

ON THE QUESTION OF STANDARD FANTE

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Fante, a dialect of the Akan language, is classified into three major subdialects: Anee, Boka, and Iguae. There is some discussion, however, about which variety is the standard Fante dialect. In this regard, scholars and nonscholars alike claim the standard (literary) status for the dialect of Fante spoken in the small coastal town of Anomabo without any reference to linguistic data. This article refutes this claim by providing evidence that the Iguae dialect, spoken in Cape Coast and its satellite towns and villages, is the standard Fante dialect besides being a prestigious koiné dialect and sociolect.

Le fante, dialect de la langue akan peut se subdiviser en trois parlers principaux, à savoir l'anee (l'ouest), le boka (l'est) et l'iguae. Le choix du parler qui servirait comme le fante standard reste toujours un sujet fort controversé. A cet égard, maints spécialistes ainsi que profanes réclament ce statut privilégié de standard (littéraire) pour le fante parlé dans la petite ville côtière d'Anomabo, au mépris des faits linguistiques. Cet article cherche à réfuter cette revendication et à prouver que l'iguae, parlé à Cape Coast et ses villes-satellites serait plutôt le fante standard. En plus, l'iguae reste le fante prestigieux en sa qualité de koiné et sociolecte.

0. INTRODUCTION

Mfantsefo, or the Mfantse people, occupy the southern part of Ghana, bounded on the south by the Gulf of Guinea, on the east by the Ga, on the west by the Ahanta, and on the north by the Wassa, Denkyira, Assin, and Akyem (see map on next page). These people have a form of speech referred to as Mfantse or Fante, a dialect of the largest language of Ghana, Akan.

Fante is mutually intelligible with the other dialects of Akan which include Asante, Akuapem, Akwamu, Assin, Denkyira, Akyem, Kwahu, Bono, etc. According to the 1960 census figures,¹ Fante—among the dialects of Akan—has the second-largest number of native speakers totaling 758,000 with Asante constituting the largest having 895,000 native speakers. The Akan language does not have a common standard literary dialect because three of its dialects, namely Akuapem, Asante, and Fante have achieved literary status; each has a written form despite the fact that they are mutually intelligible.

Whereas no question arises in terms of standard literary Akuapem or Asante, there is still some controversy over standard literary Fante. This article, therefore, seeks to classify the Fante dialect into three major subdialects and then determined the variety of Fante which serves as standard.

1. THE FANTE DIALECTAL AREA

The states which constitute the Fante linguistic community include Oguaa, Nkusukum, Abora, Ekumfi, Enyan, Gomua, Asebu, Kwamankese, Komenda, Edina, Abrem, and Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis and its satellite towns and villages. In fact, the Fante dialectal area has encroached upon some adjacent non-Akan languages and even eclipsed them. Welmers (1973:11), for instance, points out that "in Ghana, Efutu was the original language of the coastal town of Winneba but has almost totally disappeared in favour of Fante." As a matter of fact, in Winneba today Efutu is spoken mainly by the fisherfolk with Fante as their second language. Efutu's two sister coastal Guan dialects, Senya and Awutu, also use Fante extensively as their second language.

The original Ahanta language of the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis and its satellite suburbs has died out completely in favour of Fante. According to an informant in Apowa, an Ahanta town close to Takoradi, Ahanta is fading away; Fante is taking over at a rate which has caused great apprehension among the adult conservatives. At the time

¹ The 1960 census had a section on the ethnic group to which a person belonged. Most people in Ghana (at least in 1960) normally spoke the language of the ethnic group to which they belonged, hence the use of those figures to represent the number of native speakers of the languages. The total population at that time was six million.

of writing this article, the chief of Apowa, according to the informant, had imposed a ban on the speaking of Fante among the native Ahanta speakers because it had become fashionable among the teenagers to speak Fante only. This ban has received support from the educated Ahantas who see the loss of their mother tongue in favour of a second language as cultural genocide, and they accordingly look on the Apowa chief as a custodian of the Ahanta language. Another informant accordingly remarked that

The chief of Apowa is the most dynamic Ahanta chief of all time in that he is not the type who will sit down unconcerned like Sekondi and Takoradi chiefs did in the past as a result of which Sekondi and Takoradi have become Fante towns.

Needless to say, the effectiveness of this ban remains to be seen.

Be that as it may, almost all Ahanta speakers speak Fante as their second language. Burmeister (1988:96) affirms that

Ahanta is spoken primarily in the region between Axim and Takoradi in Southern Ghana. Most of the 75,000 speakers of this language are also fluent in Fanti and tend to speak that language in public.

In many Nzema towns and villages up to Half Assini-Elubo, Ghana's border with Côte d'Ivoire, Fante is spoken as a second language. Some Akan dialectal areas also speak Fante as a second dialect. In the gold-mining town of Tarkwa-Abontiakoon and its immediate environs and Bogre village, Fante is more of a first dialect than a second dialect, while in Bonsa, Manso, and some few other towns and villages in the Wassa dialectal area, Fante is spoken as a second dialect. But in most Wassa towns and villages Asante Twi is adopted as the second dialect except in the gold-mining town of Prestea where both Fante and Asante Twi are used as the second dialect.

In all these areas where Fante is spoken as a second language or a second dialect, apart from the Nzema-speaking communities, it is taught in school and is also the medium of instruction in the first three years of primary education even as it is used in church and for trade.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF MFANTSE

In this article Mfantse is classified into three main subdialects: Anee, Boka, and Iguae (see also Abakah 1993). Subdialectal differences are found at the phonological, grammatical, and lexical levels, as illustrated in (1), (2), and (3), respectively.

(1) Phonetic representations

| | | |
|-------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| | /nina/ 'all' | /son/ 'seven' |
| Anee | [hĩná] | [òs ^w ʒh] |
| Boka | [ɲĩná] | [æ ^s w ^o ũ] |
| Iguae | [ɲĩná] | [è ^s w ^é í] |

(2)

| | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--|------------|--------------|
| Anee | | | | |
| soer | fi | | mpa | no do |
| get [^] up | move [^] away [^] from | | bed | the on |
| | Get up from the bed. | | | |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Boka | | | | |
| soer | wɔ | mpa | no | do |
| get [^] up | to [^] be | bed | DET | on |
| | Get up from the bed. | | | |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|--|
| Iguae | | | | |
| a. soer | mpa | no | do | |
| get [^] up | bed | the | on | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|------------|------------|-----------|
| b. fi | | mpa | no | do |
| move [^] away [^] from | | bed | the | on |
| c. soer | fi | | mpa | no |
| get [^] up | move [^] away [^] from | | bed | the |
| Get up from the bed. | | | on | |

| | | | | |
|-------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|
| (3) | | ‘broom’ | ‘pawpaw’ | ‘machete’ |
| Anee | prade | apae | afowa | |
| Boka | mbisa | borɔfer | ɔfangya | |
| Iguae | emena | borɔsuow | adar | |

The Iguae subdialect is the variety of Mfantse spoken in Cape Coast and its surrounding villages including Brabedze and “Brafoyaw”. This subdialect is referred to as “Cape Coast Fante” by Stewart (1962), Dolphyne (1988a), and others. Annobil (n.d.) and others refer to it as “Oguaa Mfantse”, and Abakah (1978, 1993) refers to it as “Iguae Mfantse”. This subdialectal area is the reference point, and all the Mfantse sub-dialects to the east and north of it constitute the Boka subdialect. Bɔrbɔr (made up of Mankessim, Nkusukum, Enyan, Abora, and Ekumfi states), Gomua, Edwumake, A beadze, Etsii, Asebu, and Kwamankese are some of the states which constitute the Boka subdialectal area. Every Boka speaker claims to speak a variety of Mfantse which apparently bears the name of their home state; thus, a subdialect is made up of a number of sub-subdialects. But it is discovered that, apart from Gomua which is easily identifiable phonologically, all the varieties spoken in Boka are homogeneous. Stewart (1962) labels this subdialect “Confederation Fante” and Annobil (n.d.) terms it “Borbɔr Mfantse”. To the west of Cape Coast is a cluster of fairly homogenous varieties of Mfantse which constitute the Anee subdialect stretching from Elmina and its neighbouring villages of Iture, Atrankwa, and Ankaful westward through Sekondi-Takoradi.

3. STANDARD FANTE DIALECT

In the words of Dolphyne (1977:15), “the choice of a dialect instead of another as the standard literary dialect often has the effect of raising the prestige of the literary dialect and correspondingly lowering the prestige of the dialect that is not written.”

The same is true of a subdialect of a dialect of a language; the literary subdialect attains a great measure of prestige while the aggregate prestige of the nonliterary ones is accordingly lowered. However, this section seeks to present the true situation as regards the controversy over which Fante subdialect is standard.

3.1 CLAIM FOR STANDARD LITERARY STATUS

To begin with, some scholars, both linguists, and nonlinguists, claim that it is the variety of Fante spoken at the coastal town of Anomabo which is the standard literary Fante. Others claim the standard literary status for Mankessim, and yet others claim it for Abora, etc. Thus, among the educated Boka Fante speakers everyone claims that their variety of Fante is the standard literary one, that is to say, the educated Gomua, Ekumfi, Enyan, Nkusukum, Edwumako, Abora, etc. claim that it is the Gomua, Ekumfi, Enyan, Nkusukum, Edwumako, Abora, etc. that is, respectively, the standard literary Fante dialect. Indeed this controversy existed as far back as the nineteenth century. H. N. Riis has observed in Christaller (1875) that

The kingdoms of Gomua, Enumabo and Abora in oratorical skirmishes, may contest to the point of metropolitan standard for the Mfantse language; but the drawn sword of provincialism, by which the Dialect of one District is bounded on each side by the Dialects of other Districts can only have to be sheathed back again to rest in the mutual retreat of the bearers. We may as well fix our speech to the idioms of Igu (that is Cape Coast) seeing that the orthography of one District may be taken as a criterion for all others.

According to Christaller, Riis' words

... point as well to the diversity as to the jealousy obtaining among those Fante dialects whilst Akan dialects,² though spoken on territories of much greater extent and of tribes that were for a long time hostile to each other, are less inclined to divergencies, and better agree with each other.

This comment of Christaller's on Riis' observation was very much to the point seeing that even today, a century plus later, it is absolutely relevant. The jealousy has today assumed, linguistically speaking, catastrophic proportions. Some teachers of Fante in some tertiary institutions have even warned their students never to speak the Iguae variety because it is not proper Fante. All arguments in support of their claim and the ban point to the fact that Iguae is not pure and for that reason is too sophisticated and musical to be Fante at all. They argue further that "proper Fante is pure, unadulterated". Iguae speakers, on the other hand, refer to the "pure" variety as "Adese Mfantse" meaning village/uncultured/uncouth/crude Fante. The points of divergencies are many and the whole affair leaves something to be desired.

3.2 UNFORTUNATE MISINFORMATION

That Anomabo Fante is the standard literary Fante subdialect is an unfortunate misinformation that has caught on very well even with academics. Suffice it to say that one is hard pressed to fathom on what fact, be it linguistic or nonlinguistic, this misinformation is based. Historically Anomabo was originally an Etsii village but the Etsii were sacked by the Bɔ̀rɔ̀r in a war. As a result, it was partitioned and occupied by the Nkusukum and Abora forces. According to some informants, the Nkusukum half owes allegiance to the paramount chief of Nkusukum, whilst the Abora half owes allegiance to the Abora state. Most importantly, the variety of Fante spoken in Anomabo in no way differs from any of the varieties spoken in any of the five Bɔ̀rɔ̀r states or any of the other Boka Fante states. Therefore, it does appear strange that the standard literary status is not claimed for, at least, Bɔ̀rɔ̀r rather than Anomabo. Stewart (1962:2) has made a similar observation and has accordingly remarked that "many say that the best Fante is spoken in the coastal town of Anomabo but Anomabo is the Confederation and the speech of the Confederation appears to be fairly homogenous."

3.3 LITERARY FANTE

Fante has only one literary form, and it is in the literature that the Iguae Fante was the first variant of Akan to be reduced to writing. Christaller (1875), for instance, posits that "the earliest of the Tshi language we find in a book of Rev. W. J. Muller, of Harbourg near Hamburg published in Germany in 1673 containing 500 words in the Fante dialect of Cape Coast."

Iguae (i.e., Cape Coast) Fante was the standard literary Fante long before Christaller's (1875) grammar of Akan was written. This fact is clearly established in Riis' observation quoted above. Moreover, Christian Protten's *Short Grammar of Fante*, published in Copenhagen in 1764, was a syntactic study of Iguae Fante.

3.4 CURRENT FANTE ORTHOGRAPHY

In 1941, however, the synod of the Methodist church established a committee under the editorship of Rev. G. R. Acquah to write a series of graded readers in Fante from Primer I to Reader VII which, it was thought, could equip the schools for the reading and appreciation of the standard set of Acquah's *Oguaa Aban* published in 1939 and other books including *Fante Proverbs* and *John Wesley*. In the course of its work, the committee identified certain problems which forced its hands to compile and card-index

² Christaller uses the label "Akan" for the inland Akan dialects, namely Akuapem, Asante, Kwahu, etc. often referred to as "Twi".

a list of words from available Fante literature. In addition, existing rules for spelling of Fante were collected and collated and used to check the words. This does seem to suggest that the writers resorted to writing in their own sub-subdialects and probably in their various idiolects as being done today but with an appreciable amount of respect for the codified form. Be that as it may, the outcome of the committee's efforts to resolve the identified problems was the codification of the Fante dialect, an abstraction derived from the blending of Iguae and Boka forms.

This abstraction of an orthography does not take into account the phonetic representations of morphological words. For example, the spellings of polymorphemic or compound words do not correspond to their phonetic representations; the spellings are based on the underlying representations of the free morphemes that merge to form them. The data in (4) illustrates this point.

| | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| (4) | Underlying representation | Phonetic representation | Orthography | |
| | ɔbaa + ebun | ɔbeeb^wun | ɔbaabun | |
| | female + unripe | | | → virgin |
| | bɔ + dzin | ab^wodzin | abɔdzin | |
| | mention + name | | | → epithet |
| | da + du | ded^wu | dadu | |
| | day + ten | | | → tenth day |
| | kɔ + jimũ | k^wujĩm | konyim | |
| | fight + triumph | | | → victory |
| | ɔhin + egua | ahing^wua | ahengua | |
| | chief + stool | | | → royal stool |
| | gya + biriw | gyebiriw | gyabiriw | |
| | fire + coal | | | → charcoal |

But with words whose orthographic and phonetic representations are identical, the standard literary Fante is closest to Iguae. For instance, a good number of words which do not have final /w/ in Boka do have it in Iguae, and the Fante orthography reflects the Iguae pronunciations of such words as shown in (5).

| | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---|---|-------------|
| (5) | Orthography | Phonetic representation | | |
| | | Iguae | Boka | |
| | ahataw | [ahataw] | [ahtaa]/[ahateɪ]/[ahateɛ] | leaf |
| | few | [fjew] | [fjɛ] | beautiful |
| | eburow | [eb^wur^wow] | [æb^wur^woo] | maize |
| | kuw | [k^wuw] | [kwu]/[kwuu] | association |
| | aahow | [aaMɔw] | [aaMɔɔ] | gale |
| | kaw | [kaw] | [kaa]/[keɪ] | debt |

Moreover, Akan words that terminate in an **-rV** syllable at the phonemic level are realised without the final V in Iguae at the phonetic level provided the V has [+high] specification in its feature matrix. In the other dialects of Akan, especially Asante and Akuapem, either the underlying forms are retained at the derived surface level or the final **-rV** syllable is replaced by the glottal stop. It is interesting to note that these Asante- and Akuapem-derived surface representations and those of Boka are identical. However, Boka has an additional phonological representation similar to the Iguae form, but the resultant final **-r** is deleted, and its loss is compensated by a lengthening of the preceding vowel. Needless to say, like Asante and Akuapem, all the Boka forms are used as free variants. But then, it is the Iguae form only that obtains in the Fante orthography as shown in (6).

| (6) | Underlying representation | Phonetic representation | | | Fante orthography | |
|-----|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------|
| | | Asante/ Akuapem | Boka | Iguae | | |
| | ɟiri | ɟiri | ɟiri/ɟu | ɟir | yer | wife |
| | harɪ | harɪ/haʔ | haʔ/haa | har | har | light |
| | kɛrɪ | tɕɛrɪ/ tɕɛʔ | tɕɛrɪ/ tɕɛʔ | tɕɛr | kyɛr | delay |
| | kɔrɔ | - | kɔɔ/kɔʔ | kɔr | kor | one |
| | tiri | tiri | tsii/tsiʔ | tsi | tsi | head |
| | atarɪ | atarɪ(Ak) atarɪɛ(As) | atar | atar | atar | dress |
| | mbɔbɔrɪ | mmɔbɔʔ | mbɔbɔʔ | mbɔbɔr | mbɔbɔr | piteous |
| | atiri | atiri | atsiri | atsir | atser | spoon |

Furthermore, Fante words spelled with the alveolar nasal /n/ as the word-final letter reflect the Iguae pronunciations of such words, whereas Boka forms are identical with those of Asante. It is worth pointing out that in the Akan language, the final N of the CVN structure has two realisations. In all the dialects, one of these realisations is a bilabial nasal [m] as in **dam** 'madness'. The second realisation of N is different in each of the major dialects. It is velar nasal /ŋ/ in Akuapem and alveolar nasal /n/ in Fante. In Asante such syllables are pronounced with a glide towards a nasalised close back vowel /ū/ or /ō/ if the vowel in the structure is a back vowel. If it is nonback, there is a glide towards nasalised close front vowel /i/ or /i/. The two vowels in each case are determined by whether the preceding vowel is advanced or unadvanced; **i**, **u**, being advanced vowels, co-occur with advanced vowels while their unadvanced counterparts **ɪ**, **ʊ**, co-occur with unadvanced vowels of the structure. Be that as it may, the Boka forms are the same as the Asante forms while the Iguae forms, represent that of standard Fante as the data in (7) illustrates.

| (7) | Fante orthography | Phonetic representation | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| | | Asante | Akuapem | Iguae | Boka | |
| | pun | p^wūū | p^wūŋ | p^wūn | p^wūū | to smoke a pot |
| | abon | - | - | ab^wɔn | ab^wɔɔ | shell |
| | sin | - | sīŋ | sjīn | sjīi | short |
| | sen | sīi | sīŋ | sjīn | sjīi | surpass |
| | bɛn | bēi | bɛŋ | bjēn | - | get near |
| | kɔn | k^wɔɔ | k^wɔŋ | k^wɔn | k^wɔɔ | neck |
| | kan | kāi | kaŋ | kān | kāi | count/read |
| | ebien | - | - | ebjiēn | ebjiēē | two |

All scholars who have studied Akan phonology agree that in Fante, if a word ends in a -CV syllable at the phonemic level then the V is obligatorily deleted if it has [+high] feature specification and the C is specified as [+sonorant]. This generalisation is captured by the phonological rule in (8) which states that a word-final high vowel is deleted in the environment of a preceding nonvowel sonorant. The data in (5)–(7) exemplify this fact. These data also reveal that Fante here, and for that matter standard Fante, refers to Iguae Fante because the Boka forms are more like Twi (i.e., Akuapem and Asante etc.) than Fante ones.

$$(8) \quad \text{Pl} \quad \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{V} \\ +\text{high} \end{array} \right] \rightarrow \emptyset \quad \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{C} \\ +\text{sonorant} \end{array} \right] \text{ ——— } \#$$

4. FANTE TAUGHT IN SCHOOL

All over the world it is invariably the standard dialect of a language that is taught in school. That it is the Iguae Fante that is taught in school is clearly manifested by the fact that it is the variety of Fante spoken by the educated non-Iguae Fante speakers. It is observed that the educated Boka and Anee speakers are bisubdialectal in their own subdialects and in the Iguae subdialect which they learn after their own subdialect in school. What is more, non-Fante Akans like the Wassa and the non-Akans like the Ahanta, Awutu, Efutu, and Senya who acquire Fante as a second dialect and a second language, respectively, through schooling speak the Iguae variety with some sort of accent.

A few examples of words, phrases, and sentences showing that Iguae Fante is taught in school, and is for that reason standard Fante, should suffice. To start with, there are several words whose orthographic shapes reflect Boka phonetic representations but whose Iguae pronunciations are taught in school.

| (9) Fante orthography | Phonetic representation | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------|
| | School | Iguae | Boka | |
| noa | nɔjā | nɔjā | n ^w ɔā | to cook |
| toa | tɔja | tɔja | t ^w ɔa | to join |
| boa | b ^w ɔwa | b ^w ɔwa | b ^w ɔa | to help |
| nua | nɔā | nɔā | n ^w ũǎ | sibling |
| dua | dɔa | dɔa | d ^w uæ | tree |
| tua | tɔa | tɔa | t ^w uæ | to pay |
| bua | b ^w uwa | b ^w uwa | b ^w uæ | to reply |
| esuon | es ^w ɔn | es ^w ɔn | es ^w ɔũ | seven |

There is a wide spectrum of words that are pronounced differently by the different subdialects of Fante, but invariably it is the Iguae pronunciations that are taught in school (see (6) and (7) for more examples). It is worth emphasizing that with some words the Boka forms are not recorded in the *Fante Word List* (Methodist Book Depot 1942). The last four words in (10) illustrate this.

| (10) Fante orthography | Phonetic representation | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | School | Iguae | Boka | |
| atwer | atɛɔir | atɛɔir | etɛɔer(i) | ladder |
| adwe | adzɔi | adzɔi | edzɔe | palm kernel |
| asew | asɔw | asɔw | osew | in-law |
| ɔadwe | waadzɔi | waadzɔi | eg ^w o | it has cooled down |
| wia | ɔja | ɔja | wuæ | to steal |
| guar | g ^w uar | g ^w uar | g ^w uræ | to bathe |
| ewi | ɛɔi | ɛɔi | owuadāā | thief |

There are a few words in Fante whose spellings and pronunciations taught in school tally with Boka forms. A greater percentage of Fante stem words spelled with double **aa** at final position are realised as **ɛɪ** in Iguae, while the Boka pronunciation corresponds to the orthographic form except **ɔbaa** 'female' and a few other words.

| (11) Fante orthography | Phonetic representation | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|------------------|
| | School | Iguae | Boka | | |
| mpaa | mpaa | mpɛɪ | mpaa | | prayer |
| saa | saa | sɛɪ | saa | | to dress a wound |
| oguaa | og^wuaa | ig^wɛɪ | og^wuææ | | Cape Coast |
| ɔbaa | ɔbaa | ɔbaa | ɔbɛɪ | | female |
| ntsem | ntsem | ntɛm | ntsem | | quickly |
| preko | prek^wo | prak^wɔ | prek^wo | | pig |
| gon | g^wɔ̃n | dzq̃ɪ̃n | g^wɔ̃ũ | | grey hair |
| tweɔn | tɛq̃ɔ̃ñ | tɛq̃ɛ̃ñ | tɛq̃ɔ̃ɔ̃ | | to wait |

It is interesting to note that those who acquire Fante as a second dialect or a second language through education, more often than not, display the Iguae phonetic representations of words whose pronunciations, as taught in school, are identical with Boka pronunciations (including the examples in (11) in their speech forms. The same is true of fairly educated Boka speakers.

4.1 TONE

One very important area of phonology upon which any number of distinct dialects of a language or subdialects of a dialect can be easily distinguished from one another is tone. In reality all pronunciation drills carried out in schools on words, phrases, and sentences are, essentially, based on the Iguae tonal structure as illustrated by (12). This is not to obscure the fact that in schools, especially those located in the Boka linguistic community, according to our investigation, most Boka-speaking teachers tend to teach their various idiolects thinking that they are teaching the standard Fante as explained earlier (§3.1). But our research further reveals that no matter how hard they try, they are unable to dispense with the Iguae tonal structure, and the examples in (12) clarify this point.

| (12) Fante orthography | Phonetic representation | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|---|
| | School | Iguae | Boka | | |
| mo wura | múwùrà | múwùrà | múwúrá | | my lord/master |
| no nua | núnq̃ijá | núnq̃ijá | nú!n^wúá | | his/her sibling |
| oedzi | wèédzì | wèédzì | wæádzí | | s/he has eaten it |
| muhan wo akyer | múhúnùwáá- tɛ̀ɛ̀ | múhúnùwáá- tɛ̀ɛ̀ | múhúnùwáá tɛ̀é | | it is a long time since I've seen you |
| wo nana | wó náná | wó náná | wó!náná | | your grandparent |
| ne tsir mu apae | nítsírímùápêì | nítsírímùápêì | nítsímùápáá | | his/her scalp is broken |

It should be noted that all non-Iguae Fante speakers who are literate in Fante, be they Akans or non-Akans, use the Iguae tonal patterns and, in the case of Fantes, the Iguae tonal patterns are used, at least, outside their subdialectal areas or speech communities.

4.2 GRAMMAR

A syntactic investigation into schoolbook grammar has revealed a corpus of expressions which help to resolve the question of which variety of Fante is standard. At this juncture, we wish to point out that the average non-Iguae speaker claims that Iguae Fante is not written and that it would be outrageous to think that any aspect of it could be found in any Fante grammar book. The only argument in support of this claim is that the Iguae subdialect is inflated with Fante-English code-switching/code-mixing. This claim is true of the educated Iguae speakers and is equally true of educated Boka/Anee

speakers, thus giving credence to the sociolinguistic fact of life that "in a bilingual speech community, there is a natural tendency among speakers to mix lexical items, phrases, clauses, and sentences during verbal interaction" (Kumar 1986:195). As a matter of fact, every educated Ghanaian, being redundantly bilingual, tends to use his or her mother tongue/English code-switching, seeing that it forms part of their communicative competence, "the ability to switch linguistically and appropriately according to the situational changes" (Verma 1975:35). However, we seek to contradict the above-mentioned claim even as we attempt to prove that it is rather the Iguae Fante which is synonymous with the true standard literary Fante dialect by way of syntax.

To start with, every educated Fante we asked to pass grammatical judgments on the pair of sentences in (13), consequent upon their knowledge of Fante consciously acquired in school after their own subdialects, readily reported that (13a) is grammatical whereas (13b) is not.

- (13) a. **wɔrokɔ skuul**
They are going to school.
- b. ***hɔn rokɔ skuul**
*Them are going to school.

On the other hand, all illiterates we called upon to make grammatical judgments on the same pair of sentences, as a result of their unconscious knowledge of their subdialect/Fante, and depending upon which subdialectal area they came from, declared without hesitation that either (13a) is grammatical and (13b) is not or vice versa. Boka illiterates affirmatively asserted that (13a) is an ungrammatical sentence whereas (13b) is not, while Iguae illiterates labelled (13a) grammatical and (13b) an ill-formed Fante sentence.

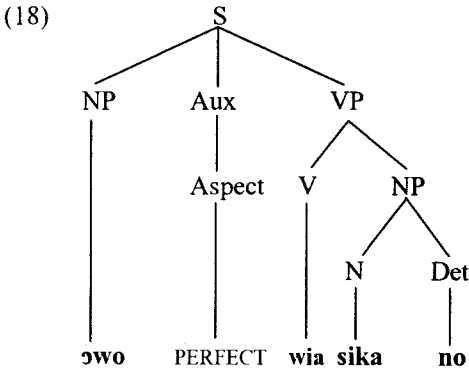
We concede the fact that both sentences are impeccable in structure, but by standard literary Fante or textbook Fante, (13a) is the variety which literates in Fante accept as grammatical within the framework of schoolbook grammar. The vast majority of educated Boka speakers, including teachers of Fante who served as informants, uttered (13b) rather than (13a) in their unguarded moments due to their unconscious knowledge of their subdialect. But when asked to give a grammatical judgment on (13b), they readily labelled it ungrammatical on the strength of their familiarity with the rules of another subdialect which they learned in school and which they do not control thoroughly. Indeed, sociologically, the forms represented by (13a) like all forms acceptable to Fante literates as grammatical have a privileged position, seeing that they are found not only in books but in the most socially prestigious subdialect of Fante accordingly referred to as standard Fante. It therefore goes without saying that the subdialect of the Fante dialect of Akan found in books and in the speech of the educated is standard Fante. If the speech of the educated is the same as that of a subdialect, then that subdialect is the standard Fante dialect.

The second-person singular pronoun. In Akan, like many languages of the world, the second-person singular pronoun does not have any segmental representation in surface structure in an imperative sentence except when the construct is an emphatic one. In Fante, this pronominal loses its segmental shape when it precedes the perfect aspect formative *a/e* in a prepredicative environment in nonimperative constructs. Let us examine the sentences in (14)–(17).

- (14) **mewia sika no a**
Have I stolen the money?
- (15) **oewia sika no**
S/he has stolen the money.
- (16) **ɔwo ewia sika no**
You have stolen the money. (emphatic)

- (17) **ewia sika no**
 You have stolen the money.

In (14)–(16) we realise that the pronominal subject NPs preceding the perfect aspect morpheme **e** are all overtly expressed, i.e., **m** is an elliptical form of **me** ‘I’, **o** ‘s/he’, and **owo** ‘you’, but the pronominal NP in (17), ‘you (singular)’ occurring in the same syntactic environment is realised as zero. But the emphatic sentence (16), which can be plotted on the tree in (18), actually represents the deep structure of (17).



The structural description (SD) of (17) and the ultimate structural change (SC) it undergoes is postulated as (19).

(19)

| | # | wo | e/a | Y | # |
|----|---|----|-----|---|---|
| SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| SC | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

However, in Boka, when this second-person singular pronoun precedes the future aspect marker in an interrogative sentence or the modal **botum** ‘can’ in nominative position, it is deleted; i.e., it is covertly expressed in nonimperative/nonemphatic sentences, thus rendering the sentences subjectless.

- (20) a. ***bɔkɔ Oguaa kyena**
 *Will go to Cape Coast tomorrow?
 b. ***botum akeyɛ edwuma no**
 *Can go to do the work?

Within the context of textbook grammar, the Boka sentences in (20) are ungrammatical. The acceptable standard literary forms must obligatorily have overt pronominal subject (at sentence-initial position). (21) presents standard Fante grammatical versions of (20), which versions are identical with Iguae forms.

- (21) a. **ebɔkɔ Oguaa ɔkyena**
 Will you go to Cape Coast tomorrow?
 b. **ibotum akeyɛ edwuma no**
 You can go to do the work.

The second-person plural pronoun hom. The second-person plural pronoun in literary Fante is unchangeably **hom**, i.e., its segmental shape is not mutable regardless of the syntactic environment in which it may occur. It is used extensively in Boka while in Iguae its use is restricted to formal or guarded speech. In the main, Iguae uses **wɔ** and **hɔn**, preverbal and postverbal variants, respectively, in place of **hom**. The two constructions in (22) and (23) have the ‘same’ meaning.

(22) **Hom ammfa homho amma Jesus a hom bɔkɔ abɔnsamgyamu.**

(23) **Wɔammfa hɔnhɔ amma Jesus a wɔbɔkɔ abɔnsamgyamu.**
If you do not surrender yourselves to Jesus, you will go to hell.

Example (22) is a typical Boka utterance which is grammatical, while (23), being a typical Iguae construction, is ungrammatical only if it has the same meaning as (22). This is because (23) also means 'If they do not surrender themselves to Jesus they will go to hell'. Thus, Iguae does not differentiate between the second- and third-person plural pronouns, but Boka and standard literary Fante do. Therefore, (23) is absolutely grammatical if **wɔ** and **hɔn** are used as third-person plural. It is necessary to point out here that according to our investigation **wɔ** and **hɔn** are widely used by all Fante subdialects as variants of the same second-person plural pronoun exemplified by (23) even in formal speech situations. Indeed, one occasionally hears **hom** as second-person plural pronoun in television and radio advertisements, etc. In the words of J. E. K. Aggrey³ (pers. comm.) "**hom** is fading away in favour of **wɔ/hɔn** as second-person plural pronoun because they are the forms everybody uses today."

The third-person singular pronoun. Akan operates two subsystems of gender: animacy and sex. In the personal pronoun system, however, sex gender is neutralised: there are no separate forms for male and female pronouns. But in the context of animacy gender, lexical noun heads and pronoun heads are specified as either [+animate] or [-animate] (Boadi 1990:8). It is worth noting that the nonanimate third-person pronoun has zero representation (\emptyset) if it occurs in a postverbal or prepausal environment. For illustration, compare the sentences in (24) and (25).

(24) **Kofi hwe aberwa no**
Kofi look old^woman the
Kofi looks at the old woman.

(25) **Kofi hwe mfonyin no**
Kofi look picture the
Kofi looks at the picture.

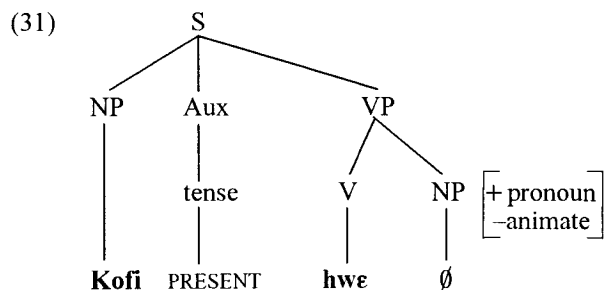
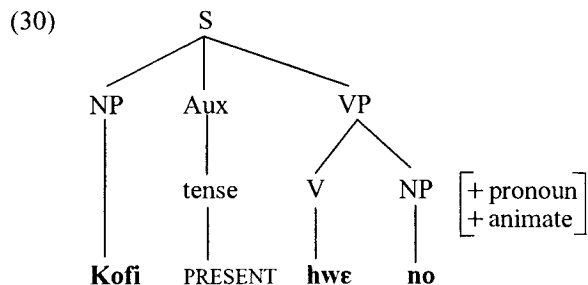
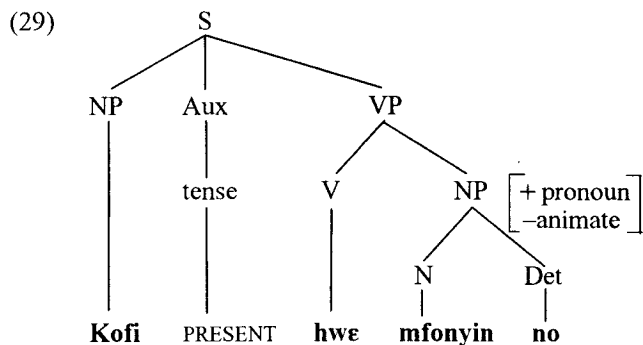
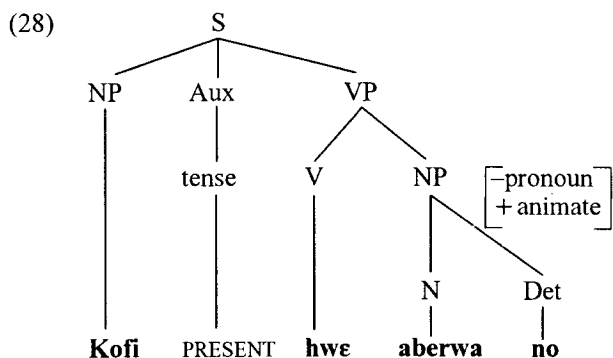
If we replace the italicised NPs at prepausal environment with anaphoric pronouns, (26) and (27) are derived.

(26) **Kofi hwe no**
Kofi look her
Kofi looks at her.

(27) **Kofi hwe \emptyset**
Kofi look
Kofi looks at it.

Let us illustrate the above point further with tree diagrams. (24) is plotted on tree (28), (25) on tree (29), (26) on tree (30), and (27) on tree (31).

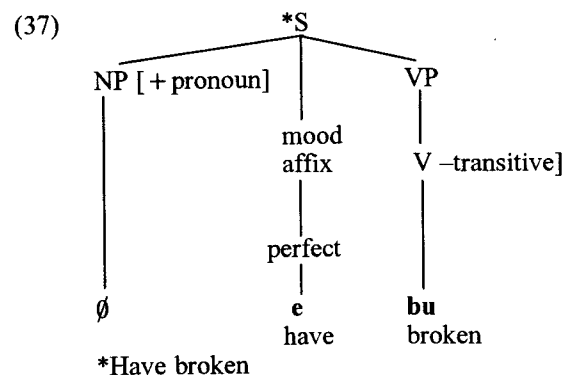
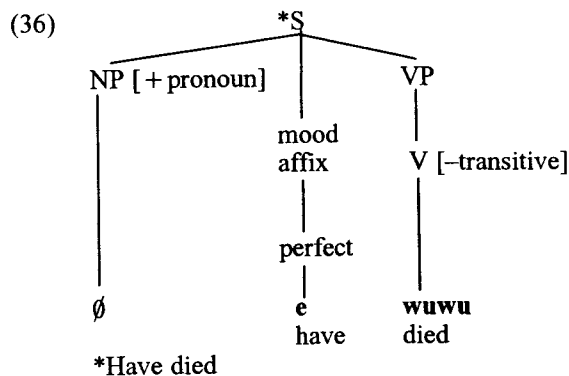
³ J. E. K. Aggrey is a high-profile Fante author and Tutor at the Department of Ghanaian Languages, University of Cape Coast.



We realise that when the NPs in object position are replaced by anaphoric pronouns, an animate pronoun anaphor receives an overt phonetic representation whereas a nonanimate pronoun anaphor receives a zero phonetic representation.

In subject position, however, gender, specifically the animacy-nonanimacy distinction in the third-person pronoun, dissolves in Iguae while Boka retains it. In all dialects of Akan, if a subject NP is replaced by a pronoun, that pronoun receives an overt phonetic representation irrespective of other syntactic features contained in its lexicon and the type of verb it precedes. But in Boka a nonanimate NP occurring in subject position is always replaceable by a covert pronominal provided the verb it precedes is specified as

The derived representations in (33) and (35) are both Iguae and schoolbook grammar forms. (36) and (37) are Boka counterparts of (33) and (35), respectively, and are ungrammatical according to textbook or standard dialect.



The third-person plural pronoun. As stated earlier, **wɔ** and **hɔn** are allomorphs of the third-person plural pronoun morpheme (see §4.2.2). They are in complementary distribution, occurring in mutually exclusive (syntactic) environments. **wɔ** occurs in prepredicative position, while **hɔn** occurs in predicative environment. The following sentences illustrate the above point.

- (38) **wɔronom nsa no muhun hɔn**
While they were imbibing alcoholic beverage, I saw them.
- (39) ***hɔn ronom nsa no muhun hɔn**
*While them were imbibing alcoholic beverage, I saw them.
- (40) **wɔreba abeye edwuma no**
They are coming to do the work.
- (41) ***hɔn reba abeye edwuma no**
*They are coming to do the work.

Example (38) displays the two coreferents of allomorphs **wɔ** and **hɔn**, occurring in their appropriate syntactic environments. This construction, representing Iguae form, is grammatical in textbook Fante while (39), a normal Boka sentence, is ungrammatical because the prepredicative position is occupied by **hɔn** which occurs in predicative position only in such constructions. (40) and (41) are typical Iguae and Boka utterances, respectively, but according to textbook Fante, (40) is grammatical and has an entry in the lexicon of standard Fante, while (41) is not a well-formed sentence. The grammaticality of (38) applies also to (40) as does the ungrammaticality of (38) and (40).

It is worth pointing out that even though **hɔn** does not normally occur prepredicatively, it occurs obligatorily in this position in focus-marked sentences and relative clauses as shown in (42) and (43).

- (42) **hɔn na wɔbaa ha**
 they FOC they^came here
 It was they who came here.
- (43) **hɔn a wɔdeda no ye mo nkorɔfo**
 those REL they^have^slept be my people
 Those who have slept / are asleep are my people.

Examples (42) and (43) are Iguae sentences and are grammatical in terms of Fante grammar taught in school, but the Boka versions of these in (44) and (45), respectively, cannot be said to be good/literary Fante expressions.

- (44) * **hɔn na hɔn baa ha**
- (45) * **hɔn a hɔn adeda no ye mo nkorɔfo**

Interrogative sentences. There are diverse types of interrogative sentence including (1) yes/no questions or categorical questions, (2) pronominal or question-word questions, and (3) the “echo” type questions. We shall focus our discussion on yes/no questions in Fante inasmuch as it presents significant differences between Iguae and Boka forms and, therefore, offers us the opportunity to place our linguistic fingers on the variety of Fante which serves as the standard literary dialect.

The construction of yes/no questions in Fante, like the other dialects of Akan, involves the application of various strategies which include the use of movement processes, placing of falling pitch on sentence-final syllable and the use of question particles. We shall be concerned with the employment of question particles in the construction of yes/no questions in Fante.

Standard literary Fante has two main question particles in its lexicon. These are **a** and **ana** which are in complementary distribution. **a** occurs in sentence-final position, while **ana** occurs sentence initially. The sentences in (46)–(48) illustrate this point.

- (46) **irubu dua no**
 you^are^felling tree the
 Are you felling the tree?
- (47) **irubu dua no a**
 you^are^felling tree the Q^particle
 Are you felling the tree?
- (48) **ana irubu dua no**
 Q^particle you^are^felling tree the
 Are you felling the tree?

Example (46) does not employ any question particle but the high tone of the prepausal syllable **no** is transmuted into a falling pitch. This type of yes/no question is used by all Fante speakers. (47) and (48), however, are Iguae and the educated Boka speakers' variety of utterance acceptable as standard Fante. We noted that illiterate Boka speakers do not normally use **a/ana** particles but **mãã** and **ãã** which are also in complementary distribution; **mãã** occurs sentence finally and **ãã**, sentence initially. However, Boka speakers use **mãã/ãã** and **a/ana** interchangeably. In our investigation, we discovered that Boka speakers acquire **ana/a** particles either in school or in church, where the Bible and other forms of literature are written and read in standard Fante, or through trade. Thus, typical Boka versions of (46)–(48) are (49)–(51), respectively.

- (49) * **Rubu dua no?**
 (50) * **Rubu dua no mǎǎ?**
 (51) * **Aǎ rubu dua no?**

Note that (49)–(51) are subjectless sentences (cf. (20)). Suffice it to say that these Boka **mǎǎ/ǎǎ** question particles have no place in the lexicon of Fante textbook grammar; it is the Iguae question particles which are written and spoken by Boka speakers in their guarded moments.

The verb *ma*. The word **ma**, a homophone, occurs in several kinds of contexts in which it contributes quite different meanings. Examples (52)–(58) are some of the contexts in which it occurs, and in each instance its meaning in the overall English gloss of the sentence is italicised.

- (52) **ɔma mo ho hiahia me**
S/he/it causes me to have tribulations.
- (53) **Kɔbena ma me sika**
Kɔbena gives me money.
- (54) **ma Abena nkɔ**
Let Abena go.
- (55) **no kɔɔpoo aye ma**
His cup has become/is full.
- (56) **mo ho ye dzen ma**
I am very strong.
- (57) **Kofi abor no ma enntse ase**
Kofi has beaten him/her so you do not understand why.
- (58) **ɔabor no ma**
S/he has beaten him/her well.

ma is used as a verb in (52)–(54), an adjective in (55), an intensifier in (56), a conjunction in (57), and an adverb in (58). We shall focus our brief discussion on the verb **ma** as is used in (52). Sentence (52) belongs to Iguae and standard literary Fante. The Boka version of (52) is unusual because when **ma** occurs before an utterance-initial lexical noun the construction is perfectly grammatical as in (59).

- (59) **Abena ma mo ho hiahia me**
Abena causes me to have tribulation.

But when this lexical noun is pronominalised and prefixed to **ma**, then **ma** is repeated as shown in (60), the Boka version of (52). Such forms are not grammatical in terms of textbook grammar.

- (60) **ɔma ma mo ho hiahia me**

4.3 THE LEXICAL LEVEL

Comparing lexical items is an uphill, if not an impossible, task to undertake inasmuch as the *Fante Word List* (Methodist Book Depot 1942) contains both Iguae and Boka counterparts of various words. For example, the Iguae/Boka words **dwow/ɔdo** ‘yam’, **borɔsuow/borɔfer** ‘pawpaw’, **mena/mbisa** ‘broom’, **kakraka/taferew** ‘cockroach’, **adar/ɔfangya** or **dadze** ‘machete’, **pia/adankyir** ‘chamber’, **apɔnkye/ aberekyi** ‘goat’, **kɔhwinyi/ɔtorfo** ‘liar’, etc. are all recorded in the word list. For this reason, it is not possible to actually determine which subdialectal lexical items are acceptable or not

acceptable as standard literary Fante forms. But we have observed in our investigation that the Iguae lexical items have gained currency among all subdialects of Fante; they are the regular words taught in school and written in books. As a result, their Boka counterparts are all fading out in favour of the Iguae varieties inasmuch as they are rarely found in books apart from the *Fante Word List*.

5. EVIDENCE FROM THE LITERATURE

Having discussed and “tacitly” established that Iguae is, at least, closest to standard Fante, we now centre our discussion on evidence from the literature pointing to the variety of Fante that is standard.

To begin with, scattered in the literature are pieces of evidence all pointing to the fact that Iguae Fante is the variety taught in school. Welmers (1946) for instance argues that “speakers of Fanti recognize the dialect of the coastal town of Anomabo as the *best* Fanti, although that dialect has no official standing. The town of Cape Coast appears to be a more active centre of Fanti education and writing” (my emphasis).

Riis’ observation from Christaller (1875) in §3.1 can also be cited. Stewart (1962) has also observed that:

The traditional cultural supremacy of the Confederation in the Fanti-speaking area, however is threatened by Cape Coast which is only a few miles outside its borders. Cape Coast is a much larger town than any in the Confederation and has played an outstanding role in the development of European education in Ghana as a whole. Its speech has made some headway in Abura Dunkwa and particularly among the school children.

Stewart’s observation sheds light on the fact that it is the Iguae Fante which is taught in school. It therefore comes as no surprise that he discovered that Iguae was spoken, especially by school children in Abura Dunkwa. What he discovered in Abura Dunkwa in 1962 obtains even today in all communities where Fante is taught in school. These school children grow up having lost their first dialect partially if not completely, in favour of Iguae.

A classic case in point is that of Kobina-Arhin Ahumanu Mbura, a native of Anomabo, an informant Welmers used in America consequent upon which Welmers (1946:2) claims that his description of Fanti “follows as closely as possible the dialect of Anomabo”. But Welmers ends up describing Iguae Fante. Commenting on Welmers (1946) work Stewart (1962) asserts that “the dialect is claimed to be that of Anomabo but it is in fact far removed from Confederation Fante than is Cape Coast Fante.”

It also obtains in the literature that Fante does not have æ in its vocalic inventory. Scholars who claim that æ is lacking in Fante include Ladefoged (1964:37), Welmers (1973:20), Andoh-Kumi (1977:10), Osam (1986:32), and Obeng (1989:2). But Abakah (1993) has established that Boka has this æ vowel even at the phonemic level while as Anee has it in a number of words. Iguae is the only subdialect that lacks, in relative terms, this æ vowel in its vocalic inventory. And Dolphyne (pers. comm.) explains that since standard Fante does not have æ it is natural for linguists to state that Fante does not have it seeing that so far all linguistic description of Fante is based on the standard variety. Therefore, Iguae is synonymous with standard Fante.

6. SOCIOLECT

Most standard dialects are also sociolects. The prestige Iguae enjoys stems from its being a sociolect. It is the variety spoken by the upper class and the educated elite including ministers of state, professors and lecturers, doctors, directors, managers, judges, administrators, lawyers, etc. Musicians and most other artistes use the Iguae variety for their works.

Dolphyne’s (1988b:172) observation buttresses this fact:

Akan speakers who watch the 'Osofo Dadzie' T.V. series may have observed that some of the actors speak the Agona dialect of Akan when acting the part of somebody from the village but speak Asante or "standard" Fante when acting the part of a sophisticated person.

And the average educated female speaks the Iguae variety only, at least, outside her hometown. Television and radio advertisements in Fante are invariably rendered in the Iguae variety.

7. THE PURE, PROPER, AND BEST FANTE

It is observed that all native speakers of Fante acknowledge the fact that the Boka subdialect is pure. "Pure" here is synonymous with unpolished, crude, slovenly, ugly, etc. It is not easy for non-Fante Akans to decode Boka Fante for meaning. It is, therefore, not surprising that it is rare to find a non-Fante Akan or non-Akan who speaks Boka or even Anee unless s/he grew up in either of the two subdialectal communities. Every non-Fante Akan found speaking Fante speaks the Iguae variety. In an answer to this question: "How come you speak flawless Iguae Fante?" an Asante-speaking informant affirmed that

I have never been to any Fante town or village so I never consciously learned the Fante dialect. As a child we lived in the same house with a Fante family in Accra, so I grew up speaking Fante. To tell the truth, I am learning from you for the first time that the type of Fante I speak is the Cape Coast variety. Indeed I have never been to Cape Coast but all that I know is that it is the "best" Fante, very musical and romantic with its segmental sounds very easy to articulate. It is very distinct from other variants of Fante, which I hear at times and which are very very slovenly, unpleasant, and very difficult to understand.

Another person who happens to be an Ahanta in an answer to the same question declared:

Well, I have never stayed in Cape Coast, not even for a day, so I cannot speak Iguae Mfantse. In all fairness, I do not know the name of the variety of Fante I speak but what I do know is that I try my best to speak the best Fante which, incidentally, is the variety I learned in school and which, I do know, is spoken by every literate in Fante. It is very refined and sweet. And above all, it sounds very pleasant in the ears even as it is easily understood by anybody who understands any of the Akan dialects. If this is the variety you call Iguae Mfantse then I assure you that I did not learn it in Cape Coast. I learned it in school at Apowa in Ahantalana.

Even some Boka and Anee speakers share the same view. In an answer to the same question, a Boka young lady confirmed:

I know that the variety of Fante I speak is very ugly so I always make every effort to speak the best Fante which is the variant I learned in school. To the best of my knowledge, it is spoken by every educated Fante and even illiterates who have either lived in Cape Coast before or were born and bred there.

Another Boka informant argues that if he had never been to school, he would not have known that the proper Fante forms for [fjɛ] 'beautiful' [etɔɔɛr] 'ladder', [edzɔɛ] 'palm kernel', [n^wɔa] 'to cook', [jaala] 'Thursday', and so on, are [fjɛw], [atɔɔɛr], [adzɔɛ], [nɔɔɛ], and [jawɔda], respectively. These "proper" Fante forms are Iguae forms.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It ought to be clear from the evidence given that Iguae Fante, a sociolect, constitutes the standard Fante dialect. The concept of "Anomabo Fante" is, linguistically speaking, untenable as is the epithet the "best Fante" imposed on it. It is equally unfounded to claim standard literary status for Anomabo Fante simply because high-profile Fante authors including G. R. Acquaaah, J. A. Annobil, and C. S. M. Brew hailed from Anomabo. The late Rev. Acquaaah's works, for instance, are written in Iguae Fante only. The present writer was taught Fante at secondary school by the late Brew, and had the opportunity to work with the late Annobil at the Department of Ghanaian Languages, University of Cape Coast. These two scholars spoke impeccable Iguae Fante, and it showed in their works. I never heard either of them speak Boka Fante.

It is worth noting that if a speech form moves away from its primitive, crude, or pure state to a refined state and accordingly becomes sophisticated and employs a lot of code-switching in informal speech situations, it does not cease to be a proper speech form, be it a dialect or subdialect. It also does not mean it cannot be the standard literary variety; a primitive/pure dialect/subdialect is not synonymous with standard dialect/subdialect. For a variety of a language to be standard it must, first and foremost, be reduced to writing, be taught in school, and it could be a koiné dialect and/or a sociolect as well. Under this criterion, Iguae Fante is standard Fante or at least the closest to standard Fante.

It should be emphasised here that linguistically speaking, no language, dialect, or subdialect is superior or inferior to another. Therefore if a dialect/subdialect happens to be the standard dialect/subdialect, sociolect, and more prestigious, it does not in any way imply that the nonstandard dialect/subdialect, nonsociolect, and less prestigious ones, are inferior. As a matter of fact

The scientific study of language has convinced most scholars that all languages, and correspondingly all dialects are equally 'good' as linguistic systems. All varieties of a language are structured, complex rule-governed systems which are wholly adequate for the needs of their speakers... There is nothing at all inherent in nonstandard varieties which make them inferior. (Trudgill 1983:20)

Hence, neither of the subdialects Iguae, Boka, or Anee is in any way superior or inferior to each other. We need to lay emphasis on the fact that all the Iguae and Boka utterances that have been shown to be ungrammatical are ungrammatical in terms of schoolbook grammar only. They are all perfectly grammatical (at the subdialectal level) apart from textbook Fante.

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