

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation/symbol	Meaning
+	plus or added to
=	equals to
Sg	singular form
Pl	plural form
Adj	adjective
N	noun
Adv	adverb
V	verb
Prep	preposition
~	alternates
/	high tone
\	low tone
!	rising tone
	exclamation mark
	changes to

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CHAPTER ONE

YESKWA LANGUAGE ANDITS SPEAKERS

1.0 General Introduction

Language is a majormeans of communication, interaction and relation in the human society. Languageis the network that connects human society together in a lively mood making ita lively place to stay.

Language is “humanvocal sound, or it is the graphic representation of signs and symbol,gesticulations and signals for the purpose of communication.” Language issimultaneously a physical process and a way of sharing meaning among people, alanguage in this sense is a system of signs for encoding and decodinginformation. In another words, language is “an instrument of thought, that is,a psycho social interactive measure which binds human society together incommunities and linguistic groups.” The use of language has become deeplyentrenched in human culture and, apart from being used to communicate and shareinformation, it also has social and cultural uses, such as signifying groupidentity, social stratification and for social grooming and entertainment.

This work serves as achannel to show case Yeskwa language and also to bring it into the lime lightof the real world of the academician.

Yeskwa language isspoken in the north- west of Nasarawa state, in Karu local government area andKaduna state in Jema’a local government area, all in the Northern region ofNigeria.

Yeskwa language is spoken by about thirty-two thousand speakers[32,000] as at 2008 [from

Ethnologue.com] . Most of the speakers are multilingual, that is, they are able to speak more than their native language [Yeskwa] .

This work will concentrate on the morphological aspects of Yeskwa language, that is, the organization of words and formation of words, studying to bring out the morphological beauty of the language by identifying, analyzing and describing forms of words, the morphemes; free and bound morphemes; Derivational versus inflectional, morphological processes and many more in Yeskwa language.

1.1 Historical Background of Yeskwa People.

The first Nyankpa man who lived during the pre-historic era came from a place called "Darigo". This place was named after the founder of the language, till now this mystical place forms parts of the areas around the hills located North East and West of the present Kwoi, in Kaduna state across to Gitata, Bagaji up to Uke areas of the Nasarawa state.

Darigo, was married to Obiche, with whom they had many children, some of the children are named, Ovurgbe, Onat, Onok (all males) and Oching (female). The grand children to Darigo produced by his biological children grew up to different clans present in Nyankpa land both at home and in diasporas. Ovurgbe's children later became the Ovurgbe clan, Onat's offspring was shaped into Ontat clan and those of Onok are believed to have been the pioneer of the old Nok of famous archeological monuments and indeed environs like Kafanchan, Kagoro and Zonkwa area in the present Kaduna state. It is believed that, Mada and Eggon language sprung Oching's lineage today. The Nyankpa people are thus one of the proud archaeological ethno-linguistic clusters of the famous Nok area.

A permanent foot mark and other archaeological evidence of this pre-historic advent of Nyankpa language is present at the orally authentic place of origin called 'Darigo'.

From the other hand, Yeskwa language speakers migrated from Maiduguri, apart in the northern Nigeria. In the bush they migrated to then, which is now their present permanent location of habitation, the name of the language was derived from the situation of their immigrants fore-father, meaning 'we deviate or leave from Maiduguri to this bush then what are we to call ourselves' i.e. Nyankpa is formed from two words, leaves "ankpa" and deviation.

The people are called Yeskwa both in literature and by the Hausas, but they call themselves "Nyankpa" and their language "Nyankpa". The language is having Panda, Bede, Gitata (Buzi) and Tattara as the main dialects of Yeskwa language, while Tattara is the standard form of the language and Bede the most divergent dialects of Yeskwa language. The alternative names are Anyankpa and Yagwa (according to Ethnologue). The population of the people have graciously increased year after year because in 1973 (Summer Institute of Linguistics) they are about 13,000 but as at 2008 they are about 32,000 in number. The language is not threatened by any neighboring language or prestigious language like Hausa language.

1.2 The Administrative Circle of Yeskwa Speakers

Prior to the advent of colonial rule in Nigeria and before the 19th century, Nyankpa people had an advanced functional system of governance, with their well shaped clans that stayed independent of each other. Each clan had a head that gives justice and also makes sure that each clan is well administered to.

These heads who are called 'odyongutep' as the title also preside over meeting in their clans in all matters, and they have the house or compound heads and elders of the clans as their assistance in performing their duties right.

In addition odyongutep were juju priest odyong nyanpka in each clan who perform purely ritual rites. Their functions are mainly based on general issues of discipline, and these are usually done in the juju shrine 'ofu'. Also these priests have selected elders called 'Asa cisa' to give a helping hand. The present odyongnyankpa is Joel Sabo Awinge.

1.3 Geographical Location and Map

The language speakers of Yeskwa language are located in the Northern part of Nigeria. About seven hundred kilometers or more away from Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory

of Nigeria. The speakers of Yeskwa language are founded in Karu Local Government Area also formerly known as Keffi LGA in Nasarawa State, and Jema'a Local Government Area in Kaduna State

1.4 Socio-Cultural Profile

Yule (2007:239) describes "sociolinguistics as the interrelationship between two language and society". Socio-cultural is formed from three word or terms; language, society and cultural. (2007:239):

"It is important not to overlook this social aspect of language because, in many ways, speech is a form of social identity and is used consciously or unconsciously to indicate membership of different social groups or different speech communities. A speech community is a group of people who share a set of norms, rules and expectations regarding the use of language. Investigating from this perspective is known as "SOCIOLINGUISTICS".

Yeskwa language speakers have so many social plus cultural activities and lifestyles that distinguish them from their neighbouring communities. They treat these social-cultural ways of life with great reverence. Some of these social-cultural activities will be exposed.

Occupation: Yeskwa people engage mainly in farming, they plant millet (Acha), cassava (Logo), maize (Vuza), rice (Siyapa), okra (Anwago), sweet potato (Juma), sugar cane (Oleke), guava (Nkpocho), cotton (Aluru), locust seeds (Emi), monkey-guava (Onkpwat), cowpea (Enep), sorghum (Avu), guinea-yam (Ociti) and so on. They are involved both in annual and perennial farming. This is the major reason the men are polygamous, because both wives and children help the man in farming processes. After the harvest the women take their product to the market for sale. And in cases when the products are in large quantity they export them to other communities and also outside the state which is known as "dam" in Yeskwa language.

Dressing: There is also something special about the way they dress. The ancestors of Yeskwa people covered their nakedness with leaves, the women cover both breast and private part only with leaves. Later on, they improved on their dressing changing from the use of leaves to what they call "bente" which is made from animal skin (this animal like leopard, cow, ram, etc.) This improved way of dressing was in the 17th century and it went into extinction in the 70s. The 'bente' way of dressing is majorly used by the men in order to hold their male organ (penis) tightly. The women on the other hand made use of animal skin to cover their breast with small piece of the animal skin to cover their private part, which is made in form of short wrapper that wrapped their waist to cover their private part.

As the world becomes more civilized in dressing, the modern way of dressing among the Yeskwa speakers is to cover their nakedness with sewed underwear like pants for both women and men alike, and brassiere for the women especially those in their youth age. Then the outer covering with sewed materials, for men, shirts and trousers, and women, skirts, wrappers and blouses.

1.4.1 Religion

In ages past, the ancient fathers of Yeskwa people (Anyankpa) engage in traditional religion. They worship 'Nan' as their main god and some masquerades to be specific they worship, namely; 'terefu', 'jaku', 'dagba', 'awiya', 'ambabe', 'donko', 'yaka', 'gbarato', 'ofu', 'ogbeke' and so on. The story changed when the white missionaries came for mission in the land in 1912, through this Christianity was introduced in the land and community. Later on Islam was brought into Yeskwa through the influence of Usman Danfodio's jihads. As at present, the population of the Christians among the people has greatly increased and has risen high above other religions with the percentage 70% and the ratio seventy to thirty (70:30) to both traditional religion and Islam.

1.4.2 Marriage

Marriage is the formal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. Marriage is a means by which reproduction can take place by further multiplying and increase in the population of a community.

This aspect of life is not taken by levity at all by Yeskwa people, but with much

seriousness. Bosom friends (men) marry off their daughters to each other right from the time their wives are pregnant (even as at the time they haven't known the sex of the unborn baby). After their wives put to bed, the father of the baby boy presents large quantity of dried locust bean powder to the mother of the baby girl with which her meal is prepared till she is about seven years old (7yrs) when the baby is seven years old her parent will bring her to her husband's house, although, she will be under the care of her mother-in-law. From that age, it is a must that she pays her husband respect till when she is old. When she is old enough i.e. when she reaches her puberty stage she will leave the mother-in-law to settle down with her husband. The process is called 'zam' by the people meaning traditional marriage. Through this method ladies virtue and dignity are preserved and treated with high regards and reverence.

Among the yeskwa people, polygamous is rampant and a normal way of life. A man can have up to twelve wives and even more, depending on the capacity. Polygamous is a way of helping the man in his farming occupation, that is both the wives and their children help the father in farming on his farm. Apart from the father's (husband's) farmland, the wives have each or different farmlands to themselves also each child is entitled to have a farmland to his/herself. After working with their father, they retire to work on theirs.

1.4.3 Festival

Festival is a day or period of celebration, and this is the time people from different homes come together in the universal lively mood in the town to celebrate in yeskwa. This is a time, when numerous socio cultural belt of harmony fastened more tightly among the people. The Yeskwa's have numerous festivals, in this research work only two will be showcased.

Yeskwa people celebrate a festival called 'ekokop' by them when a grandfather has four grandsons. This festival came to life because of their belief that the sons are strong and gift from their gods. This festival is a way of showing appreciation to the gods for blessing them with special gift. The grandfather provides meal to all the invitees during the ceremony.

The second festival that the Yeskwa's will never treat with levity even though their religion (Christianity or Islam) is not in support of which they still celebrate is 'turning of the dead'. This is done after some years a person has died, during the celebration a masquerade will represent the dead person, then horns called 'ezo ezo' a long wooden horn will be played with what they call 'ontom' during the ceremony. The people also call the masquerades voice 'ekpaciri'.

Their belief about this, is that it is a way of making the journey of the dead safe to heaven, they also believe that any family who refuses to perform this tradition can lead to a dead trap to the other living members of the family. It is one of the family members who is a matured man that usually put on the masquerade cloth, and this masquerade represents the dead person on earth. During all these festivals, there is usually merry all over the community because they are wishing one of them who is dead a safe and smooth trip to heaven.

The points that have been discussed under the broad topic socio-cultural using Yeskwa language, has proved and showed that the Yeskwans are rich and wealthy when it comes to culture and tradition.

1.5 Genetic Classification

Ruhlen (1994:1) states that; "the idea that groups of languages that share certain systematic resemblance have inherited those similarities from a common origin is the basis for genetic classification". Also Greenberg (1966:8) explained that African languages belong to various families, and there are four main groups namely; Niger-kordofian, Nilo-sahara, Afro-asiatic and Khoisan.

Yeskwa language is related to other African languages through the diagram of genetic classification. This means or portrays that all languages grouped under African languages relates in one way or the other, this is the usefulness of genetic classification.

Yeskwa language is sub-grouped under the platoid-west of language family. The below

diagram figure shows the detailed classification of Yeskwa language.

1.6 Scope and Organization of Study

In this research work, an attempt has been made to investigate the aspect of the morphology of the Yeskwa language spoken in Nasarawa, Karu Local Government (formerly Keffi) and Kaduna state, Jema'a Local Government.

Thus, the study in general has been systematically divided into five chapters, with each chapter containing relevant linguistic information about the morphology of the language.

Chapter one addresses the introductory part of this work, it includes the general background of Yeskwa, the historical location where the people, the geographical location where the people speaking Yeskwa language can be found, the socio-cultural profile, with their religion, marriage and festival inclusive, the genetic classification of Yeskwa language, as well as the theoretical framework, the data collection, data analysis gotten data from Yeskwa language.

Chapter two examines the sound inventories and the sound patterns in Yeskwa language with the distribution of vowel and consonant sounds inclusive.

The third chapter probes into the aspects of the Yeskwa morphology; morphemes types and language typologies in Yeskwa language, also examined are the details of free and bound morphemes with their kinds in Yeskwa language.

The fourth chapter focuses on the morphological processes that are present in Yeskwa language, in the formation of new words.

Chapter five, the last chapter, summarizes, makes some recommendations and draws conclusion about the whole work also with the references including the appendix containing the 400 word list.

1.7 Data Collection

The data collection was done through the use of Ibadan word list of four hundred (400) lexical items. The method used in the data collection is called contact method. The data collection was possible through the language informants or helpers, who are native speakers of Yeskwa language. Information about the informants used in this research work are as follows; the first informant is Mr. Ayeme Efuna, thirty-four years old, he is a state security officer by occupation. Mr. Zachariah Muhammed is the second language helper, he is thirty years old, he works with the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC). The duo are native of Kondoro in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa state, also both informants are multilingual, aside Yeskwa language, they speak English, Hausa, Gbagi and Eggon in addition to their native language. The minimum years they had stayed in their home town is twenty-five years. The third informant is Mr. Abudullahi Aminu, he is 63 years old, a native of Nasarawa state, a native speaker of Yeskwa language, aside this he is able to speak Nupe, Hausa, Yoruba and a bit of English language. He spent 25 years in his home town, by occupation he is a traditional medicine practitioner, also a Muslim by religion.

1.8 Data Analysis

Based on the Ibadan 400 wordlist and the frame technique collected through a direct translation from English into Yeskwa language the data was analysed.

1.9 Brief Review of Theoretical Framework

Theories are bundles of abstract representation that occurs in the linguistics repertoire of a linguist. Theories are propounded in order to present a systematic account of the linguistic knowledge or the competence of native speaker possesses morphology like other levels of language analysis has several theories that can be used to demystify it.

The frame technique that will be used in this research work is one of the most valued approaches to morphology, this distinct approach was codified by two scholars by name Bloomfield (1933) and Hockett (1954). This approach is linked with structuralists' linguistics because this approach was probed into by Bloomfield in 1933 by organizing laws and rules which later developed into a system in morphological linguistics.

The theoretical framework to be used in study is Morpheme based morphology. Henceforth, sees word forms to be analysed as arrangements of morphemes. Morpheme based morphology, a modern and sophisticated approach seek to maintain the idea of the

morpheme while accepting non- concatenative, analogical and other processes that are problem free.

“A morpheme is defined as the minimal meaningful unit of a language.”

This theory of morphology that treat words as if they were made up of morphemes, place after each other like beads on a string is called item and arrangement model. In English language for example the word ‘antidisestablishmentarianism’ is a single word in the dictionary but it is the joining of morphemes. This word also proves the fact that in this model is putting the above word arrangement in a language. The constituent can be analysed as follows;

Anti– means preventing, like antivirus. [bound morpheme]

–dis – means not or the opposite. [bound morpheme]

–establish– means to start or create. [free morpheme]

–ment– means a derivational way, it changes the word to noun class from verb class. [bound morpheme]

–arian– means a derivational way of changing word class [bound morpheme] .

This word comprises six morphemes; five bound morphemes and one free morpheme.

Other examples:

Misfortune > mis-means bad [bound] + -fortunate means luck [free]

Misused > mis-[bound] , -use – [free] , -ed-[bound] represent past tense

Unenviable > un-[bound] means ‘not’ +-envi- [free] +-able- [bound]

Tucker > tuck-[free] + -er- [bound]

Triangle > tri-[bound] means three +-angle- [free] means shapes.

ASPECTS OF THE MORPHOLOGY IN YESKWA LANGUAGE

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