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AN ASSESSMENT OF INTELLIGIBILITY IN THE EJAGHAM COMMUNITY

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by Juerg Stalder

Summary of the results of a survey, carried out by John and Kathie Watters, Engelbert Domche-Teko, Olivier Risnes and Juerg Stalder, 13 - 19 February 1989. More background information on the Ejagham people is given in the introduction of "A Phonology and Morphology of Ejagham --- with notes on dialect variation", dissertation by John Watters.

1. Purpose:

John and Kathie Watters who worked for many years among the Ejagham, realised during their intensive fieldwork that intelligibility between Eastern Ejagham and Western Ejagham was not, as originally was assumed, on a very high level but rather on a critical level. Clarification was asked for by the means of RTT (recorded text testing, Casad testing).

2. Results:

2.1 Cognicity:

Western Ejagham / Eastern Ejagham: 92 % (according to J. Watters)

2.2 RTT (Recorded Text Testing):

20 people tested. Categories: Age, sex.

Test location: Kembong (arrondissement d' Eyumojok). Reasons for choosing Kembong as a test location (according to John Watters): The Eastern Ejagham people consist of two groups: Keaka, approximately 25,000 people and Obang, approximately 5,000 people. The village of Kembong is farthest away from the Western Ejagham area, having a population of about 5,000 Keaka speakers. From the linguistic point of view, as well as from the sociological point of view, the Keaka area can be considered as homogenous.

subject	sex	age	Eastern Ejagham (hometown)	Western Ejagham
16	M	12	90 %	70 %
18	M	12	90 %	75 %
12	M	15	90 %	40 %
14	M	16	90 %	70 %
4	M	28	90 %	80 %
5	M	35	100 %	90 %
19	M	36	100 %	100 %
6	M	50	90 %	55 %
13	M	60	90 %	80 %
2	M	62	90 %	65 %

15	F	13	90 %	70 %
17	F	13	85 %	80 %
1	F	25	90 %	90 %
8	F	30	100 %	95 %
10	F	31	90 %	90 %
9	F	37	80 %	90 %
3	F	40	95 %	50 %
11	F	50	90 %	90 %
7	F	>50	100 %	90 %
20	F	?	90 %	70 %

mean of Western Ejagham: 77 %

standard deviation of Western Ejagham: 15.9 %

mean of Western Ejagham, according to different categories:

men (10 people)	72.5 %
women (10 people)	81.5 %
young people (10 people)	76 %
old people (10 people)	78 %
young men (5 people)	67 %
old men (5 people)	78 %
young women (5 people)	85 %
old women (5 people)	78 %

Evaluation:

The results of the RTT as presented above confirm that intelligibility is in the critical range, i.e. inherent intelligibility seems to be lower than the empirical threshold value of 75%, and the standard deviation is higher than the threshold value of 15%, which is an indicator for acquired intelligibility.

2.3 Sociolinguistic questionnaire:

20 people interviewed (the same as for RTT)

Insight on the attitude of the Eastern Egham people towards Western Egham has been given by the following questions:

Are you always able to understand the speakers of Western Egham?

Given answers:

14 yes
3 hesitation
3 no

Evaluation:

Although this question is not very useful for determining actual language comprehension because it consists of the self report method of evaluation, it nevertheless reflects the attitude of the testee towards Western Ejagham. Considering the above data, we can say that

Eastern Ehagham people consider themselves as understanding Western Ejagham. Rejection because of sociological reasons does not seem to be the case.

Would you be willing to learn to read and write Western Ehagham, if it were written?

Given answers:

15 yes
5 no

Evaluation:

Eastern Ehagham people are willing to learn to read and write Western Ejagham.

The chi-square test confirms the above mentioned statement:
(Formula for chi-square when there is only one degree of freedom)

$$\text{chi-square} = (|O-E| - 0.5) / E$$

O = obtained frequencies

E = expected frequencies

straight vertical lines mean absolute value

$$E = 20 / 2 = 10$$

$$\text{chi-square} = \frac{(|15-10| - 0.5)}{10} + \frac{(|5-10| - 0.5)}{10}$$

$$\text{chi-square} = 2.025 + 2.025 = 4.05 > 3.84 \text{ i.e. significant}$$

Which would be your first choice (for learning to read and write)?

Given answers:

9 Western Ejagham
2 Kenyang
4 Pidgin
2 English
3 no answer given

Evaluation:

Although we can't say that Eastern Ejagham speakers give first choice to Western Ejagham (no significant difference), Western Ejagham is the most frequently chosen language.

3. Conclusion, recommendation

In a literacy program among the Ejagham people, in which literature in Western Ejagham is used, special consideration has to be given to the Eastern Ejagham, for instance by producing bridging material. Ethnologue and ALCAM consider Eastern Ejagham as one of the dialects of Ejagham. This status can be retained.

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