

## CHAPTER TWO

## HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

## 2.1 ANNANG AND ITS DIALECTS

Annang is a major language in Nigeria and one of the languages spoken by the Annang people of Akwa Ibom State, in the south-south geopolitical zone in Nigeria. The ethnic groups that make up Akwa Ibom State include Annang, which comprises of Annang speaking people of Abak, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Ika, Ikot Ekpene, Obot Akara, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun (Essien, 1982, Udoh, 1983, Utip 1989). Annang, according to the above sources, is the next largest dialect in the Ibibio-Efik language cluster. Mutual intelligibility exists among these groups that form the Annang language communities. However, various dialect differences also exist within this language background, (Udoka & Umoh (2021) and Essien, Ekanem, Umoh, 2023).

It is observed that the variant of Annang spoken in Ikot Ekpene and Obot Akara is not exactly the same as what exists in Ukanafun. For instance, in the English expression, "The rope will cut if ...", the verb will cut can be rendered variously as anakpeke, adakpeke, or alakpeke, (or anakukpe" as the case may be) with n, d, and l used in free variation. The sentence translated as "Uruk ade anakpeke/adakpeke/ alakpeke", will still be understood and meaningful to the users.

Annang is spoken as a first language by the Annang speaking communities but the Annang spoken by Abak has undergone some process of assimilation into Ibibio language due to the influence of the Ibibio neighbours of Uyo, Ikono – Uyo, with the result that /d/ is substituted for /t/ as in the sentence: "nkudo eka Mfon" instead of "nkute eka Mfon" (I have not seen Mfon's mother). A similar overlap of forms is revealed in the way God is used by the Annang speaker. With the exception of Ikot Ekpene and Obot Akara, other Annang speakers refer to God as Awasi as in God is good ("Awasi afon" instead of "Abasi afon"). The reasons for such differences are not farfetched. Ikot Ekpene, being bounded by the Ibibio and Igbo speakers is more exposed to urban influences than their Ukanafun counterparts who are far removed from the metropolis.

Human beings respond differently to situations based primarily on the nature of their language. Udoka (2020), notes that language has different manifestations and the users of any language express their perceptions using different forms in syntactic constructions. Annang as a natural language equally manifests different dialect forms which do not impair communication among the speakers. In the English expression: "will you buy it?" The Annang equivalent can be rendered as Anadep? Adadep? or as Alalep? From the general point of view, one may observe that Annang is only a cluster of dialects. The broad classification of Annang, tends to ignore near-dialects which exist among the Annang speakers. For the purpose of this textbook, the term "Annang" is used to cover the main areas where the language is spoken, with the variations as occasion demands.

Nyoyoko (1997) and Enang, Nyarks, Utim, Udoka and Udom, (2014), considers Annang as "one of the minority political groups" in Akwa Ibom State, which situates within the Cross River Basin and is bounded in the North and West by Igbo while the Ibibio constitute its Eastern and Southern neighbours. The physical geography of Annang also accounts for these dialectal differences. Minor varieties are easily noticed among speakers from Ika, Ikpe Annang in Essien Udim, and Etim Ekpo in the use of alveola lateral /l/ and the palato-alveola affricates: /tʃ, dʒ/. These manifest in the pronunciation of certain words such as "laka k'inua ulok" (leave the door post) and "nka uchoro ndo" (I am attending a wedding). These differences however, do not hinder communication among the speakers of Annang language.

Other factors that have seemingly caused the differences in dialects among the Annang speaking communities, are the physical distance between groups, cultural practices, sizes of the neighbouring groups, proximity to urban area and social amenities, influence of other linguistic groups, literacy, political and religious affiliations.

### 2.2 ANNANG LANGUAGE PHYLUM

Annang is a Lower-Cross language spoken by some inhabitants of Akwa Ibom State. Okon Essien (2010) identifies four language groups or families in Nigeria, namely:

- i. The Chadic (Hausa)
- ii. The Nilo-Sahara (kanuri)
- iii. The Semitic (Shawa Arab spoken by Borno State) and
- iv. The Niger-Congo (the largest group to which all Southern and most Northern Nigerian languages belong)

Annang, like other languages in Akwa Ibom State, is a member of the Bantu language group and it is spoken as a first language by approximately two million people. Gleason's (1961) as cited in Udoka, Enang, Utin, (2018), on language families identifies the Niger-Congo as the most important language family of Africans. The central branch of this language family centres on Eastern Nigeria and the Cameroons. It consists of numerous sub-branches mostly containing languages which we know relatively little, spoken by small tribes.

Efik and Ibibio are mentioned in this language family, thus making them mutually intelligible. The differences however, among these dialects are primarily lexical and phonological, rather than morphological and syntactic. Nabi Umoh-Faithmann (1999) groups the Efik/Ibibio/Annang cluster as belonging to the Ibobio (Ibibio) Jews of Akwa Ibom State due to sameness in names, concepts, and music. The source is able to trace a possible link between the Ibibios and Ikpe, Afaha Obong and some villages in Obot Akara as "migrants from an original source".

Essien (2010) and Enang, Urujzian, Udoka, (2013), posit that almost all Nigerian languages employ serial construction at the level of syntax. This may be true in some cases but in other cases some Annang sentences often require addition of an idiophone which is not the case in Ibibio, as the following examples show:

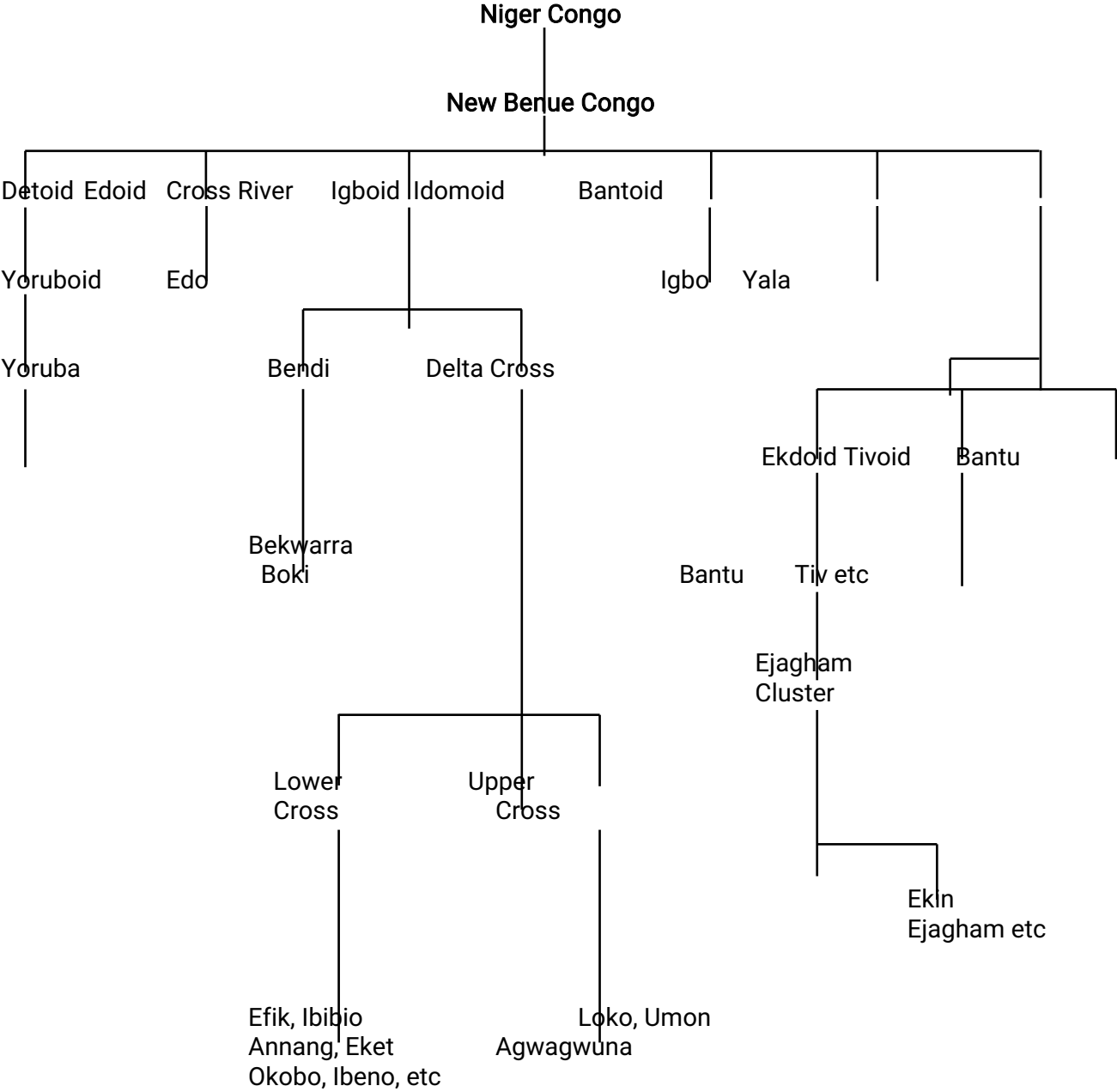
Annang: AMary ekenam

Ibibio: Mary ekenam

Gloss: Mary did it.

The following diagram presents a spectrum of the Niger-Congo language phylum

Figure 1: The Niger-Congo Language Group



*Culled from Udoka and Umoh, ( 2020:58)*

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