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The Phonological Processes in The Anaang Language

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Abstract: This study examines the phonology of Anaang, and the environment of assimilation, palatization, labialization, and nasalization together with their structures. The data for this work were drawn from Anaang speakers who are indigenes and resident in Anaang speaking community for not less than 20 years. The area of study was stratified based on dialectal variations and the population of study was randomly selected. The research relies on Articulatory Model by Browman & Goldstein (1990) as a theoretical framework. This theory lays claim on the fact that phonological structure is an interaction of acoustic, articulatory and psychological organization. It is inherently multidimensional because it can explain a number of phonological phenomena, mostly those that involve overlapping articulatory gestures. Anaang is a Lower Cross language spoken in North-Western part of Akwa Ibom State. In Anaang, labialization occurs in a restricted phonological environment. This study reveals that the syllable structure has influence on the labialization in that, structures with open syllable are more labialized than those with closed syllables.

Keywords: Nasalization, Labialization, Assimilation and Palatization

1.1 Introduction

Anaang is a language spoken by the Anaang people in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. It constitutes the second largest language spoken in Akwa Ibom after Ibibio language. It is the fourth largest language in Nigeria after Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The population of Anaang language speakers according to the 2006 population census is 1.8 million and they occupy a total landmass of 2.73 square kilometers of Akwa Ibom State. Anaang is made up of homogenous group of people with common linguistic heritage and it is used as the first language (L1) by the inhabitants of Abak, Oruk-Anam, Ukanafun, Essien-Udim, Ikot-Ekpene, Obot-Akara, Etim-Ekpo and Ika Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. The inhabitants of Anaang language speech community occupy the North-Western part of Akwa Ibom State. They are bounded by the Igbo Speaking group of Abia State in the North, the Ogoni speakers of River State in the West, the Ibibio speakers in the South, East and North. Genetically, Anaang is a Lower Cross Language of the Benue-Congo sub-family of the Niger-Congo Language Phylum, (Greenberg 1963). Connell (1991) puts Anaang-Ibibio-Efik and Ukwa group as Central Lower Cross of the Lower Cross arm of Benue-Congo. Essien (1993) and Urua (1996) groups the Anaang-Ibibio-Efik as a dialect cluster among several other varieties spoken in Akwa Ibom State. These entire classifications group Anaang with Ibibio and Efik as a cluster of language which share close linguistic affinity with each other.

Anaang is one of the endangered languages and needs to be worked on as well as documented to save it from possible extinction in the nearest future. To achieve this feat, the entire language structure and its features have to be thoroughly and deeply investigated. Preliminary investigations have been conducted by scholars like Udoh (1998) on 'Anaang Phonology: A Descriptive Sketch'; Michael (2000) 'Assimilatory and Syllable Structure Processes of Anaang'; Michael & Obot (2001) 'The Orthography of the Anaang Language'; Nyarks (2006) Varieties of the Anaang Language; Unang (2007) The Annang (Anaan) Accent of English: A features Analysis; Michael (2008) 'The Syllable Structure of the Anaang Language'; Nyarks (2013) 'Strategies towards the Development of a Meta-Language: A Case Study of Anaang'; Ekpe (2015) on 'Aspects of Anaang Phonology'. Each of these works had touched on the major structures of the language and its attendant processes. It is glaring that the few researches conducted on Anaang so far is just a scratch on the surface. More works need to be carried out on the language to resolve lots of controversial issues, mostly on the exact number of phonemic segments and supra-segments that exist in the language. Though some of the works listed

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above had touched passively on Anaang language and co-articulatory features, it is necessary to look at the phonological and the targets of labialization process in Anaang, thus the thrust of this research.

2.0 Anaang phonological processes

Words are formed with the combination of letters or sound (morphemes). A sound on itself cannot convey a message but it communicates when they are grouped together. When sounds are combined to form words and the words are used in a sentence, it is observed that in Anaang, the segments within and without the neighbouring sounds undergoes some adjustments. This process of adjustment is phonological processes due to the influence of the other sounds. This confirms the adage that a person is actually influenced by the person he walks with. Schane (1973:19) asserts that:

When morphemes are combined to form words, the segments of neighbouring become juxtaposed and sometimes undergo change. Consider the morphologically related forms: electric, electrical, electricity and fanatic, fanatical, fanaticism. Here the final K of electric and fanatic becomes S before a morpheme beginning with I. Change also occur in environments other than those in two morphemes come together - for example, word initial and word final positions, or the relation of a segment visa-vis a stressed vowel. All such changes will be called phonological processes.

In order to enable proper understanding, phonological processes are discussed in four different categories of assimilation, syllable structure, weakening and strengthening, neutralization.

2.1 Assimilation

Assimilation involves the process where a segment takes the features of a neighbouring segment on the course of the coming together. This means that a consonant may take on the feature of a vowel, also a vowel may adopt the characteristics of a consonant. On the other hand, a consonant can be influenced by another consonant or a vowel may be influenced by another vowel. This may occur as a result of the modification of sounds in the direction of close similarity to the surrounding phonological environment. Aspects of a vowel may influence a consonant as a secondary modification. Instance of this effect may be palatalization and labialization, homorganicity and nasalization. Schane (1973:49) describes assimilatory process to occur when "A segment takes on features from a neighbouring segment. A consonant may pick up features from a vowel, a vowel may take on features of a consonant, one consonant may influence another, or one vowel may have an effect on another".

2.1.1 Palatization

This is an assimilatory process where the tongue position of a front vowel is overplayed on a consonant next to it. According to Schane (1973:50) "In palatization, the tongue position of a front vowel is super imposed on an adjacent consonant". Examples in Anaang are:

ŋŋwɔɔŋ
ŋwɔŋ

2.1.2 Labialization

In this process, the lip position of a rounded vowel presses a secondary actualization on the consonant. "... In labialization, the lip position of a rounded vowel induces a secondary articulation out of the consonant". Schane (1973:50).

Examples in Anaang are as follows:

kɔk	-	vomit
kwɔ	-	sing
kwɔk	-	close
ukwod	-	a leave

2.1.3 Homorganicity

When two adjacent segments have similar place of articulation, they are said to be homorganic (Langacker 1972:261). As such, homorganicity is a system whereby the characteristics of a given segment are extended to another segment in a particular environment such that both segments have similar place of articulation. For example /d/ and /n/ are homorganicity because they are produced in the same place of articulation, alveolar. In another illustration, Giegerich (1992:115) demonstrates that in the word "song" /ŋ/ the nasal and the velar /g/ sounds, exchange influences due to their adjacency in a way that the nasal which is directly preceded by the velar sound takes the features of the velar during realization /ŋ/ in /sɔŋ/. Furthermore,

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he adds that there is a tonal deletion of the sound /g/ which leads to the disappearance of /n/ and /g/ to /ŋ/ in such homorganicity.

However, it is possible for a nasal with the following consonants which in some circumstances may be on prefix. This fact is confirmed by Schane (1973:51). “It is common for a nasal consonant to become homoganic with the following consonant – that, this, etc; the nasal adopts the same place of articulation.

Examples in Anaang are:

mbá	-	wing
mfɔŋ	-	forest fruit
ńsuŋ	-	fly
nkɔ́	-	can i pluck vegetable?
mkpàétó	-	bark
mbie	-	rubbish
nkáŋ	-	charcoal

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2.1.4 Nasalization

Nasalization is a procedure whereby an oral sound is nasalized in the region of a nasal sound. In Anaang, this process is found in the following words:

/tèm/ - cook
/kàŋ/ - deny
/àtoŋ/ - soap

Derived from the above illustration, it has been discovered that traces of assimilatory processes such as palatization, labialization, homorganicity and nasalization are possible in Anaang. Their major role in this language is to help in the realization of sounds. According to Sommerstein (1997:250), he alleges that "assimilation arises to help in articulation or punctuation. However, though this is not artificial, it is a natural act exhibited by speech organs to help in the production of sounds which results in the assimilation of some sounds when they are joined together". Schane (1973:61) adds that "assimilation has a natural explanation in co-articulation".

3.0 Syllable structure processes

This process concerns the outcome of the proportionate spreading of consonants and vowels within a word by decreasing a more complicated syllable structure. According to Schane (1973:52) "syllable structure processes affect the relative distribution of consonants and vowels within a word". The ultimate aim of syllable structure is to simplify consonant clusters of vowel sequences. This process takes different dimensions which are deleted, insertion, and coalescence.

3.1 Insertion (Epenthesis)

This is a process where sounds are inserted between jointed words. This situation happens whenever there are unrelated consonant clusters between the prefix and suffix of jointed words (compound).

"Vowel epenthesis is a term used to refer to a situation where a vowel is inserted in a word. Vowel epenthesis occurs whenever cases may arise of non-identical consonant clusters" (Urua 1996:105).

Kŏd + kod → kóókód (be calling)
Fiad + fiad → fiááfíád

3.2 Coalescence

This process involves the position of two definite sounds to produce a single different sound. According to Schane (1973:56) "Since coalescence involves both assimilation and reduction many of these examples could be described as the joint action of these two processes". Examples in Anaag are as follows:

étí àkpóŋ → ètì kpŏn god palm frond
ètì aboŋ → èti bóŋ good cane

Functions of tones in Anaang

Tones in Anaang are very useful since it is a tonal language. It is the diverse tones that enable the listener to decode what the speaker encoded.

Moreover, since there are many similarities in the speech pattern especially among homographic words (words with similar spellings but different pronunciations and meaning), it is the tone that we use in differentiating the words for accurate meaning so as to achieve the purpose of communication.

Examples

úrwá - sacrifice
úrwà - life situation

Furthermore, these tones have helped the language to be free from homophonic expression (words with different spellings but similar pronunciations) and homonyms (words with same phonological, morphological phonetic representation but different semantic interpretation).

This function of tones enables the elimination of ambiguity and semantic misinterpretation which is the major problem in most languages.

In Anaang, tone is used to mark lexical and grammatical distributions and these include tense and aspectual uniqueness. "Tone is used to make lexical as well as grammatical distinctions of languages, some of which include tense and aspectual distinctions" (Urua 2000:55).

Examples

dép - buy
dí - come

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káa - go
Atim a-se-adep ekpad - Atim has been buying bags
Atim-a-ma-ase-idep ekpad - Atim had been buying bags
Atim-a-na-adep-ekpad - Atim will buy bags

Additionally, Anaang, proverbs and riddles are spoken through tonal components and the ability to understand what the tones stand for will enable appropriate interpretation. "Some African riddles are strictly tonal without any segmental component in that the riddles are posed in the form of tonal component of the correspondent speech. (Urua 2000:55).

Tones are also used to convey messages in dance drama where dance steps are communicated to the performers through the drum beats which match with the tonal commands similar to actual speech in likeness of folk songs. These functions are confirmed by Urua (2000:55).

> ...the importance of tones in African tone languages is seen in the fact that a lot of these languages frequently make use of just tone to communicate massages , especially in dance music, where particular dance movements are communicated to the dancers through the drum beats which correspond the tonal component equivalent to actual speech in the form of songs.

The realization of the different types of tones in Anaang language is a welcome development in the study of the language. This development really confirms the fact that Anaang is a tonal language. It would serve as a compass to linguists who may want to research in the language by guiding them to realize that different tonal manifestation in words determine the meaning and not only the lexical forms. Therefore, this work will create a remarkable insight into other aspects of supra-segmental developments in the language. Anaang language is a virgin area that needs many linguists to exploit using this roadmap.

The concept of compound is an interesting phenomenon in morphology. Compounds provide motivation for assigning internal structure to words. This is achieved through a process known as compounding. Compounding deals with word structure rules rather than word formation rules. Our focus in this paper was to analyze the phonological constituent processes necessary in Anaang productive words. Data were collected through structured interview using an English word list of 50 compound words. This was administered to fifteen native speakers of Anaang purposely selected. They provided the Anaang equivalence of the word list verbally, which was recorded with a tape recorder. Relevant data were elucidated from the tape, transcribed and used for analysis. Analysis shows that compounding involves the combination of stems from the lexicon into a phrase or word. Anaang compounds are made up of two elements without any further dependency holding between them. This paper therefore assets that, though compounding is a morph-syntactic process, it has implications on the structure of Anaang phonology in the sense that compounding equally involves certain phonological processes which of course affect the internal structure of the syllable. This work is a contribution to the existing phonological theories on phonology-morphology interface.

Conclusion

From the above, the analysis of the phonological constituent processes prominent in Anaang words show that compounding involves the combination of stems from the lexicon into a phrase or word which has implications on the structure of Anaang phonology. Labialization in Anaang affects both stops and fricatives which are not labials and it is triggered only by the back high (rounded) vowels. The result of this process stems from partial assimilation of lip and tongue processes. The analysis equally reveals that the syllable structure of articulation has influence on the Anaang speakers of English. The open syllables are more labialized than those with the close syllable.

Recommendation

We recommend that more findings could be achieved if the phonology of Anaang is approached from the laboratory perspective, which will make it more empirical, objective and scientific.

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