the school, that is their mother tongue or first language, as well as any other language(s) they speak
- linguistic background of teachers
- language(s) of instruction at pre-school, lower primary, upper primary and junior high levels
- language(s) taught as examinable subject(s)
- language(s) of communication outside classroom between teachers and pupils
- language(s) of communication outside classroom among pupils
- language(s) of communication outside classroom among teachers
- language of communication during Parent-Teacher Association (henceforth PTA) meetings

### 3.2.2. Interviews with church leaders

Christian religion is widespread in Winneba. There are various orthodox and Pentecostal/‘spiritual’ denominations found in the community. Hagan’s (2000, pp.197-198) list of churches in the community shows that the number of Pentecostal denominations (about twenty eight) outnumbers the orthodox denominations (about seven). Some of the churches, both Pentecostal and orthodox, have basic schools which are normally housed in the same premises/compound. In some cases, church buildings and/or church meeting rooms are used as classrooms and vice versa. It was not confirmed though which of them, the school or the church, was established first.

Seven church leaders were interviewed from four different churches - four leaders from two different orthodox denominations and three from two different Pentecostal groups. All four churches are located near the fishing beach. The interviews took place outside church hours and as a result I could not personally observe activities or linguistic behaviour in the churches. Questions asked in the interviews include:

- language groups of members of the congregations
- language(s) used for sermon, announcements, prayers, singing, sharing of testimonies small group discussions and other activities

### 3.2.3. Interviews with traditional religion practitioners

Another prevalent religion beside Christianity in the Efutu community is traditional religion (Hagan, 2000). With many deities/gods abounding among them (Ackom, 2005), members of the community actively practice traditional religion. (It is not uncommon, though, for an individual to practice both Christianity and traditional religion; I spoke with people who confirmed that they practise both). There are many shrines located in the community, with some of them located right in the homes of some families (Hagan, 2000). The deities of these shrines are believed to possess supernatural powers which sustain the community in various ways (Ackom, 2005; Hagan, 2000). For instance, some community members I spoke with expressed their belief that it is these deities that provide them with protection and cure from diseases, protection from enemies and provide plentiful rain and harvest, among other provisions. I also found out that some members of the community consult the shrines (rather than a hospital) when they fall ill. Various festivals and rituals are performed regularly for the deities (Ackom, 2005). One such festival is Aboakyer, a ‘deer-hunt’ festival (Ackom, 2005; Hagan, 2000).

Two persons were interviewed in the area of traditional religion – an *osow*, and an elder. The term *osow* translates into English as ‘a priest’. The *osow* is different from the *obireow* (*okomfo* in Akan) who is also a priest but of a different kind with a different role. For instance, an *obireow* is chosen or possessed by deities, and he or she could be from any clan/tribe/family within or outside the community. The *osow* on the other hand is selected from the community/family/clan by elders of the shrine to serve as their leader. The role of an *osow* in the traditional religion is to pour libations and offer prayers to the deities at appointed times, to feed the gods with ‘spiritual preparations’<sup>6</sup> and to perform a weekly ritual at the shrine. In general, the *osow* could be described as a general overseer of the shrine. He or she is elected from the family/clan/tribe, which the god inhabits, by elders of that family. An elder of a shrine on the other hand is one (of several individuals) entrusted with the general affairs in the shrine, including taking part in the performance of rituals, ensuring the wellbeing of the shrine/god and the selection of an *osow*, among other obligations. Every shrine has one *osow* but several elders at a time.

Questions in the interview with the traditional religion practitioners include language(s) used at the shrine in general and for specific activities such as interactions with clients/visitors, prayers/libation and performance of other rituals.

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<sup>6</sup> It is explained that this is a special preparation offered to the gods (as a meal).

### **3.2.4. Interviews in homes, the fishing beach and the fish market**

Finally, other individuals were interviewed in their homes, the fishing beach and the fish market, as well as on the streets in these places. Although participants in these interviews were randomly selected, I excluded members in the community that I had had previous interactions with, especially those I regularly worked with and whose linguistic behaviour I had personally observed. As a result, individuals and homes that I did not visit regularly were targeted in these interviews.

Unlike the interviews with the specific groups discussed above, these interviews focused on the individual rather than any particular institution/organisation. One hundred and eighty individuals<sup>7</sup> (ninety females and ninety males) aged between sixteen and seventy years were interviewed. In these interviews, questions included:

- age, hometown, occupation, marital status, (name)
- mother tongue (L1)
- other languages spoken
- language(s) spoken at home with children, spouse and other household members
- language(s) spoken at the beach/fish market with others

## **4. Findings**

This section reports on findings from the survey. They include responses from the various interviews as well as findings from (my) personal observations through participating in activities in the community.

### **4.1. Language use in schools**

In order to set the language situation in schools in context, this section will begin with a brief background to language policy in education by the Ghana government. From before independence until now, Ghana has witnessed frequent changes in its policy on the language of education (Owu-Ewie, 2006). The complexity of the linguistic state of the country, particularly, the presence of over sixty indigenous languages (see figure 2 in section 2 above) is one of the major factors that makes it difficult for policy makers to decide on the choice of language(s) of education. It has been recognized that multi-lingual communities face challenges on matters pertaining to language and education (Ouadaogo, 2000). Currently, the government of Ghana's policy on language for basic education follows a bilingual model. The policy, contained in the 2007 Education Reform of the Ministry of Education of Ghana,<sup>8</sup> "stresses the importance of local language instruction at the primary level" (NALAP Baseline Assessment, 2009). The inclusion of mother tongue (L1) in basic education is based on the philosophy that learner's proficiency in his or her L1 can enhance transfer to L2 learning. The policy proposes a bilingual model of the use of English, which is the official language of the country, in combination with a Ghanaian language, as languages of instruction at the

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<sup>7</sup> The sample size is random: it cannot be said to represent a specific percentage since absolute number of speakers is not known. However, respondents cut across the suburbs near the beach area.

<sup>8</sup> Source of information on the 2007 Education Reform includes secondary sources rather than the original document.

basic level. Besides the policy in the 2007 Education Reform, the Ghana Education Service (GES) has developed a programme known as the National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP) which is designed to promote literacy at the basic school level. The NALAP programme, introduced in 2009, is said to support the 2007 Education reform; it recommends a bilingual transitional “early exit” model (NALAP Baseline Assessment, 2009). According to the designers, the model helps children to learn to read in their mother tongue (L1) and to speak English (L2). The model proposes that the majority of instructional time initially be spent on L1, that is, ninety per cent (90%) in KG and eighty per cent (80%) in P1, and the time for English be gradually increased to fifty per cent (50%) by P3. By P4, all instruction must be in English. The description of the NALAP bilingual model is captured in figure 4 below.

Figure 4: The NALAP bilingual model of language of instruction in basic education

Level /class	Percentage of Ghanaian language (L1/MT)	Percentage of English
KG	90%	10%
Primary 1	80%	20%
Primary 2 – 3	50%	50%
Primary 4 – JHS 3	0%	100%

In order to cater for this bilingual model of basic education, there are nine government-sponsored indigenous languages from the various regions in the country: Akan (Fante, Asante Twi, Akuapim Twi), Nzema, Ewe, Gonja, Kasem, Dagaare, Dagbani, Dangbe and Ga.<sup>9</sup> These are the indigenous languages that serve the various regions as a Ghanaian language to be used in combination with English, as described in figure 4. For example, a school in the Ashanti region may use one of the Akan dialects, say Asante Twi, in combination with English as languages of instruction. For this purpose, teaching and learning materials in these languages have been developed and made available to schools. In addition, teachers are trained in the languages in the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) and the University of Cape Coast (UCC).

Furthermore, the nine government-sponsored languages are taught as examinable subjects at the basic level, and in order to qualify for entry into a senior high school, a student’s results must include a credit in one of them. Depending on the region in which a school is located, one (or two) of these local languages, usually the one used as a medium of instruction, is also taught as an examinable subject from P1 up to JHS3. English and French<sup>10</sup> are also taught as examinable subjects from P1 up to JHS3. The paragraphs that follow describe the survey in schools in this study.

As indicated above (see section 3.2.1.) nine teaching staff members from four basic schools located near the fishing beach in Winneba were interviewed. All schools except

<sup>9</sup> Although reasons/criteria for the choice of these languages are not investigated in this study, one probable criterion could be that they constitute dominant language groups in the country.

<sup>10</sup> French is not offered in some schools, probably due to lack of qualified instructors.

one have a kindergarten (KG). One school has a nursery in addition. It was discovered that most children in these schools generally start school later than the recommended age.

From the survey, it was reported that over eighty per cent of children in the schools come from an Efutu speaking background and speak Efutu as their first language. According to the teachers, when the children start school (nursery, kindergarten or primary one), they speak only Efutu. That is, children could be described as being monolingual in Efutu when they start school. They can barely speak or understand Fante or English. In spite of the linguistic background of children at the start of school, it was reported that Fante or/and English are used as medium of instruction in schools.

In one of the public schools, the head teacher reported that regarding language of instruction, the school uses English and Fante as its implementation of NALAP. She explained that in her school they use 50% Ghanaian language and 50% English at lower primary, 70% and 30% English and Ghanaian language, respectively, in upper primary and 100% English in junior high. The teacher showed me some NALAP materials/text books in Fante that her school uses for lower primary.

After consulting the NALAP document (after the interview), I discovered that the ratios of percentages of the languages of instruction reported for the school are different from those contained in the NALAP document. I could however not go back to ask for reasons for the modification of the percentages in the school.

In the other schools no specific model such as NALAP was mentioned. However, it was reported that Fante and English are used as media of instruction. In one private school, it was reported that English is the main language of instruction and Fante is used occasionally, for example, when pupils find it difficult to understand a lesson.

Regarding linguistic background of teachers in the schools, an estimation of less than twenty per cent of Efutu speakers was reported. Other members of teaching staff come from different language groups such as Akan, Ewe and Ga. English is said to be the main language of communication among teachers in the schools. However, teachers who share a common language other than English sometimes communicate in that language. At staff meetings and other formal meetings however, English is the main language used for proceedings.

On the subject of language(s) of communication outside classrooms, it was reported in all schools that English and Fante are the only approved languages. In all schools, it was reported that the speaking of Efutu is prohibited at all times in the school compound and in some schools pupils are said to be subjected to various forms of punishment if they are found speaking Efutu in the school compound during school hours. This means that children are prevented from using their mother tongue, Efutu, even during play time or break hours in school. The enforcement of this prohibition however varies in schools;

the private schools appear to be stricter. In the private schools, pupils in upper primary and beyond are expected to communicate in English only. The teachers explain that when children start school they find it difficult to adhere to the prohibition since the only language they speak and understand is Efutu. They continue to speak Efutu but they are always reminded of its prohibition. Children thus gradually learn to speak Fante in school and eventually, they get used to communicate in it in school at all times within a year or two. Children also learn to speak English but not at the same rate as Fante.

At Parent-Teacher Association (P.T.A) meetings Fante is said to be the main language used. Reading of minutes/reports, discussion of the day's business and all other items are carried out in Fante. It was however mentioned in three schools that some parents/guardians choose to make their contribution in Efutu which is then translated into Fante by a teacher.

#### **4.1.1. Reasons for language choice/used in schools**

Reasons were given by the interviewees for the linguistic situation in the schools. In all schools the main reason cited was the fact that Efutu is not an examinable subject in the school curriculum. As illustrated in the preceding section, only nine of the indigenous languages have been selected and developed to be included in the bilingual model of language of education and Efutu is obviously not one of them. Fante however is one of the nine. Fante, as already noted, serves as a second language in the Efutu speaking community (see section 1). Schools in Winneba thus use Fante as the approved Ghanaian language for education. Indeed most schools in the central region use Fante for this purpose. Another reason cited is that there are no teaching and learning materials in Efutu and so even if one is willing to use it that will not be possible.

Again, the reason that Fante but not Efutu is an examinable subject in school forms the basis for the prohibition of Efutu in schools. It was explained that children are expected to be proficient in Fante and English in order for them to pass examinations in these subjects. Teachers believe that if children are allowed to speak Efutu, it will interfere with and delay their proficiency in Fante and English. For that matter, when children start school they are encouraged (actually forced) to speak Fante and English right away so that they will be proficient sooner. This is the reason for outright prohibition of Efutu in school.

Another reason cited by one school (a private school) is that when parents/guardians realize that their children do not show any improvement in their Fante speaking skills after a while, they withdraw the children to other schools. And since the private schools are in competition for enrolments, they try to impress parents by making sure that children improve in Fante and English within a short time, in order to maintain their existing students or even get more students to enrol. This explains why the prohibition on Efutu is sterner in the private schools.

#### 4.2. Language use in churches

As mentioned earlier (see section 3.2.) seven persons were interviewed from four different churches – two orthodox and two Pentecostal. Although exact population figures of congregations in the churches could not be obtained, estimation for the biggest congregation was 200 members, and the smallest congregation has about 30 members. Again, estimation puts the percentage of Efutu speakers in the congregations at over ninety per cent. In other words, a great majority of the various congregations are Efutu speakers.

In spite of the fact that nearly all members of congregation are Efutu speakers, the main language used for most activities in the churches is Fante. Indeed, Fante is the main language used for preaching of Sermons, reading of announcements, Bible readings, praying, sharing of testimonies, and to a large extent for singing hymns and other songs. It was mentioned that although some individual church members use English Bibles, the Fante Bible is used for Bible readings in church programmes and activities such as main services on Sundays and also for other services such as funeral services, wedding ceremonies and Bible studies. Likewise, notices and announcements are delivered in Fante. It is, however, not uncommon for a preacher or a speaker to contribute an Efutu expression in a Sermon for instance, to create humour or to elucidate a topic. Prayers are generally said in Fante, although individuals occasionally pray or give testimonies in Efutu. Regarding singing in the church, popular songs are mostly in Akan, (particularly in Twi<sup>11</sup> and Fante) and English. One hymn book mentioned by an interviewee from an orthodox church is *Christian Asor Ndwom* 'Christian worship/church songs' which contains translated hymns from the Methodist Hymn Book into Fante. Two of the people interviewed from the orthodox churches however mentioned that they occasionally translate Bible text into Efutu and read their (translated) Efutu version to the congregation when they are assigned with Bible reading.

A notable exception to the use of Fante in churches was pointed out in the course of the interviews. It was mentioned that there exists one church in the community nicknamed 'Efutu Pentecost' for its exclusive use of Efutu. My informants (themselves not members of the church) maintain that the church uses Efutu for all its activities including singing.<sup>12</sup> They claim that the church never uses Fante or any other language apart from Efutu for all its activities. An attempt to visit the church or a member of its congregation to confirm the information was not successful due to time constraints. However I intend to follow up in the future.

A remarkable revelation emerged during the interviews. One of the interviewees, a church minister, has translated some Christian materials from Fante/English into Efutu. They include the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed and several other popular Bible verses such as the twenty third and the twenty seventh chapters of the Book of Psalms.

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<sup>11</sup> Twi is another dialect of Akan

<sup>12</sup> It was surprising to hear that a church sings Efutu songs only: during my fieldwork, an attempt to document Efutu songs proved challenging, I could find just a few, about four.

He has also translated about 50 hymns from the Methodist Hymn Book. He showed me some of these items and other materials he has worked on in Efutu. None of the materials however is published or used in his church or any other church. More on these materials will be mentioned in section 5 below.

#### **4.3. Language use in traditional religion**

As mentioned above (see section 3.2.3.), two persons were interviewed in this area. It was revealed that Efutu is the main language used in all activities in traditional religion in the community. At the shrines, Efutu is the main language used for consultation, discussions, as well as for prayers/libation among other rituals. The only time Fante is spoken at the shrine is when a client/visitor does not speak/understand Efutu. In such situations Efutu still remains the main language, and a translator for Fante is used only for parts of the negotiation as deemed necessary. Thus Efutu could be described as the language of traditional religion in the community.

It was, however, explained that an *obireow* speaks a *special language* when he or she is possessed by a deity. In that possessed state, the *obireow* is said to be controlled by a deity. The main manifestation of spiritual possession is a state of spell or abnormal state, during which the *obireow* delivers a message amidst a special dance performance. The message is always coded in special language, often non-intelligible to the people present. This language is considered a 'spiritual language' from the gods. The belief is that it is the deities that speak through the *obireow* at such moments and therefore the language that comes out is the choice of the deities. Although the spiritual language is usually non-intelligible to all persons around, there is always one individual who is enabled by the gods to understand the message carried in the language. Such an individual therefore immediately translates the message into Efutu for the *osow* and the elders to receive the message and act on it accordingly. The *obireow* is said to be unable to recall anything that happened during the possessed state - including the language he or she spoke - when he or she comes back into a normal state.

#### **4.4. Language use in homes, the beach and the fish market**

As already mentioned (section 3.2.4.), 180 individuals were interviewed from homes, the beach and the fish market. With the exception of two persons, all respondents speak Efutu as their first language or mother tongue, and Fante as a second language. Some respondents mentioned that they speak a third and a fourth language, including Ewe, Ga, Nzema and French (only one person mentioned French). Most respondents reported that they can understand English and can speak it to a limited degree. Respondents reported that Efutu is the main language they speak at home; they use Efutu to communicate with their spouses, parents, children and other (extended) family members and other household members. However, when an outsider comes in they speak Fante with him or her. Efutu is also the main language they use at the beach for all activities. At the fish market, the women reported that Efutu is the language they use in communication among themselves and with most buyers. However, if an 'outsider' comes to the market they speak Fante to them. Efutu is also the language they use in

communication with the fishermen (most of the women mentioned that they are married to fishermen). A few young individuals (below age 25), mentioned that although Efutu is their mother tongue and they speak and understand it perfectly, they sometimes speak Fante rather than Efutu to other speakers. That is, while their interlocutors speak Efutu, they themselves speak Fante. It turned out that all these individuals are students in secondary schools.

#### **4.5. Personal observation through participation**

The responses from the interviews with individuals at homes, the beach and the fish market confirm my personal observation in these areas through participation in activities in the community. In homes, parents/adults speak Efutu to children and the children speak Efutu to their parents and other adults. Children use Efutu to communicate fluently and effectively among themselves for playing, conversations and for other activities. At the beach where the fishermen spend most of their day, Efutu is the main language spoken among themselves in conversations, arguments, giving instructions, sharing the catch and conducting other fishing activities. Efutu is also used in communication with the women who come to buy the catch. However, I noticed that all the songs they sing when docking or launching a boat are in Fante. When asked if they ever sing in Efutu they could not remember any Efutu songs. In the fish market, the women speak Efutu among themselves and with most customers/buyers. The only time Fante is used in these areas is when an outsider comes along.

In the schools however, I noticed that the children speak Fante among themselves and to their teachers. I also noticed teachers speaking English as well as Fante to children. On one occasion only did I notice a child speak English to a fellow child, in one sentence: “*close the door*”.

At a traditional festival organised to appease one of their deities, I witnessed that Efutu was the language used in the pouring of libations, in discussions and in giving instructions. However all the songs sung at the festival were in Fante. I asked if they have any songs in Efutu but they could not remember any.

#### **5. Language development in the community**

During the survey, it was discovered that one speaker has written some materials on the language though none of them have been published. These unpublished manuscripts include alphabets in the language, primers and picture books, and translated hymns and Bible verses. Titles of the materials include:

- i. *Ewutu, the dialect of my people – Winnebarians*
- ii. *Aya Penkye* ‘the woman of Penkye’
- iii. *Gyate wo mane* ‘Gyate goes to school’
- iv. *Edwo ne noto nsobo* ‘vowels and consonants’
- v. *Wombi* ‘picture’
- vi. *Na ane tu tente (sonso) nda* ‘let us sing sacred (heavenly) songs’

In an interview with the author, he explained that it is his wish to publish the materials however he has no funding for it. When asked whether he has approached any individuals or organizations for help he responded that he has not. The materials thus remain in his private domain though he has shown them to a few people, including family members and close friends.

Another case which could be cited as an instance of language development is a radio programme in the language at a community radio station in Winneba. A member of staff of the radio station who works as a producer/presenter was interviewed on the programme. According to her, the programme has directly or indirectly developed the language through broadcasting. As part of its initiative to promote the language and to encourage speaking/listening/learning of it, the station devotes one hour each week to a programme in Efutu. The station has a policy on its language(s) of broadcasting - twenty per cent foreign language/English and eighty per cent local language – part of which is used for the Efutu programme, with Fante being the main local language. The Efutu programme is a one-hour programme presented once a week, on Tuesday<sup>13</sup> afternoons from 2.00pm to 3.00pm. According to the producer/presenter the programme has two main components. The first part, lasting for about fifteen minutes, is made up of a brief news item. In this part of the programme news items that are deemed important and of particular relevance to the community are selected from the week's new items and translated into Efutu and read on the programme. The aim of this translated news is to enable speakers who do not understand Fante/English to receive information on important national and local matters in a language that they understand, namely Efutu. The second component, lasting for about forty-five minutes is mainly made up of discussion on selected topics in national or local debate (and could be one of the topics from the news, though not necessarily). This second part of the Efutu programme begins with a brief introduction of the day's topic for discussion by the host of the programme. The topic is then discussed briefly by a panel of two members, after which phone numbers are announced, followed by opening of the phone lines for callers to make their contribution to the discussion. Contributions can only be made in Efutu: if a caller begins to speak Fante or any other language, he or she is quickly reminded of the rule(s) – exclusive use of Efutu. Callers who insist on speaking other language(s) are taken off air. However, if a non-fluent speaker calls and makes an effort to speak Efutu, he or she receives help/correction on air from the host and panel members. Besides the one hour programme in the afternoon, the daily morning devotion and appellation<sup>14</sup> at the start of the day at 5.30am is held in Efutu on Tuesdays. The interviewee stated that the programme is listened to in the Efutu speaking areas and beyond, and over time people have called the station to acknowledge the contribution of the programme toward their

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<sup>13</sup> Tuesday is the only day in the week that fishermen do not go to sea and it might be one of the reasons for it being the day for the Efutu programme, for it is well-known that in Winneba, the fisher folks constitute the group that speaks the language best.

<sup>14</sup> The appellation involves the singing of praise and virtues of persons born on the day in question. On Tuesdays, Abena (a Tuesday-born female) and Kwabena (a Tuesday-born male), are featured in the appellation.

developed interest in the language. Others have mentioned that the programme has helped them to improve on their Efutu speaking. The station has been widely recognized for its contribution towards the promotion of local languages and as a result has received several awards from various organisations in the country.

### **6. Language attitude in the community**

Community members appear to have mixed attitudes towards their language. On one hand, speakers, especially those located near the fishing beach, seem to value their language such that they speak it vibrantly and use it exclusively in their homes. It is also the main language used in their fishing activities, traditional religion and other activities as described above.

However, some speakers make comments that suggest that they put a low premium on their language. It was reported that comments like “such a fine lady/gentleman speaking Efutu” are ever received from speakers. It is however not clear whether such comments amount to admiration (for ‘unsuspected’ speakers) or whether they signify low esteem of the language.

One significant observation from the field on linguistic attitudes is that when speakers receive higher education (secondary education and beyond) they become alienated from their community and their language; they move out from the suburbs near the fishing beach to live in inland Winneba and beyond, and speak Fante rather than Efutu in their new homes. If they marry and have children they speak Fante with their nuclear-family members. The only time such speakers use their mother tongue Efutu is when a relative/friend from their previous community visits them or when they visit their previous community. In a way one could say that the change of attitude of such speakers towards their language is linked to their acquisition of higher education.

Again, at the initial stage of my fieldwork, I received warnings like “this language is not writable” and comments/questions like “how could you possibly attempt to write a language that is not writable?” from some community members after explaining my project/research to them. Yet some of them were pleased to hear about the possibility of their language being writable and showed genuine interest in the project. Indeed, some expressed that they are willing to learn to read and write in their language if it ever gets reduced to writing. Still, there are other community members who expressed hostility towards the project and the researcher.

### **7. Summary and conclusion**

From the discussions so far, we find that out of the four domains examined Efutu is used in two – home<sup>15</sup> and traditional religion, but it is marginalised in the other two domains – basic education and Christian religion. The home and traditional religion situations suggest that Efutu is spoken both in private and certain public domains. The

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<sup>15</sup> Recall we refer to homes near the fishing beach area where the survey was conducted, not homes in the inland Winneba.

home situation especially indicates that there is an intergenerational transfer of the language among some families, particularly those living in suburbs close to the fishing beach.

However, the church and especially the school situations are different – in these two domains Efutu appears to be discouraged. In the churches, Efutu is relegated to the background if it is ever used at all. In the schools, the NALAP programme, with its good intention to promote the mother tongue, appears to defeat the very intention in the case of Efutu (and indeed in the case of several other Ghanaian languages). In the school environment, not only is Efutu excluded from the curriculum, it is also prohibited.

Given the current situation of Efutu the language could be said to be threatened as a result of the following factors:

- Speakers speak Fante, a dominant language in Winneba, as a second language
- There are no policies in place to protect the language at the local or governmental level
- Its usage is discouraged in some public domains including basic schools and churches
- Educated speakers tend to alienate themselves from the language
- There are no adequate language development activities in the community
- Speakers' attitudes towards the language are generally not so positive

Considering the current state of Efutu, there is the need for documentation, especially as the language is still in use in some domains in some parts of the Winneba community. The process of documentation will help create awareness of the worth of the language as well as activating cultural knowledge among speakers. Speakers, especially those involved in the documentation process, will become more conscious of the uniqueness and importance of their language and culture. Moreover, the documentation will serve as a foundation for further development of the language.

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