The role of language in ethnic identity: The case of Akwamu in Ghana

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Researchers in several disciplines within the social sciences, for example anthropology, sociology, history, linguistics and the humanities in general have explored the relationship among language, culture and identity from different perspectives. The general picture in the literature is the recognition that these three phenomena are connected to and affect each other in intricate ways. In this paper, we focus on a specific aspect of this relationship (the relationship between linguistic identity and ethnic/cultural identity). The paper provides a historical account of the rise and fall of the Akwamu Empire (a socio-politically powerful sub-Akan ethnic group in pre-colonial Ghana) and explore the role language may have played in the loss of the ethnic identity of the Akwamu after the fall of the Empire. We argue that the apparent loss of the Akwamu ethnic identity among several people of Akwamu origin is attributable to the loss of their linguistic identity resulting from extensive language contact situations. The paper is broadly situated within sociolinguistics, but specifically within contact linguistics.

Key words: Akwamu Empire, language contact, linguistic identity, ethnic identity.

INTRODUCTION

Several studies in social science point to a relationship among language, culture (including ethnicity) and identity (Dorais 1991, 1995). Scholars, like Roosens (1989); Dorais (1991) and Stairs (1992) have particularly focused on the role language plays in defining cultural/ethnic identity. For example, the 2010 social report which identifies language as a central component of culture and a necessary skill for full participation in a society lists language as one of the three indicators that provide a snapshot of the health of New Zealand’s cultural identity. Champions of linguistic diversity in the world believe that each of the world’s living languages needs to be preserved if we are to preserve human identity.

For instance, at its 31st General Conference in October 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) passed the “UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity” which promotes multilingualism. According to Vigdis Finnbogadottir, the former president of Iceland and UNESCO’s goodwill ambassador for languages, linguistic identity is vital for cultural (human) identity. In his own words, “everyone loses if one language is lost because then a nation and culture loses their memory, and so does the complex tapestry from which the world is woven and which makes the world an exciting place”. In this paper, we explore the role of language in the loss of ethnic/cultural identity (that is, how the memory) of the Akwamu, once a great nation and culture in pre-colonial Ghana, is practically lost. We trace the historical movements of the Akwamu through time and space and how the group may have lost its identity (both linguistic and cultural/ethnic) through assimilation that resulted from extensive language contact.

METHODOLOGY

The authors made use of and reviewed the existing literature in the
form of books, journal articles and magazines to buttress some key findings in the field. They also went on field trips or research tour of three key former Akwamu towns in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Ghana (that is, Akwata, Asamankese and Nsawam) in order to obtain vital first-hand information from the indigenous people (both from the royal families and the streets) through oral interviews. All interviews were audio recorded for transcription and analysis. In all, 30 (10 male and 14 female. Whereas eleven (11) out of the 30 people interviewed were from the royal families of their respective towns, nineteen (19) were ordinary people from the towns.

Language, culture and ethnic identity

The term 'identity' has been described as a slippery notion, frequently used, rarely defined, and varying from one discipline to another. In Gee's (1999) words, 'some people... tend to reserve the term 'identity' for a sense of self that is relatively continuous and 'fixed' over time'. On the one hand, one school of thought (essentialist) with regards to defining 'identity' is based on belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity (Fuss 1989). On the other hand, the constructionist view of 'identity' is informed by the belief that people make a series of choices about themselves and their lifestyle continually.

Consequently, they define identity as the 'result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities which are available to them in their social context' (Ivanic; 1998: 12). In other words, identity can be seen as multiple and fluid - a series of choices that can never be complete as a process, rather than a state or set of personal attributes (Giddens, as paraphrased by Jaworski and Coupland, 1999). In this regard, Ivanic (1998: 11) suggests that 'the plural word 'identities' is sometimes better, because it captures the idea of people identifying simultaneously with a variety of social groups. One or more of these identities may be foregrounded at different times; they are sometimes contradictory, sometimes interrelated: people's diverse identities constitute the richness and dilemmas of their sense of self.

Three main aspects of 'identity' that are discussed in the literature are: (i) social class (ii) ethnic origin and gender. In this paper, we focus on the aspect of identity that is based on ethnic origin. Social science researchers like Dorais (1991, 1995) have questioned whether there is or should be a difference between ethnic identity and cultural identity. He defines cultural identity as the basic consciousness of one's own group's specificity amongst other people in terms of living habits, customs, language, values etc (Dorais 1995: 294). However, he defines ethnic identity as that which divides people into categories (in complex societies) based on gender, age or occupation. He links ethnic identity to cultural identity by arguing that in order to categorize people, one invariably refers to some of their culture. Thus, in this paper, we shall use the terms cultural identity and ethnic identity interchangeably because of their interrelatedness. For instance, according to the 2010 Social Report of New Zealand, culture refers to the customs, practices, languages, values and world views that define social groups such as those based on nationality, ethnicity, region or common interests.

In a similar vein, there have been questions concerning the role of language and cultural/ethnic identity. In this regard, Dorais (1995) asks whether a culture/ethnic group can be considered unique if it does not possess its own language or at least, a version of a common tongue. Abderrahman and Aissati (2001) has submitted that the most prominent index to ethnicity is linguistic because language in general constitute a very strong factor in group identity so that people typically define themselves as belonging to ethnic group X (Imazighen) once they speak the X (Amazigh) language. Holmes (2008: 184) also makes the connection between language and ethnic/cultural identity rather inseparable when she asserts that 'many ethnic groups are use as a distinctive language associated with their ethnic identity'. Fishman (1989: 27) also explains that a distinct language "is more likely than most symbols of ethnicity to become the symbol of ethnicity. Akwamu was (is) one of the sub-ethnic groups of the Akan ethnic group in Ghana (alongside Asante, Akwem, Fante, Bono etc). However, Akwamu is not listed as one of the sub-dialects of Akan or a language in Ghana (see ethnologue report for Ghana). Based on the foregoing discussion, can Akwamu be considered as a unique ethnic group/sub-ethnic group in Ghana? This paper tries to answer this question.

According to the New Zealand Social Report (2010: 90), the ability of people to speak the language of their identified ethnicity is an indicator of the ability of ethnic groups to retain and pass on their culture and traditions to future generations as language is a central component of cultural identity. In other words, the ability of an ethnic group to maintain their ethnic and cultural identity depends on their ability to keep their linguistic identity. In a monolingual monoethnic community this does not seem to be a problem at all. However, in language contact situations (where two or more language groups coexist), this could be challenging. Historically, language contact has occurred under conditions of social inequality, usually resulting from wars, colonisation, slavery, forced migration etc (Sankoff, 2001). Typically, languages in contact interact and influence each other. However, in prolonged contact situations language shift, language loss or death may easily happen. This because language contact often creates linguistic minorities.

According to Sankoff (2001), the creation of linguistic minorities has led in hundreds of cases to language loss and a reduction of linguistic diversity. For instance, language shift occurs when a generation of a linguistic group (usually a linguistic minority group) move from being monolinguals to becoming bilinguals (in their own ethnic language and another ethnic language) and then eventually become monolingual again, this time in another ethnic language (Holmes, 2008). It usually occurs in prolonged language contact situations where there exists some form of unequal power relations among the socio-cultural groups and their languages who are in contact. Nevertheless, language shift may occur as a result of socio-political and economic changes (other than migration) that occur in a community. Holmes (2008: 54) cites the example of the people of Oberwart who were Hungarian speaking before World War 1 but who later became German speaking after the war when the town became a part of Germany.

So would the people of Oberwart consider themselves as ethnically Hungarian or German? Thus, the relationship between language, culture and ethnic identity appears complex indeed especially in view of the dynamics of language contact where social relations affect or create linguistic outcomes and where these linguistic outcomes may define and redefine identities. According to Sankoff (2001: 640), ‘the linguistic outcomes of language contact are determined, in large part by the history of social relations among populations, including, economic, political and demographic factors’. Consequently, she emphasised the importance of situating any discussions of the results of language contact within a sociohistorical perspective that considers the historical forces that have led to language contact. In the next section, we situate this study in its sociohistorical background/context.

Background -the rise and fall of the Akwamu Empire

Existing traditional accounts trace the origins of Akwamu to Kumbu in Kong in Bonoland which is now part of Northern Ivory Coast. They emigrated from Kong in search of new homes after their subjugation by the Zaberima (Meyerowitz, 1950). Leaving
Bonadjo, they made for the south and crossing the Ote and Pra Rivers, settled at Twifo Hemang; some sixty-five kilometres north-west of Cape Coast (Buah, 1980).

About the time the Akwamu were consolidating their position in their new settlement among the Etsi in the area, another Akan group, the Twifo, also emigrated from Bonoland and settled on both sides of the Pra River. Traditions indicate that after a time, Twifo gained ascendancy over and became overlord of her southern neighbours, the Akwamu in Hemang. Situated close to the coast, the Twifo and Akwamu established trading links with the European merchants at Shama, Komenda, Elmina and Cape Coast. They also served as middlemen in the coastal-inland trade, gained much wealth and became powerful states (Buah, 1980).

The actual date for the settlement of Akwamu at Hemang is shrouded in obscurity, but about the beginning of the seventeenth century, as a result of dynastic disputes, a group of malcontent migrants led by one of the rival candidates later known as Otumfuo Asare, left Twifo-Hemang and settled in the Birem Valley in West Abua and built a town which they named Asare-Mankese after their leader (meaning, Asare's large state) now known as Asamankese (Buah, 1980).

Akwamu's original homeland had the Atewa hills as its spine. By 1646, the Akwamu territory extended far beyond the River Denso eastwards into Akuapem (Wilks, 1957). Hoping to build up a powerful state, the Akwamu soon tried to expand their territory and began to control the trade routes between European forts in the Winneba and Accra districts and inland states. They were able to buy arms and ammunition for wars of expansion winning the support of the Europeans on the coast and led by able rulers, the Akwamu spread their sphere of influence down to Accra and the neighbouring countries (Buah, 1980).

Both the oral and written sources agree that through plunder, threat and war, the Akwamu were able to extend their dominion over the surrounding areas to include the Ga who came under Akwamu sovereignty as a result of a war which they were defeated by the latter in 1680 (Ako-Brew, 1981). They extended their suzerainty over the Guan and Kyerepong in the region to the east. Thus the Akuapem range became part of the Akwamu Empire. This area they called "Nkoa Apen" which was corrupted as "Akuapem"—that is, the thousand subjects—after they got it under their control (Kwamena-Poh, 1973). This was facilitated by the disunity existing among the Guan principalities which refused to help each other in times of war. Their extension of their overlordship over the Krepis and Kwahu was intended to monopolise the gold and slave resources in this area (Kwamena-Poh, 1973).

By the first decade of the eighteenth century, the Akwamu had been able to organise themselves into a potential power. They secured effective control over all the trade routes leading both to the interior and to the coast, thus making those traders who piloted these routes economically dependent on them.

Much of Akwamu’s success depended on the ability and bravado of her able leaders. The first of the great rulers of Akwamu, after the founder Otumfufo Asare, was King Ansa Sasraku who ruled from 1660 to 1689 (Wilks, 1957). He extended the frontiers of the Akwamu Kingdom by subduing, among other people, the Gas and Akanes ketes. He also established friendly and prosperous trading relations with European merchants in what is today known as the “Greater Accra Region” whose kingdom was under Akwamu’s hegemony up to 1730 (Wilks, 1957).

After Ansa Sasraku’s demise, two rival members of the royal family named Basua and Aco became joint rulers and ruled in his stead (Reindorf, 2007). On the death of Basua, Aco became the sole ruler of the kingdom and continued the wars of expansion and the promotion of trade with the Europeans on the coast. Akono, an able ruler, succeeded Aco and reigned from 1702 to 1725. He annexed Kpandu and part of the Afram plains in Kwahu. Akono cultivated friendly relations with the Anlo on the coast, an alliance which brought to them the benefits of trade with the Danes in Keta and the neighbourhood (Reindorf, 2007; Buah, 1980).

The annexation outlined previously, helped the Akwamu to gain control of the rich trade with the Europeans. They became middlemen in the trade of gold and slaves which passed through their territories from Asante to the eastern coast. The tributes paid into the royal treasury by the vassal states and the rents and tolls imposed on European traders during the period when Ga-Adangbe came under the control of the Akwamu, added much to the state revenue (Ward, 1962). The wealth she commanded not only boosted her power and prestige but also helped the rulers to maintain an effective system of administration and an efficient army.

However, as often happens in history when a kingdom or an empire becomes wealthy and powerful, the rulers became tyrannical and this with other causes led to the decline and fall of the Akwamu Empire. The Akwamu chiefs and royals became very arrogant in their dealings with their subjects. They oppressed, repressed and suppressed their subjects who were sold in their numbers into slavery (Ward, 1962). The activities of Oten Ayagye and Oten Abesenadu, the nephews of Ansa Sasraku, the then king of the Akwamu was to play an important part in the fall of the Great Akwamu Empire. These two princes used the middle of women’s breasts, especially pregnant women, as the target to test their guns. This singularly revolting sadism was deemed as most outrageous even by the Akwamu themselves (Ako-Brew, 1981). Certain Akwamu towns including Asamankese, Atwima, Kwarang, Aco, Aburi and Tafo persuaded Ansa Sasraku to check the atrocious activities and conduct of his nephews for that matter, but their persuasion carried little or no weight (Ward, 1962; Ako-Brew, 1981). They also cultivated the habit of kidnapping and selling Ayem and Fante traders to the Dutch (Ward, 1962). This attitude was detested because of the general insecurity it caused to trade.

Lack of effective communication throughout the vast empire and her failure to weld together the many vassal states into an integrated whole encouraged many vassal kingdoms to pray for a day of reckoning to reassert their independence. The third factor that brought about the collapse of the Akwamu Empire was the hostility between the state and Akyem. During the seventeenth century, a party of refugees from Asante settled in the area to the north of the Birem River in what is now known as Ayem Abua (Addo-Fening, 1975). At the time of their arrival, most of modern Ayem Abua was part of the Akwamu Empire with its capital at Nyanoase which is located about three miles from Aadaagyi (Nsawam) on the Nsawam-Adeiso road (Addo-Fening, 1975). Asaremanekese was then an important town whose stool was next in rank to that of the King of Akwamu (Wilks, 1957; Addo-Fening, 1997).

The Ayem who were settled on the western frontier of the core of the Akwamu Empire began to threaten the integrity of that empire from the last decade of the seventeenth century through a series of forays into its northern districts. The fundamental cause of Ayem-Akuapmu hostility was the relentless rivalry for control of the gold trade between the auriferous lands of the Birem valley and the coast (Addo-Fening, 1997). Bosman remarked that, Ayem "furnished us large quantities of gold as any land" he knew, adding that, “sometimes, more gold was received at Accra alone than on the whole coast besides” (Rodney, 1969; Fynn, 1971). Indeed, a Dutch report of 1716 (from Apam) described Ayem as “the fountain from which the trade in gold must flow into these countries, and this being stopped all the leeward factories must necessarily suffer on that account…”

The Ayem in their period of migration from Adanse to Banso and their subsequent dispersal to areas between the Pra and Birem valleys came into possession of a region which was both auriferous and diamondiferous. This exposed them to the jealousy and malevolence of neighbouring states, especially Akwamu. Finding the Ayem fortress very difficult to subdue by force of arms, the Akwamu resorted to harsher economic policies which made them monopolise the gold trade on the coast at the expense of the...
Akyem producers. Akyem Abuakwa reacted to the monopolistic tendencies by taking up arms. This resulted in numerous wars between the two states which eventually culminated in the decisive defeat of Akwamu.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, Ofori Panin continued Akyem Abuakwa’s war with Akwamu in close co-operation with the Kotoku state now relocated at Da, east of the River Pra. Da was situated some 48 kilometres west of the Abuakwa capital of Banso (Addo-Fening, 1997). In 1714, Ofori Panin and Apintin, described together for the first time as Akim caboceers, were reported to be making preparations for war against Akwamu (Addo-Fening, 1997).

The Akyem kept up the pressure on this north-western frontier till 1730, when acting in alliance with the rebellious subjects of Akwamu, they overran the whole of the Western part of the empire including the original Akwamu country which was thus lost forever to the Akyem Stool. This feat was achieved with the supply of arms and ammunition from the Dutch, and the rebellious states which aligned themselves with Ofori Panin’s successor Bra Kwante Ayemang (1727 to 1742) and Ofosu Apenten who overthrew Ansa Kwao and inflicted a heavy defeat on the Akwamu who sought refuge at Akwamufie located in the Volta Gorge in 1730. By the right of conquest, the Ofori dynasty in addition to its overlordship of James Fort, the Adangbe and Akwapim districts, integrated the Nyanawase Kingdom with Akyem Abuakwa (Kwamena-Poh, 1974).

And by this singular act he took “possession of all the Aquamboe Croms” as observed by an European trader (EFC Notes).

This defeat led to the dispersal of the Akwamu to the forest region where under the clan name Aduana, they settled in most of the towns and villages then in existence. Others under the command of a prince of the royal house founded the Wassa-Amenfi state in the south-western forest. (Meyerowitz, 1950).

Thus, the cruelty on the part of the chiefs which led to the rebellion of the conquered states, their failure to check the ignoble activities of their subjects which led to the neutral position adopted by some of the Akwamu towns such as Asamankese, Akwatia, Akenten, Aburi and Tafo and the secret ambition being nursed by the Akyem which became a reality accounted for the fall of the empire in 1730.

Some historians give the impression that, by 1730, following her defeat by Akyem, Akwamu had vanished as a powerful kingdom. This is not entirely true. The Danish governor of Christiansborg in Accra, writing in 1744 affirmed that “the Akwamu are still as bellicose as their ancestors and they have sold us the largest number of slaves (war captives) which are traded inland” (Buah, 1980). The Akwamu seemed to have held their own until the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, under two of their able kings, Darko (c1781) and Akono (1792), Akwamu was able to annex Peki, their eastern neighbour, a state exercising overlordship over a large area (Buah, 1980).

Akwamu has had an important and lasting impact on the states which came under her. The Ga adopted some Akwamu institutions, such as the Asafo organisation and songs and the Akan institution of kingship, which have all survived to this day. Indeed, Akwamu’s influence crossed northwards, throughout Akanland right to Asante. The creation of a special Akwamu Stool in Asante and in many other Akan lands owes its origins to the Akwamu. Historians also believe that Asante and other states owed much of their effective military strategy to what Osei Tutu I and Okomfo Anoyke learnt from Akwamu.

It could be recalled that after the death of the third Akwamu king, Ansa Saseraku I, a bitter stool dispute arose when a set of twins stood for election. Therefore, in order to avoid a civil war, the Queen Mother and Obiri Yeboa, the older and younger of the twins left with a great many followers whom she affectionately called ‘Doma’ – ‘Beloved Children’. Their journeys took them through Asante where they settled initially at the village of Asantemanso. Later, most of the Doma went north into the Kwaman area, where among other places, they founded the town of Asuntiriso near Kumasi. To the north-west of it, in what is today known as the Sunyani District, they founded towns like Abamperedease and the Suman state at Nwemene south of Banda and Drobo (Meyerowitz, 1950).

In 1697, the Doma of Asuntiriso defeated the Ayoko chief, Obiri yeboa of Kumasi, by killing him in battle. King Osei Tutu who succeeded Obiri Yeboa in 1700 avenged the death of his predecessor by attacking and annihilating the Doma and destroying Asuntiriso and Abesem. Subsequent attacks by the Asantehene, Opoku Ware I, totally destroyed Dorma towns of Drobo, Suman and Gyaman and brought them under Asante’s overlordship (Meyerowitz, 1950).

The majority of the Kumbu people who migrated into the Gold Coast spoke Twi, a language that spread right through the forest region once the Twifo, or Twi people, were dispersed after the collapse of the three states founded by them – Twifo-Heman, Akwamu and Doma. The languages Twi superseded were Guan and Bono, of which Bono (Brong) is regarded by Christaller (1933) as a Twi dialect but deemed inferior by the people to Twi proper, probably on account of archaisms or the admixture of foreign elements. Today, the Akan people in the forest region are often referred to as Twi people, particularly the Asante (Christaller, 1933).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the interview data, all interviewees claimed to be indigenous members of their respective towns or communities. Whereas all interviewees from Nsamew claimed to speak Akuapem Twi, all participants from Asamankese and Akwatia claimed to speak Akyem Twi. On the question of their ethnic origin, among the participants from Asamankese and Akwatia, whereas the ordinary people said they were Akyem by ethnic origin, the interviewees said that even though they live on Akyem land, they were Akwamu by ethnic origin. The story was no different in Nsamew. Whereas the ordinary people said they were of Akuapem (presumably remnant of Akwamu) origin ethnically, the royal interviewees claimed they were ethnically Guan who migrated from Aburi to their present location when the Akwamu occupied the Akuapem ridge.

Again, from the historical account about the Akwamu given above, it is obvious that there was an extensive socio-linguistic and cultural contact between the Akwamu and other socio-cultural and linguistic groups in Ghana. While the Akwamu Empire was not the only empire that rose and fell in pre-colonial Ghana, for example, the Asante and the Denkyira empires rose and fell, the fall of these two empires did not result in the loss of the group’s ethnic/linguistic identities. Both the Asante and Denkyira remain distinct sub-cultural groups of the Akan ethnic group in Ghana. Why did the fall of the Akwamu Empire result in the loss of their linguistic 1 and ethnic identity?

We propose the following as possible explanations as contributing factors to the apparent loss of the Akwamu identity after the fall of the Akwamu Empire. First of all, the Akwamus spread themselves thinly across several lands of different ethnicity (and different linguistic identities). So that even though the Akwamus were politically a more powerful group than the subjects in their territories, they were a linguistic minority in several of
these territories. This spread paved the way for the second potential contribution to the loss of the Akwamu ethnic identity — their assimilation into other ethnic groups. As the literature shows, typically, it is easier for speakers of ethnic minority languages in language contact situations to shift to ethnic majority languages.

For instance, after the fall of the Akwamu Empire, the remnant Akwamu that continued to live on the now Akuapem ridge, for example, the people of Aburi, readily submitted to the new power. Similarly, while the Akwamus who lived in Akyem land, for example, the people of Akwatia, Kade and Asamankese became assimilated into the Akyem culture and language, those who lived in the Asante kingdom, for example, the Adums and the Asafo became part of the Asante culture.

In other words, the loss of the Akwamu ethnic identity may be attributed to their inability to maintain their linguistic identity during the period of extensive language contact situation preceding the fall of the Empire.

The situation with the Akwamu is no different from what happens in typical prolonged language contact situation where there is simultaneous language shift and lack of language maintenance on the part of one or more of the languages in contact. For example, the fact that the linguistic and cultural heritage of Alaska Native societies (the Eskimo) is threatened with extinction has been attributed to their complete assimilation into the Western culture and language resulting from the contact between the two cultures (MacLean, 1990).

Another possible explanation for the loss of the Akwamu ethnic identity is the emergence and development of Akuapem Twi, which we believe started as a pidginised Akwamu. During the Akwamu occupation of the Guan and Kyerepong lands (now Akuapem ridge), the Akwamu subjects may have spoken the Akwamu dialect of Akan as a second language. During that time Akuapem Twi was not a dialect of Akan because there was no Akwamu ethnic group. The Akuapem state, where Akuapem Twi originates, was established only after the fall of the Akwamu Empire (The History of Akuapem State, 2012). The Akuapem state is constituted and traditionally governed by the following divisions (also ethnic groupings):

Adonteng 1: Akropong (remnant of Akwamu)
Adonteng 2: Aburi (remnant of Akwamu)
Gyaase: Amanokrom (Akyem - Okyehene’s brother)
Nifa: Awukugua (Kyerepong)
Benkum: Larteh (Guan).

Thus, the ethnic-linguistic constitution of the Akuapem state may be taken as further evidence in support of the suggestion that Akuapem Twi is a pidginised Akwamu.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, we have given a historical account of the rise and fall of the Akwamu Empire in pre-colonial Ghana and that when the Akwamu Empire collapsed their cultural and linguistic identities seem to have collapsed alongside. We have offered possible explanations for the apparent loss of the Akwamu distinct linguistic and ethnic identity when their Empire collapsed. First of all, we have argued that the Akwamus became ethnic/linguistic minority in their territories because they spread themselves so thinly across their vast territories whose original inhabitants belonged to diverse ethnic/linguistic groups. Subsequently, when the Akwamu Empire collapsed, the Remnant Akwamu easily became assimilated (were unable to maintain their distinct cultural and linguistic identity) into the language and culture of the people who were once their subjects. We have also argued that the emergence of a pidgin form of Akwamu (spoken by the subjects of Akwamu) which later developed into the Akuapem dialect of Akan, belonging not only to the remnant Akwamu but also to several other ethnic groups who have their own L1s, was a major, perhaps the main contributing factor to the loss of the distinct Akwamu ethnic/linguistic identity. Thus, in this paper, we have shown that indeed, there is a connection between linguistic identity and ethnic identity and that the loss of a group’s linguistic identity is likely to lead to the loss of other kinds of identity, including ethnic/cultural identity.

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