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**Introductory Materials**  
**Akan Twi Asante**

## 1. Bibliographical survey

This paper is dedicated to the dialect Asante of Akan Twi, one of languages of West Africa. The topic of this small research is usage of phrasal verbs (*emu*) *ye den*, (*emu*) *ye duru* and (*emu*) *ye hare*, which is described in the grammar outlook, written by J. G. Christaller in 1875 and called *Grammar of the Asante and Fante Language called Tschii [Chwee, Twi]*. This is a brief grammar outlook, describing all main phonetic, morphologic and syntactic aspects of Akan Twi. There is a lack of fundamental linguistic studies of Akan Twi, the majority of the works are either general essays or textbooks for school students, what means there are mostly works one can consult only on basic patterns of verbal conjunction and noun inflection in Akan and its dialects. The ones, used while writing this paper are: *Asante-Twi learners' reference grammar* written by David Adu-Amankwah in 2003 and *A Comprehensive Course in Twi (Asante)* by Florence A. Dolphyne, published in 1996 as well as the *Twi, basic course* written by James E Redden, and Nana Owusu, issued in 1963. Unfortunately there are only a few references to the dialectal differences between Akan dialects in the mentioned general works, but there is a lack of a thorough research on this topic.

There are few works on typology of Akan Twi, for the most part – short articles, included in general typological researches and one of those is an Article written in 2014 by Kofi Abrefa Busia and published at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, called *Typological features template for Akan (Twi)*.

Akan Twi Asante is a tonal language, for which several writing systems are developed. In addition, there are several systems of phonetic recording of Akan. The system of phonetic and graphic recording of Akan, used in this research, was constructed on the basis of an article by Hyon S. Cho, Gifty Akuamoah, Daan Baldewijns, Sara Candeias, Cristiano Chesi, Kofi Agyekum and Miguel S. Dias, called *A phone set of Asante-Twi defined in IPA and X-SAMPA, a language resource for the first text-to-speech system of Akan*, which gives an analysis of phonetic characteristics of Akan sounds and the variants of their graphic depiction, together with orthographic equivalents for each phone. The other

phonetic research, upon which the writing system, used here, was built, is the article by Emmanuel N. Abakah, published in 2004 in the *Journal of Philosophy and Culture*, *Where have all the Consonantal Phonemes of Akan Gone?* This work provides a scheme of all Akan consonants with a detailed description of their phonic characteristics. The description of the Akan tones, which have a sense differential function one can find in Florence Dolphyne (1988) *The Akan (Twi-Fante) language: its sound system and tonal structure*. This work as well as the article by Paul Schachter and Victoria A. Fromkin, *A Phonology of Akan: Akuapem, Asante, Fante* (1968) was extremely helpful by establishing the correspondence between sounds of Akan Twi and the phonetic symbols which are used in this paper, considering the fact that Akan tones are omitted in the used here recording system.

While collecting the material there was a need to translate several akan sentences, and one of the most helpful sources was the Twi-English Dictionary by Berry Jack, called *English, Twi, Asante, Fante dictionary*, edited in 1960.

Thus this bibliographical survey doesn't cover the whole range of works on Akan Twi Asante, but it is enough to create a basic understanding of grammar and phonetics of Akan Twi Asante.

## 2. Language identification

Language identification: Akan, dialect: Twi (Achanti, Asanti, Ashante Twi)

Glottocode: akan1250

Akan is used in West Africa, in Ghana and on the Ivory Coast. According to ethnologue, Akan Twi Asante belongs to the Niger-Congo language family, if to describe it's position precisely, we will receive the following sequence: Akan, as the Akanic language, belongs to Tano-languages – a part of Atlantic-Congo subfamily of Niger-Congo languages. [<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/aka>].

Akan itself is a macrolanguage, divided into several dialects, the biggest of which are Twi (Asante) and Fante, which were developed as literary standards with Latin orthographies. Asante is defined by Ethnologue as a largest subdialect of Akan Twi dialect. According to Ethnologue, Akan as a macrolanguage<sup>1</sup> has more than 9.100.000 native speakers, and is Asante subdialect is spoken as a native language by approximately 3.820.000 people and is the third largest subdialect of Akan. Asante is spoken by an ethnic group, called Ashanti (Asante), living in Asanti region in South Ghana with the center in Kumasi. Along with Akuapem, Asante is one of the most prestige dialects of Akan, because it is one of the few Akan dialects (together with Ashanti), which received alphabet and writing and was used in education and business documentation. More than half of the population in Ghana either speak or understand Akan language in different dialectal variants, but the southern parts of Ghana and the borders of Ivory Coast and Western Togo are the areas, where Akan is the main spoken language.

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<sup>1</sup> see [13]

### **3. Sociolinguistic description and language vitality**

#### **3.1. Sources:**

Ehala, Martin. (2015) *Ethnolinguistic Vitality*. University of Tartu, Estonia.

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Hammarström, Harald & Forkel, Robert & Haspelmath, Martin. 2018. *Glottolog 3.3*. Jena: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History. (Available online at <http://glottolog.org>, Accessed on 2018-10-13.)

Lewis, Paul M., Simons, Gary F. (2009): *Assessing endangerment: expanding Fishman's GIDS*. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*

Wichmann, Søren, Eric W. Holman, and Cecil H. Brown (eds.). 2018. The ASJP Database (version 18)

#### **3.2. Sociolinguistic description and language vitality**

In Ethnologue the vitality of Asanti dialect in Ghana is evaluated as 3 according to EGIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) and labeled as “Wider Communication” language, which means that it “is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across the region” [<https://www.ethnologue.com/about/language-status>]. Thus Asante Twi „is used in work and mass media“ [<https://www.ethnologue.com/cloud/aka>] in South Ghana and is in fact the main language of all domains (work, education, mass media, politics usw.) for the majority of the population, English continues to be the official language of Ghana, otherwise Asante Twi could be identified as EGIDS Level 2 (Regional). According to the

subjective informant's impression, the vitality of Akan in Accra is slightly declining because of the growing prestige of English, but it still remains the main spoken language for the significant part of the population. If to define active "domains of usage" for Akan Twi Asante in Ghana, according to EGIDS [11, p. 25] the main domains of usage are local and regional work, home and school education. According to the informant Frank Obeng the university education is mostly in English, as the institutional support of Akan is weakening.

The literacy status of Asante Twi, according to Ethnologue, varies between 60 and 30 percent for native speakers in South Ghana and between 5 and 10 percent for speakers, speaking Asante Twi as a second language.

According to the informant Frank Obeng, there is no known to him organized communities of Akan-speakers in Berlin, but there are a few researches about the numbers of Ghanaian citizens residing in Berlin. The study conducted by the Ghanaian Consulate in Berlin, revealed that since 1970 the number of Ghanaian citizens in Germany is increasing: „Die Zahl ghanischer Staatsbürger in Deutschland stieg seit 1970 – der „initial Period“. ...und stieg 2014 wieder auf fast 27.000 an“. [17, p. 8]. According to the research of Ghanaian Consulate in Berlin, on the state of 2006 the proportion of Ghanaian citizens living in Berlin was 9,2%, which is 1.866 people [18, p. 14]. There are no exact data about the language distribution inside the group of immigrants from Ghana, but according to the fact, that the southern parts of Ghana and the borders of Ivory Coast and Western Togo are the areas, where Akan is the main spoken language we can assume that a significant part of Ghanaian citizens in Berlin are native speakers of various dialect of Akan. If to estimate the vitality rates of Akan Twi Asante in Berlin according to IAM (Interactive Acculturation Model), created by Bourhis [8, p. 5], Akan speakers in Berlin are the group with the extreme low vitality, because there is no community, large enough, to feel belonging to, so no group identity is preserved in several generations' lifetime.

#### 4. Explanation of the transcription system and orthography.

The presented annotated word list for Twi Asante, created on the basis of Swadesh list for Akan Twi was collected during two elicitation sessions and analysed, using orthography and transcription rules, listed and explained below.

In total, the recording took three days, the elicitation sessions were conducted on 10.06.2018, 19.06.2018 and 29.06.2018. The received recordings were named elicitation session number one, two and three, respectively. Eventually, the first recording from 10.06.2018 was not included into the results, so the presented sessions start from the session number two, taken on 19.06.2018. The recordings taken on 19.06.2018, consist of two parts, one of which was conducted between 15:00 p.m. and 16:00 p.m. and includes six sentences, and the second one contains the recording of a part of the Swadesh list (words 1-16) for Akan Twi Asante and was recorded between 18:00 p.m. and 19:00 p.m. Recording three, obtained on 29.06.2018, includes the second part of Swadesh list (17-56). Contents and timing of the sessions are represented in the table below.

Session Name (Identifier)	Date of the session	Time of the session	Session contents
<b>Session 2.1.</b> ELALAN 2.1.	19.06.2018	15:00 – 16:00 p.m.	6 sentences
<b>Session 2.2.</b> ELAKAN 2.2.	19.06.2018	19:00 – 20:00 p.m.	Swadesh list (1-16)
<b>Session 3</b> ELAKAN 3.	29.06.2018.	19:00 – 20:00 p.m.	Swadesh list (17-56)

In this paper the results of the sessions 2.2. and 3 are combined and described together, as they contain the Swadesh list for Akan.

Both eaf. files with the recording of Swadesh List (*ELAKAN 2.2.*) and (*ELAKAN 3*) include the following information: the number of the received sentence and it's Swadesh number (*Nummer-Tier*), an approximate transcription, made intuitively (*Transcription-Tier*), the word's spelling, as written by the informant (*Orthographie-Tier*), and the german translation of the recorded words (*Übersetzung-Tier*). Two remaining tiers

(*Kommentar1-Tier* and *Kommentar2-Tier*) contain additional information on spelling and phonetics of the recorded words and are not filled for all entries. Spelling and phonetic information are taken from the Automated Similarity Judgment Program (ASJP) [<https://asjp.clld.org>], links to all resources are added in *Kommentar1-Tier* and *Kommentar2-Tier*. *Kommentar2-Tier* also includes information about the elicitation: date, time, participants and the unique identifier of the session.

The transcription system and orthography used while analyzing the records is the same as the one used for analyzing the wordlist and is described below.

Before describing the contents of sessions 2.2. and 3 it is useful to consider a small inquiry into the phonetic system of Akan and the way its sounds were recorded during the analysis of elicitation sessions. The variant of Akan orthography used in this research will also be observed below.

#### **4.1. The phoneme set of Akan Twi Asante: transcription system and orthography.**

Akan Twi Asante, one of the main languages spoken in Ghana, belongs to the Niger-Congo language group, and shares its main phonological features: clear tendency towards open syllables of CV type, and vowel harmony, based on [ $\pm$ ATR] feature. Additionally, Asante is a tonal language, containing L- and H-tones, marked with the diacritical signs ['] and [˘], respectively.

Akan has three writing systems, based on Fante, Akuapem and Asante. The attempt to unify the writing system resulted in the “Akan Unified Orthography,” which was developed in 1978 by the Bureau of Ghana Languages.

This alphabet variant is also applied to Akan Twi Asante dialect, and will be used in this paper. All written records, created by informant Frank Obeng are also made using this alphabet variant.



Vowels	Consonants	Approximants
i, e, ε, a, ɔ, o, u	p, b, t, d, k, g, m, n, r, f, h, s	y, w

Although Asante-Twi is the most prominent and representative among twelve dialects of Twi, there is no internationally recognized recording of Akan phonemes with the IPA and X-SAMPA inventory. The phoneme set of Akan Twi Asante is also undefined: “until now there are neither IPA nor SAMPA sets clearly defined for the language and published” [3].

As Akan Twi Asante has five vowels: “high front /i/, mid front /e/, low central /a/, mid back /o/ and high back /u/” [3], they all can appear with both [+ATR] and [-ATR] feature, what gives the following letter-sound correspondence:

Letter	Represented sound
i	i [+ATR], ɪ [-ATR]
e	e [+ATR]
ε	ε [-ATR]
a	æ [+ATR], a [-ATR]
ɔ	ɔ [-ATR]
o	o [+ATR]
u	u [+ATR], ʊ [-ATR]

Table A. Akan Twi Asante letter-sound correspondence: vowels

In this paper we use the system of consonants in Akan Twi Asante, suggested in the article by H. S. Cho, G. Akuamoah, D. Baldewijns, S. Candeias, C. Chesi, K. Agyekum, M. S. Dias, “A phone set of Asante-Twi defined in IPA and X-SAMPA, a language resource for the first text-to-speech system of Akan“, which is chosen due to its simplicity. The described system is based on the one suggested in an article by Abakah (2004), despite the fact that it is not universally recognised.

	<b>Labial</b>	<b>Alveolar</b>	<b>Palatalized</b>	<b>Velar</b>	<b>Labialized</b>
<b>Stop</b>	p b	t d	k <sup>j</sup> g <sup>j</sup>	k g	k <sup>w</sup>
<b>Nasal</b>	M	n	n <sup>j</sup>	ŋ	n <sup>w</sup> ŋ <sup>w</sup>
<b>Liquid</b>		r			
<b>Fricative</b>	F	s	h <sup>j</sup>	h	h <sup>w</sup>
<b>Approximant (Glide)</b>			j	w	

**Table 1.** Consonants of Asante-Twi [3]

Labial		Alveolar		Palatalized		Velar		Labialized	
p	p	t	t	k <sup>j</sup>	ky	k	k	k <sup>w</sup>	kw
b	b	d	d	g <sup>j</sup>	gy	g	g	n <sup>w</sup>	nw
M	m	n	n	n <sup>j</sup>	ny	ŋ	n	ŋ <sup>w</sup>	nw
F	f	r	r	h <sup>j</sup>	hy	h	h	h <sup>w</sup>	hw
		s	s	j	y	w	w		

Table B. Akan Twi Asante letter-sound correspondence: consonants  
(left cell – sound, right cell – representative letter or letter combination)

Tables A and B listed above give a full picture of the sounds of Akan and their representation in the written language. This alphabet variant is used in the „*orthography-tier*“ in all *eaf* files. All written words were checked by the informant. The consonantal letter-sound correspondence used here doesn't distinguish between velar and alveolar n and between other sounds derived from these two. In these cases it is only possible to recognise the approximate phonological characteristics of the sound, transmitted by the the letter, but the exact phonological characteristics of the collected language material are not necessary for the purpose of this research. Tones are not indicated in the „*Orthographie-Tier*“ in *eaf* files „*ELAKAN 2.2*“ and „*ELAKAN 3*“. In Akan Twi Asante tones (uprising and falling) distinguish lexical meanings. An example, given by the informant during the elicitation session „*ELAKAN 3*“ consists of three variants of tone structure for the same stem: pàpá – father (low-high tone structure), pápá – good (high-high tone structure) and pàpà (low-low tone structure). Thus, it is evident that

lexical meaning is in numerous cases defined by tone structure. However, tones are not represented in fiction or other kinds of literature in Akan, and the apocryphical tone signs are used in Ghana only for educational purposes, for instance in textbooks on Akan language.tones. Tones are not indicated here, because the sentence samples used were created in English and then translated into Akan, so tones are unnecessary in order to understand this particular Akan material, so the English translation is given for each sentence. As for phonetic interpretation in the „*Transcription-Tier*“ in *eaf.files* „*ELAKAN 2.2*“ and „*ELAKAN 3*“, it is approximate. „*Transcription-Tier*“ in „*ELAKAN 2.2*“ and „*ELAKAN 3*“, consists of phonetic interpretation, based on the sounds I distinguish, so the sound inventory used in „*Transcription-Tieren*“ is quite limited: there is no distinction between [ $\pm$ ATR] feature and velar, palatalized and labialized variants of /k/, /g/, /h/ and /n/, as well as no distinction between alveolar and velar /n/. I do not distinguish uprising and falling tones in Akan, so this information is also omitted in in „*Transcription-Tieren*“. Vowel description is simplified as well: both sounds i [+ATR] and ɪ [-ATR] are represented with the symbol /i/. I tried to distinguish between ε [-ATR] and e [+ATR], ɔ [-ATR] and o [+ATR] and u [+ATR] and ʊ [-ATR], but this is an intuitive assignment of phonetic values and does not pretend to be entirely accurate. Sounds æ [+ATR] , and a [-ATR] are both represented as /a/, as I couldn't recognise any difference.

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