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SPOKEN ENGLISH AND THE NIGERIAN IDENTITY: AN ANALYSIS OF FEATURES OF THE ANNANG ACCENT OF ENGLISH

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Abstract

This paper examines the features of the Annang Accent of English. In a multilingual nation like Nigeria, language serves as an identity marker. It is generally believed that the varieties of English spoken by Nigerians set them apart from other speakers globally, as it reveals their identity. It uses the Descriptive Approach to language study as a theoretical framework. Data for this study was collected from selected students of the Senior Secondary Three (SSIII) Class from eight (8) Secondary Schools in Annang ethnic group, one Government school from each Local Government Area. The analysis of the features is done taking into cognizance the segmental and the nonsegmental features of English. This study reveals that some of the features analysed are common to those of the Nigerian accent of English, while some are peculiarly Annang, indicating an Annang identity in spoken English. The paper concludes from the features analysis that the Annang accent of English gives an Annang identity which is a sub-variety of the Nigerian accent.

Keywords: ***Spoken English, Nigerian identity, Annang Accent, Features Analysis, Annang-English Accent.***

INTRODUCTION

Annang language is spoken mainly in some areas of Akwa Ibom State. It is spoken by members of the Annang ethnic group. This language is spoken by indigenes of Abak, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Ika, Ikot Ekpene, Obot Akara, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun Local Government Areas. Enang, E.T, Nyarks, A.I, Utin, I.D, Udoka, S.T and Udom, M.E. (2014: p.15) confirm that the Annang ethnic group is made up of eight Local Government Areas and this brings about...dialectic variants in the spoken English of the Annang speakers of English. Annang language could be classified as one of the lower cross languages. It is usually grouped as a cluster of languages with Efik and Ibibio with which is it mutually intelligible (Williamson 1989, Essier. 1990, Connell 1993). According to Udoka, S. T, Enang, E.T and Utin, I (2018 p. 60), the Annang language is one of the languages spoken by the people of Akwa Ibom State. This high mutual intelligibility among these languages is brought about as a result of the close relationship existing phonologically, syntactically and semantically among the Efik, Ibibio and Annang. Learning a language is not an individual's affair but involves interacting with others. Utin, I.D (2016: p.84), observes that...it enhances question styles that makes the session of learning interactive.

In Annang, some sounds exist in free variation with others. For example, the sounds /j/ /d/ and /n/ exist in free variation in Annang. The expression "will you eat?" could be translated

as 'ayadia', 'adadia' and 'anadia'. In addition, /b/ and /w/ also exists in free variation resulting in words like 'nkewo' and 'nkebo', meaning 'I said'. Also /d/, /l/ and /r/ also exist in free variation and sometimes affect the English spoken by Annang-English bilinguals. Consider the following words 'udua', 'ula' and 'urua', meaning 'market'. Due to these last sets of sounds existing in free variation, Annang-English bilinguals tend to produce words like 'lector' for 'rector', 'lula' for 'ruler', 'grory' for 'glory' etc.

This paper examines these features that characterizese Annang- English with a view to identifying a sub-variety of English that has emerged as a result of the contact of Annang with English.

Accent: An explication

An accent is the mode of utterance, speaking or pronunciation that is peculiar to an individual, region or locality. Accent makes it possible for a particular speaker to be identified. Eka (1996: p. 111) presents an interesting definitions as

> A variety of pronunciation associated with a particular person or group. It has practically nothing to do with variation in grammar or vocabulary. From a functional viewpoint, the term accent can be used by an L1 speaker to single out and to characterized non-native (L2 or foreign) pronunciation of the given language by another L1 speaker.

Above all, my perception of the accent is that it could be referred to as the international, national, local or individual way of pronunciation. To this end, the Annang accent of English deals with the way and manner in which Annang English bilinguals pronounce words. These differences are exhibited by individuals of various socio-economic backgrounds and localities. These variations in accent most of the time betray the speakers. That is, from a speaker's accent, it is sometimes very easy to identify where the speaker hails from. Fro instance, it is accent that makes it easier for one to identify an Annang English bilingual, Yoruba English bilingual, Hausa English bilingualand Igbo English bilingual. According to Enang, E. and Urujzian, V(2014), the Annang English bilingual mostly speaks English as a second language (L2) with errors from the first language (L1) or background language (MT).

Research Procedures

Data for this paper were collected from selected secondary schools in the Annang speaking area of Akwa Ibom State. A total of 80 Annang English bilinguals who are students of teh Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) III were used. This is sequel to the fact that from their years of exposure to their mother tongue and English, they have gained proficiency in both Annang and English languages. A total of eighty (80) subjects were selected from the area that Annang is spoken in Akwa Ibom State. The rationale for selecting the Senior Secondary School Three (SS3) students was based on the fact that, they have been sufficiently exposed to the English language in readiness for their school certificate examination. The systematic sampling method was used for the selection of these subjects form the various schools involved. In each school, the subjects were both male and female of Annang origin and background. The students were systematically picked using the class register. This involved selecting a sample which is assumed to give a reasonably accurate picture of the whole. From the register, 4-5 names were omitted after a name is picked, depending in the population of the students.

Analysis/ Data Classification

The speech was used to test both the segmental and the non-segmental features of the Accent of the Annang-English bilinguals. Their speeches were tape recorded and from the recorded speeches, segmental features analyses were carried out on individual speeches. The segmental features specifically tested sound articulation. Here, peculiarities of pronunciation such as substitution of Annang phonemes for English phonemes, sound devoicing, monopthongisation of diphthongs, simplification of word final consonant clusters, etc. were analyzed. In addition, the non-segmental features tested intonation, accentuation, rhythm and pausing.

Data Classification

Table 1: Substitution of Annang Phonemes for English phonemes

Sound	Expected performance	Gloss	Annang pronunciation
/ð/	/ˈfa:ðli/	Fatherly	[fadali/fadari]
	/ðæt/	That	[dat]
	/ðə/	The	[de]
	/ði:z/	These	[dis]
	/ðəuz/	Those	[dos]
/θ/	/bəʊθ/	Both	[bot]
		truthful	[‘truthful]
/3/	/fɜ:st/	first	[fest]
			[fes]
	/ˈovə/	Over	[ˈova]
			[‘ofa]
	/mʌðə/	Mother	[‘mɔda]
	/brʌðə/	brother	[‘brɔda]

Table 2: Monothongisation of Diphthongs

Sound	Expected performance	Gloss	Annang pronunciation
/ei/	/teik/	Take	[tek]
	/peiz/	Pays	[pes]
	/kein/	Cane	[ken]
	/hesiteit/	Hesitate	[hesitet]
	/preija/	Prayer	[peja]
/iə/	/rill/	Real	[ril]
	/rill/	Real	[‘riil]
/əu/	/grəu/	Grow	[gro]
	/məust/	Most	[mos]
/uə/	/ˈauə/	Our	[awa]
/eə/	/ˈheəri/	Hairy	[‘heri]

Table 3: Problems arising from Consonant Clusters

Sound	Expected performance	Gloss	Annang pronunciation
/r/	/prəvaidz/	Provides	[‘plo’vaits]
			‘provait]
			[provaids]
/l/	/disiplin/	Discipline	[disiprin]
	/’rectə/	Rector	[lectↃ]
	/’prↃfit/	Prophet	[plↃfet]
	/krↃp/	Crop	[clↃp]
	/pleinkræʃ/	Plane crash	[prencras]
	/klæp/	clap	[krap]

Table 4: Simplification of Word Final Consonant

Sound	Expected performance	Gloss	Annang pronunciation
/t/	/ris’pekt/	Respect	[‘res’pek]
			[lespek]
	/məuʒ/	Most	[mos]
	/best/	Best	[bes]
	/briliænt/	Brilliant	[‘bridian]
	/ʧaild/	Child	[ʧail]
	/wɜ:ld/	world	[wↃl]

Table 5: Devoicing of Voiced Sounds

Sound	Expected performance	Gloss	Annang pronunciation
	/big/	Big	[bik]
	/gʊd/	Good	[koud]
	/god/	God	[kↃↃd]
	/’gəʊz/	Goes	[koos]
/v/	/lʌv/	Love	[lↃf]
	/’veri/	Very	[feri]
	/hæv/	Have	[haf]
/z/	/’bisnis/	Business	[bisnes]
	/zi:l/	Zeal	[siil]
	/teikz/	Takes	[teks]
	/ri’zɔ:t/	rezort	[ri’sↃt]

Table 6: Shortening of Long Sounds

Sound	Expected performance	Gloss	Annang pronunciation
/Ↄ:/	/pə’fɔ:mz/	Performs	[perfↃms]
	/fɔ:/	For	[fɔ]
	/mɔ:/	More	[moo]

	/bɔ:n/	Born	[bƆƆn]]
/a:/	/fa:m/	Farm	[faam]
	/da:k/	Dark	[daak]
	/fi:din/	Feeding	[ˈfidin]
	/inˈdi:d/	Indeed	[inˈdid]
/u:/	/ju:/	You	[ju]
	/sku:l/	School	[skuul]
/3:/	/wɜ:ld/	World	[wƆƆl]
	/wɜdz/	Word	[weeds]
	/wɜ:ʃip/	Worship	[wƆʃip]

Table 7: Spelling Pronunciation

Sound	Expected pronunciation	Gloss	Annang pronunciation
/r/	/riˈflektid/	Reflected	[riˈfrekted]
			[difrekted]
		Ruler	[drula]
			[ruda]
	/rikƆ:did/	Recorded	[rekƆded]
	/ˈkæsl/	Castle	[ˈkastl]
	/riˈzɔ:t/	Rezort	[risƆt]
	/riˈzƆses/	Resources	[risƆsis]
/d/	/det/	Debt	[debt]
/θ/	/wɜ:θi/	Worthy	[wƆdi]
/Ɔ/	/Ɔnə/	Honour	[hƆnƆ]
	/stopt/	Stopped	[stƆp]
	/əˈposl/	Apostle	[aˈpƆstl]
/əʊ:/	/ˈdəpəʊ/	Depot	[depƆt]
/n/	/ˈlisn/	Listen	[listen]

Table 8: Intonation

Expected performance	Gloss	Annang speakers performance
Mai ‘faðəiz e very gudmæn	My father is a very good man	Mai fada is e ferikud man
hizðə best mændætaievəsi:n	He is the best man that I have ever seen	His ðə best man data iv have fa siin
Mai ‘fa:ðə izeˈti:tʃə	My father is a teacher	Mai fada is a ‘ti:tʃə
Hi ma:ristu: waivz	He marries two wives	Ha maristu waifs
He prəvaidz ðə beisikniˈdzəf ðə fæmili	He provides the basic needs of the family	He providt de besiknids of de family
He livz am igzemplərilaiv	He lives an exemplary life	He livs an esamprarilaif

Table 9: Accentuation

Expected performance	Gloss	Annang speakers performance
Hiz ðə 'bredwine in ðə fæmili	He is the bread winner of the family	'hi 'is de' bredwina in de 'fa'mili
Hi ti:ʃəsəsturis'pectauəeldəz	He teaches us to respect our elders	He titʃisƆstu respect awaeldas
Mai 'fa:ðə iz e disciplinerien	My father is a disciplinarian	Mai fada is e 'disiprinerian

Table 10: Rhythm and Pausing

Expected performance	Gloss	Annang speaker performance
Hiz e ve 'tərenfa:mə	He is a veteran farmer	Hi is e /veteran/fama
Hi givzəsgud ædvaiz	He gives us good advice	Hi/gifs Ɔs/kuudadvais/
Hiz 'Ɔnisttru:fləndhænsm	He is honest, truthful and handsome	His hƆnes/em truthful/an shahandsƆm
Hiz e/fa:ðə tuƆ:l	He is a father to all	His em/e fada/tuƆl
Hi prəvaidzfəəs Ɔ:l	He provides for us all	Em/hi provaids/FɔƆl/

Discussion

In connection with substitution of Annang phonemes, Eka and Udofot (1996: p. 102) observe that "the learner of any new language is compelled to fit every sound of the new language into his/her LI sound system. From the above classification, it is observed that Annang English bilinguals tend to substitute /a/ for /ə/ and /d/ for/ð/. For instance, words like /'fa:ðə/, /'mΛðə/ and /'brΛðə/ are articulated as ('fada), (mƆda) and [brƆda]. This is sequel to the fact that some sounds in English sound system do not exist in Annang sound system.

In relation monopthongisation of diphthongs, Unang (2007: p. 48) observes that "some diphthongs do not exist in the Annang vocalic system such as /ei/. Consequently, Annang English usually have difficulties realizing dipthongs such as /iə/, /əu/, /uə/, /eə/. This is visible in the examples shown under this heading as words like /teik/, /riəl/, /grəu/, /auə/ and /'heəri/ were produced as [trek], [rill], [gro], [awa] and [heri].

Also, consonants clusters pose problems to Annang English bilinguals, Udofot and Eshiet (1993; p. 31) observe that "consonant clusters do not frequently occur in Nigerian languages. Annang is a Nigerian language and rarely possesses consonant clusters. This is glaring from the results of the performances of our subjects. Another feature that identifies Annang-English bilinguals is that of simplification of word final consonants sounds, as demonstrated in the results of the subjects. Another feature that identifies Annang-English bilinguals is that of simplification of words final consonant sounds. Udoh (1998: p. 18) observe that articulating final consonant sounds by Annang-English bilinguals is difficult. This is because Annang words do not have final consonant sounds. As demonstrated in the results of the subjects performance.

Devoicing of voiced sounds was another feature of Annang accent identified. Here, it was observed that the absence of the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ abd the voiced alveolar

fricative /z/ in Annang was a problem to the subjects. Consequently, Annang English bilinguals tend to articulate the voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ and voiceless alveolar fricative /s/. As a result, words like /lʌv /, /'veri/, /ri'zɔ:t/, /teikz/, /gud/ and /gəuz/ were articulated as [Iɔf], [ʻferi], [ri'sɔt], [teks], [kuud] and [koos]

In addition, shortening of long sounds was also identified as a feature of the Annang accent. Eka and Udofot (1996) refer to this as "reducing the vowel quality'. This sort of articulation presents the sounds as being shorter than the original. For example, realizing /a:/ as /a/, /ɔ:/ as /ɔ/, /i:/ as /i/ etc, by doing this the vowel quality reduced. This results in articulations such as [ju], [faam], [indid], [wɔɔl], [fo], for /ju:/, /fa:m/, /ind:d/, /wɜ:ld/ and /fɔ:l/ respectively.

This paper also took into consideration the general spelling pronunciation of Annang, O'Connor (1997: p. 8) observes that when a speaker knows the word he /she should be able to say it without necessarily stumbling over the sound... In the introduction of this paper, we had mentioned that in Annang /I/, /r/ and /d/ exist in free variation. As a result, there were articulations such as [rifreted], [difrected], [drula], [rula], etc.

At the non-segmental level, it was observed that subjects spoke using the falling tune. Udofot (1997: p.45) observes that spoken Nigerian English exhibits an overwhelming preference for unidirectional tones – particularly the fall. Annang as a Nigerian language exhibits the characteristics of spoken Nigerian English. At the level of accentuation, Annang English bilinguals accent open and closed class words alike. This is aimed at creating emphasis on almost every word spoken. In connection with rhythm and pausing, Annang accent presents a jerky rhythm resulting from high irrelevant pauses and the introduction of 'space fillers' such as 'em' and 'sha' into speeches.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, at the segmental level, it has been observed that some sounds exist in free variation. For instance, these sounds /I/, /r/ and /d/; /k/ and /g/ and /f/ and /v/ are sometimes interchangeably used by Annang English bilinguals. As a result, Annang accent has words like 'prane clash', 'crap', 'riflekted', 'difrected', 'ploblem', 'crass teacher', 'lialect', 'clop', 'lula', 'lector', 'plophet', etc. At the non-segmental level, the major features observed include a predominant use of the falling intonation tune, stressing more syllables that required jerky rhythm, and irrelevant pauses. It is also vital to note that, the Annang accent of English is a sub-variety of Nigerian English. To this end, there is a tendency for the Annang accent to exhibit the characteristics of spoken Nigerian English at the segmental and non-segmental levels. Finally, this paper has been able to identify the features which characterize the Annang accent of English thereby giving the accent an Annang identity which is subvariety of the Nigerian accent.

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