



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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Twi (Chwee)



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Ghana.svg

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TESL 539
Spring 2009

History

- Ghana has been influenced by British, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and Scandinavian peoples.
- Twi belongs to the Kwa language family (spoken by 75% of the Ghanaian population)
- Twi is one of three dialects of the Akan language
- Spoken primarily in the Ashanti region of Ghana
- But also spoken in parts of the Eastern, Western, Central, Volta, and Brong Ahafo regions of Ghana
- Spoken by about 15 million people
- Contains a common written script developed by the Bureau of Ghana languages

Where is Ghana and what is its language culture?



<http://www.wpmap.org/ghana-map/>

Like most West African countries, Ghana is a diglossic country. The people of Ghana speak at least two languages, British English (higher) and a regional language (lower.) More than 250 languages and dialects are spoken in Ghana. English is the country's official language and is the language of all schooling in Ghana. However, as a dialect of the Akan language, Twi holds government sponsored status as a language of Ghana.

Tone language

- Twi is a tone language. This means that the meaning of words is dependent on tone pitch.
- Twi has three phonemic tones: high, mid, and low

For example:

The word *papa* has three different meanings when pronounced three different ways.

Pápá (high-high) means good.

Pàpá (low-high) means father.

Pàpà (low-low) means fan.

- Tone also denotes whether a verb is habitual or stative.

Twi Alphabet and Phonology

- Twi has a total of 10 vowels: five “tense” vowels (advanced tongue root), five “lax” vowels (retracted tongue root.)
- Twi has 62 consonants.
- However, Twi has fewer vowel sounds, final consonant sounds, and consonant cluster sounds than English. This makes these sounds in English very difficult to distinguish for a Twi speaker.
- Also, since Twi is a tonal and syllable timed language, their English tends to sound jerky.
- Twi speakers do not usually weaken the vowels of unstressed syllables. As a result, they tend to pronounce words exactly as they are spelt.
- Also, there is no distinction in vowel length. They tend to pronounce all vowels short.

Common English Phonological Mistakes for a Twi speaker, Vowels:

- Due to vowel sound difficulty Twi speakers often make the following mistakes. They confuse the following words:
- *Ship and sheep*
- *Bed, barred and bird*
- *Cat, cart and cut*
- *Bat, but and bet*
- *Rod, roared and road*
- *Pull and pool*

Common English Phonological Mistakes for a Twi speaker, Consonants:

- Twi speakers have severe trouble pronouncing the English “th” sound so they make the following common mistakes:
 - *Day* for *they*
 - *Tin* for *thin*
 - *Tree* for *three*
- They also confuse /l/ and /r/ so the following common mistakes are made:
 - *Rolly* for *lorry*
 - *Grass* and *glass* are often confused
 - *Play* and *pray* are often confused

Consonant Mistakes Continued

- Twi speakers tend to devoice the final consonant sound so they make the following mistakes:
- *Write* for *ride*
- *Rice* for *rise*
- *Rope* for *robe*
- *Pick* for *pig*
- Also, consonant clusters cause difficulty for the Twi speaker so they make the following common errors:
- *Nest* for *next*
- *Knees* for *needs*
- *Fat* for *fact*

Grammar and Syntax

Twi has eight parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, numerals, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, and interjections. The most notable difference from English is the absence of the preposition. Therefore, prepositions cause great difficulty for the Twi speaker.

Verb Issues:

Auxiliaries in the simple present tense

She want to speak English, but she don't know how.

Present perfect

I have seen him yesterday.

Noun and Article Issues:

Countable and Uncountable Nouns

We had a rain this morning.

Omission of the article

This is goat.

Communication Styles and Customs

- Ghanaians greet each other with a handshake and a smile. Their handshake starts by holding the right hand then twisting the middle fingers.
- Christians will shake hands with anyone, but Muslims will not shake hands with the opposite sex.
- Ghanaians practice hierarchy. In a group, the most respected person will always get preferential treatment.
- Ghanaians believe that people get their blood from their mother, so women have a higher status than men. In a group, Ghanaians will greet the women first.
- As a sign of respect, over the age of 30, males may be referred to as “pah-pah and females may be referred to as “mah-mee.” People over the age of 50 may be referred to as “nah-nah.”
- Ghanaians address each other by their academic or honorific name.
- Ghanaians are indirect communicators.
- They communicate in a manner that will least cause any issue.
- They like to use proverbs, wise sayings, and analogies.
- Silence is a common form of communication. Ghanaians would rather remain silent than upset their listener.



Socio-Cultural Issues

English is part of the Ghanaian culture. It is not a foreign language, but a second language for the Ghanaian people. However, you have to remember it is British English, so American English still causes great difficulty for the Twi speaker. Also, although English is the language taught in schools, poverty and accessibility keeps the enrollment rate of schools down. 57.9% of Ghanaians are literate.

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