

Polytechnic Skills and Competencies for National Development, the Role of Loan Word Integration in the Northern Region of Ghana

Ibrahim James Gurindow M-minibo

Languages & Liberal Studies Department, Tamale Polytechnic, PO box 3E/R

Tamale, Ghana

Tel: 233-203-845-079/233-026-096-9864 E-mail: gurindow_james@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The skills and competencies of the Ghanaian polytechnics become useful only after they have been well communicated to the necessary organizations and societies to enable them apply the knowledge for the benefit of the Ghanaian public. Language is the most effective tool of getting this done. The skills and competencies from the polytechnics come with new ideas alien in the Ghanaian languages. Therefore, languages, including Dagbanli, integrate the lexical items expressing these new ideas into their lexicon using some phonological processes. This paper postulates that Dagbanli uses such loan word integrative processes as vowel substitution, and consonant substitution, vowel lengthening, consonant deletion, diphthong and triphthong substitution, frication, epenthesis, and that the speakers of Dagbanli are motivated to borrow words to express a concept or thought that is not available in the language, or for the sake of the prestige they carry even though an equivalent exists. With loan word integration, speakers of Dagbanli get to understand skills and competencies with ease because they are effectively communicated to them. Once they understand well, the skills and competencies are applied confidently for national development.

Keywords: Loan words, Integration, Polytechnic skills and competencies, Tamale

1. Introduction

The role of effective language use in harnessing the skills and competencies imparted by the Ghanaian polytechnics for national development cannot be over emphasised. It is through a language that these competencies and skills can be effectively disseminated and used for national development. However, due to the constant need for new lexical items, expressions, and terminologies to express the subtleties of new ideas evolving from mostly technology and the application of scientific knowledge, languages sometimes resort to borrowing from other languages which have such words for the new language needs. Speakers of a given language after borrowing lexical items need to integrate them into the phonology of the recipient language. Dagbanli is widely spoken in the Tamale Polytechnic community. It is spoken mainly around Tamale and its environs. Dagbanli falls in the same Gur language family as Dagaare, Mampruli, Kussaal, Moore, Safaleba and Talen.

This paper intends to discuss borrowing as a word formation process in relation to Dagbanli. I would discuss the processes that speakers of Dagbanli use to integrate new lexical items borrowed from different languages. I would further look at the motivation for loan words and their integration into Dagbanli.

Lexical borrowing is one of the results of language contact of people from different language backgrounds. Lexical borrowing may occur in all domains of language use; in informal circles, or in formal situations such as in written discourse. This word formation process is the adoption of individual words or even of large sets of lexical items from another language or dialect. Examples of borrowed words are common in human language. Examples, in English, such as *rouge* (from French), *macho* (from Spanish), *yern* 'craving' (from Chinese), or *schwa* (from Hebrew via German) testify this phenomenon.

2. Motivation for Borrowing

The two most frequent motivations for lexical borrowing are categorised as language deficiency and prestige (Winford, 2003:37; Durkin, 2009). When a new concept, cultural or technological is borrowed from another language, a new word is needed to represent the concept. This explains the reason the same word can be found in many different languages (Campbell, 2004:64 as cited by (Kulla, 2010). Language contact between a culturally and a technologically superior one and a less superior language group/s is an important factor for the numerous loan words in languages of the world (Foley, 2006:384). This accounts for many of the loans in Dagbanli, which are taken mainly from English, Arabic, Hausa and Akan.

On the part of Çabej (1982:116), improvement in the way of life, technical developments, modernization of everyday life and fashion seem to be reasons why we have the need for borrowing from other languages. Furthermore, he identifies the need for borrowing when the native word in the recipient language has two or more different meanings. The following illustrates; 'alb.dynja eng. the universe'; 'tur.dünya eng. the universe'. This has replaced the native word 'botë' which in Albanian is used for: the universe, people or someone else as for example 'alb.bijë e botës eng'. Someone else's daughter'. (Çabej, 1982:116).

Although it is natural that cultural borrowing is bidirectional, where both languages borrow from each other, it is frequently the less prestigious language that borrows more lexical items than the more prestigious language (McMahon, 1994:202).

3. Methodology

I used a TCM-200DV audio recorder and recorded lexical items and analysed them. Subjects were made to read two passages specially prepared to contain loan words. They were recorded and transcribed for analysis. This is because reading and discussion or conversation represents the right form of language used by speakers of any language including Dagbanli. It was therefore appropriate to record them in these aspects. The subjects were recorded at any place of convenience; home, school etc. Also, being a native speaker of Dagbani, I use my native intuition to take note of loan words in the language.

3.1 The Subjects

The subjects were of two categories:

- i. Literate native speakers
- ii. Illiterate native speakers

By native speaker, at least one parent must be a Dagbana and he/she must have been exposed to the language at home. The subjects lived in a Dagbanli speaking community in the last five years. This was to ensure that subjects were the right ones for this study. 50% of the subjects consisted of males and 50% females. Ages of the subjects ranged between twenty (20) and fifty (50) years. These were selected through the Convenience Sampling technique. This is because it was a general study of speakers of Dagbanli, and any member of the population of Dagbamba was suitable.

4. Discussion of Results

A major difficulty with borrowing from a foreign language is that languages differ in their phonology. There are many other adjustments, beside changes in pronunciation that tend to accompany borrowing. What is common to all of them however, is that they nativise the borrowed word by integrating it more firmly into the phonological structure of the borrowing language.

The most important nativisation processes clearly involve phonology. The loan word needs to be integrated into the borrowing language to fit well into the phonotactics of its host in order to make it pronounceable by its new users. Speakers of Dagbanli have borrowed lexical items from other languages such as Arabic, Hausa, Akan and English. Such words are integrated into the phonotactics of Dagbani through the following processes.

4.1 Loan Word Nativisation Processes in Dagbanli

There are a number of nativisation processes that loan words, in Dagbanli, undergo. They are as discussed below.

One integrative process of loan words in Dagbanli is substitution of pure vowels. Some

speakers of Dagbanli substitute some pure vowels for others. In the pronunciation of ‘chip’ as in SIM Card, the short high front vowel is changed into its long form; /i/ for /i:/. So one hears a person complain about his phone chip thus;

N chiipu n saɣim.

1PSG-POSS chip spoil-PERF

‘My chip has spoilt.’

In this word, there is an element of vowel insertion, and vowel lengthening which will be discussed later.

One other Dagbanli loan word with substituted vowel is the Arabic word, Muhammad.

Consider it in the following sentence;

Mahammara chaŋ dʒiŋli ni

Mohammed go-PERF mosque DEI

‘Mohammed has gone to the mosque.’

Another process used by speakers of Dagbanli in integrating loan words is by substituting the short vowel form of /ɛ/ for /ɛ:/, its long vowel form. An example is the English word ‘test’ which is nativised to read as [te:si] or tɛ:si in Dagbanli. So one hears a complaint by a candidate thus;

Teesi maa to pam

Test the difficult very

‘The test is very difficult.’

One other integrative method used by speakers of Dagbanli is by substituting the schwa vowel with others. Even though the schwa /ə/ occurs in Dagbanli words like: piringa [pəriŋga] ‘niece’, piriba [pəriba] ‘aunt’ and bira[bəra] ‘seeds’ as in kawan-bira[kawaambəra] ‘corn seeds’, this phoneme in loan words from English is substituted. A case in point is the English word ‘doctor’. Doctor [dɔktə(r)] integrated as [doɣta]

At the hospital patients usually say;

Doɣta na bi kana

Doctor yet NEG come-IMPERF

‘Doctor has not yet come.’

A nye doɣta?

You see-IMPERF doctor?

‘Have you seen a doctor?’

Another loan word in Dagbanli from English is ‘court’ integrated as [kootu]. In integrating this, the long Half Close Back Vowel is substituted with /o:/ and an epenthetic vowel added

at the end. This is seen in a statement like;

Kootu ηmaa yetoɣa maa.

Court pronounce judgment-PERF the

'The court has ruled on the case.'

The vowel addition is done in order to avoid the sibilant coda since Dagbanli phonotactics does not allow that.

There is also the case of vowel lengthening by speakers of Dagbanli in a bit to nativise borrowed words into the language. This is observed in the statement below in the word *loori*;

Gomnanti da la loori-nima n tari o paati nima

Government buy-PERF FOC cars give his party members

'Government has bought cars for its party members.'

Fiita undergoes the same process to integrate into Dagbanli in the statement below;

O bohindi la fiita tuma

He/she learn –IMPERF FOC fitting work

'He/she is learning fitting job'

In the case of rubber, there is consonant substitution as well as substitution of /ɔ/ with /o/.

This results in the Dagbanli loan word 'lɔba' as in;

Lɔba baaji maa ni ka o nye li

Rubber bag the in that he/she see-PERF it

'He saw it in the polythene bag.'

Consonant substitution is used to integrate the Akan male name, Kwabina into Dagbanli. /kw/ is substituted for /k/ and the following vowel, /a/ further substituted for /o/ while /e/ in the second syllable is changed into /a/. The loan word becomes Kobana as in the statement below;

_Kobana bua la kpi-ya

Kobana goat that die-PERF

'Kwabena's goat has died.'

An Arabic loaned word into Dagbanli that exhibits the process of consonant substitution is aljum-ar. The integrated version of this word, in Dgbani, is alizuumba.

Zuɲɔ alizuumba

Today Friday

'Today is Friday.'

Another loan word that goes through this process is ‘shikuru/ri’ as observed in the following sentence;

O chaŋ shikuru/ri
He/she go-PERF school
‘He/she has gone to school.’

The same process is seen with ‘chicha’ in the following;

Chicha –nima maa bi wuhira bihi maa
Teachers the NEG teach-IMPERF children the
‘The teachers do not teach the children’

Furthermore, substitution of long vowels for diphthongs and triphthongs is a common phenomenon in the nativisation of Dagbanli loan words. A typical case is ‘player’ nativised as [peleeya] in the following statement;

RTU ka peleeyas.
RTU NEG players
‘RTU hasn’t got players.’

There is also the use of frication by speakers of Dagbanli in the process of nativising loan words into the language. This is when a plosive is weakened to produce /ɣ/. This was observed in words where the voiceless plosive /k/ occurred in a medial position. An example is the English word doctor. After undergoing frication process, it is integrated into Dagbanli lexicon as ‘doɣta’. We see it in the statement that follows;

Doɣta Bobri tibi bara maa
Doctor Bobri treat-PERF patient the
‘Doctor Bobri treated the patient.’

Deletion of plosives is another nativisation process adopted by speakers of Dagbanli. This is common with the loan words originating from English that have consonant clusters occurring at medial or coda positions. Classical examples include master and first.

After undergoing this process, the words get integrated as ‘masa’ and ‘fɛɛs’ respectively.

Observe them in the following sentences;

N masa daa chaŋ-ya
My master PAST go FOC
‘My master went.’

Gana bi di fɛɛs maa.
Ghana NEG take-PERF first the
‘Ghana did not take the test place.’

The next integrative process of loan words into Dagbanli is epenthesis. Epenthesis is the process where a vowel is inserted to break consonant clusters and open close syllables. This is exemplified with the English word school. The initial cluster is broken by inserting a vowel. The word undergoes further processes and integrated as shikuru/ri as in the following;

Adam bori shikuri yetoɣa pam_

Adam like-PERF school matter very

'Adam likes school matters very much.'

Neindoo bohamdi la agurikacha-tali T-Poly

Neindoo learn-IMPERF FOC agriculture T-Poly

'Neindoo is learning agriculture at T-Poly.'

An Arabic loan word into Dagbanli that has undergone this process is al-janda

This becomes alizanda as below;

Alizanda dundoli pori pam.

Heaven door narrow very

'The door of heaven is very narrow.'

A Dagbanli loan word that undergoes epenthesis by opening up a close syllable is government. The word becomes gomnanti after integration. It is common to hear politicians praise government on the Tamale local FM stations thus;

NDC gomnanti ηɔ kpeei kani

NDC government this equal NEG

'This NDC government has no equal.'

One other example of Dagbanli loan word that undergoes this process is the Islamic holy scripture book, alqur'an. After undergoing epenthesis, it becomes alikirani. Moslem clerics, in Tamale, fill the ears of residents with;

Dayiri ka alikirani puuni.

Faults NEG Al-qur'an inside

'There is no faults in the al-qur'an'

4.2 Motivation for Loaning by Speakers of Dagbanli

Lexical items may be borrowed to fill a lexical gap, i.e., to express a concept or thought that is not available in the borrowing language, or linguistic items may be borrowed simply for the sake of the prestige they carry even though an equivalent exists in the borrowing language (Ngom 2000). Both instances identified by Ngom are true with speakers of Dagbanli. There

are such lexical items, in the field of science and technology, like tarata [tarata], ‘tractor’; loori, ‘lorry’; fili, ‘wheel’; expressing ideas which are new in the language. This is not to say that the concept of ploughing is new in Dagbanli; but a machine (not a man) doing this is new. This explains the borrowing and integration of ‘tractor’ into the Dagbanli lexicon.

Another such situation is in the loan word wolaansi; ‘wireless set’/‘radio’. This communication instrument is absolutely absent in Dagbanli. Others, in this line regarding sports, are laafirii, ‘referee’; bolli, ‘ball’ and goolamani, ‘goalkeeper’. In trade, there are loan words like cheenji, ‘change’; alaha from the Arabic araha, ‘cheap’. It becomes easier and better to integrate the new words into the borrowing language to represent the new idea accurately than coining new words.

On the other hand, loan word integration in Dagbanli from English, and many of the other languages by speakers of Dagbanli, is as a result of prestige. For example, Gurindow; 2010 maintains that the English language is a prestigious language in Dagbanli to an extent that even those who have no formal association with English try, as much as possible, to speak it in the Tamale market, lorry stations, and gatherings of the people. Furthermore, imaani, a loan word from Arabic meaning ‘faithfulness’ is virtually integrated into the Dagbanli lexicon though there is an existing Dagbanli word naani expressing the idea of faithfulness. But the muslim cleric keep on using the borrowed word because they think that using the loan word indicates that they are well vexed in Arabic, the language of the Al-qur’an. This, all things being equal, increases the possibility of being taken serious by their listeners and followers. This boosts the moral of the users.

4.3 Implication for Loaning by Speakers of Dagbanli

The most common communication tool is language. With the advent of science and technology, and the world having become a global village, integration of borrowed words from different languages become untenable. There is everything to lose if integration is not well done. This is because once integration is not effective; communication becomes deficient leading to ineffective communication. This, in turn, impacts very negatively on national development as what is communicated would never be understood. Consider the following statement;

N niŋ o salam
I do him/her ?

‘I asked him/her for excuse to come in.’

There is a question mark at on sala at the interlinear gloss because it is difficult to tell what it is. Is salam that name of a person or the Islamic word for ‘excuse’?

The phonology also becomes a problem, and speaking which is the basic language form becomes difficult. This would, surely reflect negatively in national development.

1. Speakers become comfortable articulating the loan word as it becomes part of their lexicon in their mental dictionary. For instance, it is more comfortable to say;

N chiipu savim-ya than N chip savim-ya.

This is because apart from the nasals, [m, n, ŋ] there are no close syllables in the language.

2. The integrated word becomes easily pronounceable as the word conforms with the phontactics of Dagbanli. The speech organs do not need to adjust from their already conditioned manipulation of the sounds they are used to.

4.4 Implications for Loaning for National Development

There is everything to lose if integration is not well done. This is because once integration is not effective; communication becomes deficient leading to ineffective communication. This, in turn, impacts very negatively on national development as what is communicated would never be understood. Effective loan word integration means that the people can communicate effectively using the new words among themselves for national development. For example, politicians can tell the people their campaign messages. Given that majority of the speakers of Dagbanli engage in agriculture, agriculture extension officers can effectively communicate new methods and their concepts to the farmers using loan words appropriately. Also, medical staff is empowered to explain medical information competently without serious problems.

On the other hand, the people get to understand the skills and competencies with ease because they are effectively communicated to them. Once they understand well, they can confidently apply them for national development beginning from their individual development.

5. Conclusion

This paper set off to investigate loanword integration stressing the need for loan words in language as a tool to effectively communicate the skills and competencies from polytechnics for national development. It went further with the motivations for loan word integration contextualising this to the Tamale Polytechnic community. I also discussed the processes of loan word nativisation in Dagbanli. These include vowel and consonant substitution, vowel lengthening, consonant deletion, diphthong and triphthong substitution, frication, epenthesis etc. Loan word integration is rather crucial in the global world of the 21st century in the Tamale Polytechnic community. This is because it enables the speakers of Dagbanli in the Tamale Polytechnic community to cope with the new concepts and ideas emanating from science and technology, and contact with people from different language backgrounds for purposes of trade, sports, religion. Effective management of loan words enhances communication among people because they see the new words now more familiar in their language and so understand one another better.

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Appendix

Appendix A

I should be most grateful to you for helping me read the words, sentences and passages below in connection with a research I am doing on loan word integration processes of English words into Dagbanli.

Words in Isolatoin

7. test 8.thirst 9.cot 10.court 11.cat 12.cart
13.cat 141. bit 2.beat 3.chit 4.cheat 5.best 6.burst
. cut 15.mad 16.mud 17.hat 18.hut
19. live 20.leave 21.pull 22.pool 23.full 24.fool
25.bat 26.but 27.pick 28.peak 29.this 30.these
31.bed 32.bird 33.price 34.prize 35.rice 36.rise
37.against 38.bins 39.beans 40.serve 41.save 42.film
43.fix 44.fast 45.chair 46.cheer 47.fare 48.daughter
49.doctor 50.tractor 51.practice 52.have 53.half 54.capital
55.principal 56.hospital 57.priority 58.player 59.tour 60.point
61.grow 62.power 63.national 64.poverty 65.justice 66. position
67.decision 68.tin 69.thing 70.tank 71.thank 72.rich
73.reach 74.day 75.they 76.tree 77.three 78.always

79.also 80.sweet 81.smuggle 82.split 83.spread 84.straight
85.blamed 86.begged 87.marked 89.stopped 90.government 91.robber
92.rubber 93.theme 94.team 95.road 96.lights 97.president
98.presents 99.rich 100. reach 101.day 102.they

Appendix B. Test Items in Sentences

103. In the sale of the Agricultural Development Bank, the national interest must be our priority.

104. Radio justice is on test to cover the best player in the team.

105. To sit in the seat is the danger.

106. The Poverty management strategy by the government is against the ruling by the court.

107. President Kufour gave some presents for the film maker.

108. Bit by bit, the national team beat the visiting one.

109. The practice of the doctor was not accepted by the daughter of the patient.

110. Amina's decision was to make a tour to the capital's hospital despite the high fare charged by the drivers.

111. A tin of milk is a fine thing for breakfast.

112. Azindow thanked my brother for the poly-tank.

113. The Kwames live expensive lives so they had to leave the village for Accra.

114. The best thing to do is to burst the balloon.

115. To cheat for a chit is not fair.

116. Three trees always grow in the garden.

117. Mahama blamed the split and spread of corruption in the party on lack of precision by the party's chair.

118. The mad man cut off one leg of the cat and hid it in the mud.

119. The point is that the cot is not as big as the cart.

120. To cheer is better while in a chair.

121. Mr. Nkurumah left his hat in the hut full of beans.

122. The bins are full with beans.

123. Nbangba wrote the test in thirst.

124. The bird is on the bed but the fool is not in a position to save it.

125. Yaw and Ama always pull fish out of the pool everyday.
126. Essien picked up a goal to reach his rich peak.
127. The robber robbed James of some rubber.
128. The tractors have done half the job already.
129. Prices of rice rise everyday.
130. Jabuni won the highest prize.
131. Fiifi and Kukua serve in the army against their father's will.
132. Abu fixed the bulb very fast in the principal's office.
133. Power does not go with poverty but with riches.
134. To smuggle is never sweet
135. Abass wrote a poem on the theme of determination for the national team.
136. Government has stopped all road construction works.
137. The lights went off and marked its 22nd failure.
138. The beggars begged for one Ghana Cedi.

Appendix C. Abu the Footballer

Abu is a football player in the Tolon/Kumbungu District team. He lives in Chirifoyili. Abu leaves for training early every day. He is full of determination and does not fool about. So, though he takes the cart to the hut in his father's farm where some beans is kept in dozens of bins, he is always the first to report for practice.

It is Abu who pulls the team together as he serves as the mid-fielder. He has won a couple of prizes as the Best Sportsman in the country. This has made him the thirst of many top world class clubs. Abu likes rice and beans. His doctor advises him against playing in mud; and was mad at him when he attempted and had a toe fractured. Abu has a cat. He cuts pieces of bread for it.

Abu will certainly become rich when he reaches his peak. He will be picked into the national team to man the No. 6 position. Back at home from the training; he sits in a seat to watch film on football heroes.

Appendix D. Politics in Ghana

Political Parties Are Now Very Common In Africa. These Parties Organize Themselves With The Principal Aim Of Winning Sweet Power. They Grow Bit By Bit, Day By Day As They Pull Members Into Their Pool. They Rise In Fame As They Pass Test After Test. The Parties Print T-Shirts, Hats And Chits For Attending Secret Meetings. They Sell These At Moderate Prices To Their Members. Decisions Are Made By Party Executive. Party Members Pay Expensive Fares To Travel Over Long Distances To Towns And Cities Where Party Rallies

Are Held.

Party Rallies Are Held For Many Purposes Such As To Burst Into Popularity In The Area, Save Some Nasty Situations, Spread Party Ideology, Cheat On The Intelligence Of Rivals, And To Avoid Split Of The Party. The Basic Factor Is To Have, At Least, Half Of The Populace'S Support In Order To Win.

The Priority Of Farmers Is To Have More Farm Implements; Tractors, Fertilizer, Insecticides Etc. Also, Politicians Promise To Give Those In The Rural Areas Lights, Good Roads, And The Elimination Of Poverty. They Further Promise To Provide Hospitals, Chairs And Tables In The Classrooms, To Improve Upon Justice And Security In The Capital City Etc. The Politicians Also Promise That Smuggling Will Be Stopped So That All

Will Have Access To Vital Goods And Services. They Further Declare That They Will Form A Government Marked By Good Governance, Increased Tours For Students, And That They Will Make It A Point To Solve Pollution Of Rubber, Armed Robbery Etc. The Electorate Is Promised That What They Blamed Their Opponents For Will Be A Thing Of The Past. Their Theme Is Always Teamwork But After They Have Won, The Theme Changes To Team Cheering As A Few Sit In Luxurious Offices And The Rest Sit Under Trees In Threes On Logs As Chairs.