

1. INTRODUCTION

1. **General Background**

This work is on Atsam morphology. Atsam is one of the languages spoken in Kuru Local Government of Kaduna State. Another name for Atsam language is 'Chawei'

This chapter will be devoted to the historical and linguistic background, geographical location, genetic classification, scope of study and synopsis of chapters.

1. **Historical Background.**

According to oral tradition, Atsam people are ethnic group found in Kaduna State. They are predominantly found in States like Plateau, Nassarawa and the Federal Capital Territory. Atsam people originated from Sango Kattaf.

1. **Geographical Location**

Atsam speaking people can be found in Kuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State. They share boundaries with Plateau, Kaduna Local Government in the South and Sango Kattaf on the West. Atsam is spoken in six districts in Kuru L. G. A. they are:

1. Damakasuwa, with its district head at Damakasuwa chawei. This district covers villages such as Kisari, Mangual and Refingura.
2. Zambinachawei. It covers villages such as Baduru, and Kurmi, Risga.
3. Fadanchawei. With its district head at Fadan chawei. This district covers villages such as Talo and Riban.
4. Pari with its district head at Kaffin chawei. This district covers villages such as Kaffin chawei, Pari among others.
5. Kamaru district with its district head at Kizakoro, with villages like Kihoba, Kamaru.
6. Barkin Kogi.

Each district is headed by a district head.

1. **Socio Cultural profile**

1. **Cultural practice**

Culture is the total ways of life of a people in terms of their beliefs, way of life or art. Culture must be studied directly by studying behavior, customs, language and soon.

The aspect of Atsam that we shall discuss here covers their language, festivals, religion, marriage rite, types of food they eat and jobs they engage in.

TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL

One of the festival in Atsam is "SHAKDODO" Shakdodo is the name of a man who in account of the bad behaviors of his wives got angry and turned into a river. Shakdodo is been scarified as dictated by the priests, food and domestic animals such as Goat, Fowl, Guinea – corn are used to make sacrifice to the river

Women are not allowed to participate in this festival, any woman found, will be punished by bringing items like Goat, Fowl to appease the river.

1. **MARRIAGE CEREMONY**

For a man and woman to get married in Atsam land, few steps are taken. Firstly, there is an intermediary between the wife and the husband's family. It is the duty of the intermediary to

make known the intension of both families. The bride's family will then decide if they want their daughter to marry the man. After many consultations, a date is picked, this time; dowry of the woman (bride) is paid along side with tubers of yam, kolanut, and some yards of cloth. But if the couple is willing to have a church wedding or an ikkrah program, a separate day will be picked for it.

1. BURIAL CEREMONY

Burial ceremony is being conducted in several ways among the Atsam people depending on the sex of the dead person. If an old man dies, "SHANGBARI" a rite, is performed in honor of the dead person for seven days, on the 40th day, another rite called "PEPIYON" is performed to appease the dead not to forget his family members, this rite is not done for women.

1. MODE OF ADMINISTRATION

There are six districts in Atsam; each district is headed by a district head. The head is charged with maintenance of law and order within their domains. The district heads are supported by a number of village heads within their domains and below the village head are ward heads popularly known as the Mai'angwa. The Mai'angwa reports to the village head. Mai'angwa village head District head Chief (Res – Tsam)

1. OCCUPATION

The major occupation of the Atsam people are farming, Craftmaking, Beekeeping, but the dominant occupation among the Atsam people is farming.

1. RELIGION

The dominant religion among the Atsam people is Christianity. According to the informant, Muslims are not many in Atsam.

1.5 SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE

Atsam language is used as a means of communication in School, Churches and Marketplaces. Atsam is spoken in Kuru Local Government area of Kaduna State, though it was said that Hausa language has in one way or the other contributed to the death of many languages spoken in Northern part of Nigeria. Hausa is used as a medium of instruction in Schools while English language is learned as the target language. Atsam is a minority language among the Atsam people while Hausa is a language of wider communication.

Neighbouring language groups communicate with Atsam language due to their unique character in terms of accommodating, peace keeping and friendly act. Atsam speakers are only about 30, 000, is used as a means of communication within Atsam speakers in market places, during festive periods.

1. METHODOLOGY

The following is adopted as methodology for this research work.

1. Data collection

2. Data Analysis

This research work is made possible through a multilingual informant

Name of informant – Mr. Sunday Danladi

Age of informant - 45 years

Religion of informant - Christianity

Marital Status - Married

Years spent in home town -25 years.

Language spoken apart from Atsam – English language, Hausa language and Tyap language

Occupation - Police Officer

Data analysis -

Means of data elicitation is through the following

1. The Ibadan wordlist of for hundred lexical items
2. Hypothetical frame technique
3. Structure and unstructured oral interview.

The Ibadan wordlist of lexical items is a list designed to elicit similar items in different languages. The wordlist consists of common items that are common among human society such as parts of human body, numerals.

The frame technique helped in small measure to determine the actual contextual usage and forms of word as well as the various morphological forms in which words can occur.

Oral interview both in structured and unstructured manner has also been used in eliciting the data. The structured are those questions prepared ahead of the informant while the unstructured type are those in which the response from the informant served as source of another information. Materials used include

Writing materials

Recording materials such as recording tape and cassette

1.7 PHYLO – GENETIC CLASSIFICATION

Phylo-genetic classification is one of the major areas of comparative/historical linguistics.

According to Haine and Nurse (2005; 259) Genetic or phylo-genetic classification involves putting together related languages into families or language group that can be presumed to have derived historically from a common ancestor. Greenberg (1966:8) reports that African languages are four main groups namely:

Niger Kordofonia

Afro - Asitic

Nilo - Sahara

Khoisan

Atsam language belong to the plateau family of a sub group of Benue – Congo. The plateau itself is a sub family of Benue Congo of the Niger Kordofonia language family of African language.

1. APPROACHES TO MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

For this research work to achieve a set of goals, the approaches to be employed are Analytic and synthetic approaches to the morphological analysis of Atsam language. According to Arnoff and Fudeman (2005;12), the analytic approach to morphological analysis is associated with American structuralist-linguistics. Main reason for this approach is to guide a researcher

in it's research work because he is not familiar with the work.

Some words are mono - morphemic words, some have more than onemorpheme breaking down of these words into their component morphs is whatanalytic approach is all about.

The following word serves as examples in Atsam language

[ra] 'House' [ara] 'houses'

[rogo] 'Cassava' [arogo] 'Cassavas'

[Naskun] 'yam' [anaskun] 'yams'

From the following examples we can say "a" represents the pluraltense maker.

Second approach is thesynthetic approach. It assumes that the linguist has some idea of the researchwork. Then, what is left behind is how to put some words together. For example:

1. Ìnká + mù Ìnkámù

Mother mymy mother

1. Núk + anin aninnúk

Pot waterwater pot

1.8.1 SCOPE OF STUDY

This work aims at describing aspects of the morphology of Atsam language. The description would use the morpheme as the unit of analyzing the internal structure of words in the language. It's morphological process will be discussed.

In the this work, the discussion will be restricted to only the Morphological aspect of Atsam and the focus of the study is Atsam language spoken in Kaduna, Kaduna State.

1.8.2 JUSTIFICATION

The study of Atsam language is very important because, to the best of my knowledge, no work of this type has been done on this language. This work will therefore help this language by not going into extinction and providing an autography for it. It will also promote future work and serve as source of reference for future work.

1.9 SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS

This research work is organized into five chapters.

Chapter one consists of the historical background of Atsam, the sociolinguistic profile, socio cultural profile, geographical location, genetic classification of Atsam, scope of study, justification for the study and the synopsis of chapters.

Chapter two centers on the phonological aspects of Atsam language.

Chapter three is on morphological processes present in the language, type of morphemes, aspects of morphology and structural position of Morphemes.

Chapter four would examine the syntactic classification of words in the language while, chapter five summarizes and concludes the project.

ASPECTS OF THE MORPHOLOGY OF ATSAM LANGUAGE

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