

LANGUAGE USE AMONG THE BRONG OF GHANA

F.A. Dolphyne

Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana

Brong, a dialect of the Akan language, is mutually intelligible with the other dialects, especially Asante, to which it is closest geographically. There is a high degree of bidialectalism among Brong speakers. This study is an attempt to determine the situations in which native Brong-speakers living in the Brong area use the two dialects and the reasons for their choices. The conclusion to be drawn from answers to questionnaires is that although the desire for group identification is strong, modern socio-economic demands have caused Brong speakers to feel the need to speak Asante to communicate with people outside their group. Furthermore, people living in urban centers with a sizable non-Brong population tend to speak Asante in many circumstances, as they feel this is the accepted pattern of behaviour. This study indicates that in spite of emotional attachment to their own form of speech, people will learn a language that brings economic advantage, even when there is real resentment towards the people whose language carries the advantage.

Une compréhension mutuelle existe entre le "brong", dialecte de l'akan et les autres idiomes appartenant à la même langue, mais plus particulièrement avec l'"asante", qui est parlé dans la région la plus proche de celle où l'on parle le "brong". Cette étude essaie de déterminer les raisons qui poussent les natifs de cette région à employer l'un ou l'autre dialecte selon les circonstances. La conclusion tirée après dépouillement des questionnaires est que, malgré un fort désir de s'identifier en tant que groupe ethnique, les exigences socio-économiques de la vie moderne font ressentir aux "Brongs" le besoin de parler "asante" afin de communiquer plus aisément avec les gens en dehors de leur ethnie. D'ailleurs, dans de nombreuses occasions, les habitants des centres urbains préfèrent parler "asante", car un pourcentage élevé y résidant n'est pas d'origine "brong".

Ils font ce choix croyant que ce soit plus acceptable par la société. Cette étude indique que, malgré un attachement sentimental à leur propre langue, les gens s'efforceront d'apprendre un idiome qui leur apportera des avantages économiques, lors même qu'ils gardent une rancune réelle contre ceux dont c'est la langue maternelle.

## 0.0 Introduction

0.1 Brong (or Bono) is a dialect of the Akan language, the largest single language of Ghana. It is spoken in Ghana and in the Ivory Coast. In Ghana it is spoken mainly in the Brong-Ahafo Region, by about 320,000 native speakers (1960 census figures).<sup>1</sup>

0.2 Brong is mutually intelligible with the other dialects of Akan - Asante, Akuapem, Fante, Akyem, Kwahu etc. - although to a large extent the degree of mutual intelligibility seems to be related to geographical proximity. In other words speakers of Asante, who are closest, geographically, to the Brong people, can understand Brong more easily than can speakers of Fante, who are farthest away. Brongs, especially those in relatively big towns, are predominantly bi-dialectal in Brong and Asante (see figures for Wenchi and Sunyani in Table 1 in the Appendix). The reasons for this state of affairs are discussed later.

0.3 Out of the 423 Brongs interviewed in 10 Brong-speaking towns and villages in the Brong-Ahafo Region 315 were proficient in the two dialects. This represents a little over 74% of the sample. The converse situation does not, however, exist so that very few Asante speakers even inside the Brong-speaking area speak Brong. Of the 11 native Asante-speakers interviewed 7 were mono-dialectal, and the 4 bi-dialectals had been born in the Brong area. The Asante dialect is spoken in an area which shares a common border with the Brong-speaking area, and for reasons which will be discussed below, enjoys a high degree of prestige<sup>2</sup> in the Brong-speaking area, so that the relationship between Asante and Brong is similar to what Bloomfield, in discussing "Intimate Borrowing" between languages, described as the "upper" or "dominant" language, which speakers of the "lower" language may learn although few or no speakers of the "dominant" language learn the "lower".<sup>3</sup>

0.4 The use of Brong and Asante among native Brong-speakers offers an interesting example of Diglossia in the sense of functionally differentiated varieties of a single language. The present study is an attempt to determine the situations in which native Brong speakers living in the Brong-speaking area use the two dialects and the reasons for their choice in any given situation. The study is in two parts: (1) the situational use of dialects by bi-dialectals, and (2) the situational use of dialects in the locality.

0.5 The data on which the discussion is based were collected in 1974 by administering a questionnaire to respondents who had at least one Brong parent, had been born in the Brong area, had learnt Brong as their first dialect/language, and who at the time of the interview were resident in the Brong-speaking area. The background of the respondents is summed up in Table 1.

0.6 In all 423 people were interviewed in 10 localities, which include, at one end of the scale, rural communities such as Suma-Ahenkro and Japekrom, which are more or less homogenous and which have had very little outside influence, and at the other end of the scale, places like Sunyani and Wenchi, which are more cosmopolitan and which have had a considerable amount of outside influence. These different localities offer interesting contrasts in the speakers' linguistic response to the speech situations discussed. Another parameter that offers a similar contrast is education, and this is indicated in the tables that summarise the responses. The ages of the respondents ranged between 16 and 70, but from the answers to the questions it appears that age is not an important factor in the choice of dialect in any given situation. Age is therefore not considered in the discussion that follows. Sex was also found not to be relevant to the discussion.

### 1.0 The Brong Dialect and its Speakers

Among the dialects of Akan, the Asante dialect has the largest number of native speakers, 895,000, followed by Fante: 758,000 and by Brong: 320,000 (all 1960 census figures), although, as will be pointed out later, the figure for Brong may be far below the actual number of native speakers.

1.1 The Brong people were politically dominated by the Asante from about 1740 to 1874<sup>4</sup>, and part of the prestige enjoyed by the Asante dialect among Brong speakers is probably due to the fact that it was the dialect of the conquering and more privileged people.

1.2 Moreover Asantes have often made fun of certain features of the Brong dialect, the most common one being the use of 'bɛ' for the third person plural concord marker and object pronoun where the other Akan dialects use 'wɔ' or 'wɔn'.

e.g.	<u>Brong</u>	<u>Other Akan</u>	
	bɛkɔ	wɔkɔ	'they have gone'
	frɛ bɛ	frɛ wɔn	'call them'
	bɛ kasa	wɔn kasa	'their language'

It is not surprising therefore that this is one of the more obvious characteristics that Brongs try to get rid of in their Brong when they become bi-dialectal. Brongs are aware of the attitude of

Asante speakers towards their dialect, and although they resent this, many of them still feel embarrassed about speaking their dialect to a non-Brong.

1.3 In recent years the introduction of commercial agriculture into the Brong area from the Asante area in the form of cocoa farming has brought with it large numbers of Asante farmers to the Brong area, thus increasing the exposure of Brong speakers to the Asante dialect.

1.4 As stated earlier, Brong is not written, while Asante is, and in the Brong area it is Asante that is used as the medium of instruction in the first few years of primary school education and also in broadcasting news and other programmes on radio. This institutionalised use of Asante has further enhanced the prestige of Asante among Brongs and has exposed more Brong speakers to Asante, thus making it possible for many Brongs, especially those who have had formal education, to become bi-dialectal.

1.5 Another reason for the prestige enjoyed by the Asante dialect among Brong speakers is the fact that since the Asante dialect has the largest number of speakers among the Akan dialects, and since it is spoken in an area that lies between Brong in the north and the other Akan dialects such as Fante, Akyem, Agona and Akuapem in the south, speakers of these other dialects have had more exposure to Asante than to Brong, and Brong speakers realise that they need Asante to communicate effectively with speakers of these other dialects as well as the large number of non-native Akans who speak Akan as a second language, since Brong is not easily understood by them. It seems to me that at the moment this is the most important reason for the extent of bi-dialectalism among the Brong. The Brong are now not a subject people to the Asante, nor are they less prosperous economically than the Asante, so that the prestige status of Asante in the Brong area now is not related to the political power or affluence of the Asante as compared to the Brong.

1.6 For all these reasons, Brongs, especially those in relatively big towns are predominantly bi-dialectal (see the figures for Wenchi and Sunyani in Table 1 in the Appendix). It must be pointed out that some of the people interviewed did control various types of Brong ranging from a type which is least influenced by Asante to a type that closely approximates to Asante, and they could change from one type to another depending on the situation. They were however fully conscious of which dialect they were using at any given time, that is whether they were speaking Brong or Asante, for the differences between these two dialects are many and very marked.

## 2.0 Situational Use of Dialects by Bi-dialectals

This section attempts to describe the factors which determine the choice of dialect by bi-dialectals in certain given situations, for while prestige may be an important consideration, other factors

such as the individual's attitude to the two dialects and the context of particular speech situations may affect the choice of one dialect instead of another in situations where either dialect could serve as the medium of conversation. Some of these factors have been discussed in S.R. Herman's "Explorations in the Social Psychology of Language Choice", and although he was concerned in that paper with language choice by a polyglot in a multilingual setting, some of the factors he describes are very pertinent to the present discussion.

2.1 The background of the respondents is summed up in Table 1. It can be seen from the table that the proportion of bi-dialectals in relation to mono-dialectals is greater in Wenchi and Sunyani, the more urban centres, than in Suma-Ahenkro and Japekrom, the more rural localities. As can be expected, the extent of bi-dialectalism is greater among the educated than among the uneducated. The 34 educated mono-dialectals deserve comment. All of them had had at least 6 years of formal education, where the medium of instruction in the first 3 years is Asante, but they had always looked on Asante as a classroom dialect, as it were, and had never felt the need to speak it themselves. Eleven of them were still at school and the others were self-employed - sixteen farmers, four carpenters and three shoe repairers. These are occupations in which there is not much motivation for the Brong speaker to use Asante, for unlike other occupations such as teaching, clerical or other office employment, contact with non-Brong speakers is limited and the Brong speaker is not required to use Asante, as is the case in teaching for example. Many of the bi-dialectals had either travelled to or lived in towns or villages in the Asante-speaking area, but some had learnt Asante in the Brong area from friends and at school.

2.2 It is necessary to point out here that given the diffident attitude that Brong speakers have towards their dialect in relation to Asante, it was considered very unlikely that one could get reliable responses to the questionnaire from Brong speakers living outside the Brong area. Brongs living in Asante-speaking areas very rarely speak their dialect outside the home setting, even to other native Brong speakers, and a few of them who were born in the Asante area or have lived there for a considerable length of time may not feel any need to be identified as Brong even though they speak the dialect. It is for this reason that it was stated earlier on that the 1960 census figure of 320,000 Brong speakers may not be correct, for the answer to the question "What is your tribe?" or "Which tribe do you belong to?" would be influenced by the place where the respondent was when the question was asked. A respondent who may readily say that he is Brong because he was at the time in the Brong-speaking area, where the feeling for ethnic identity is strong, may very well say that he is Asante if he is asked the question in the Asante-speaking area, and especially if he also has one Asante parent.

3.0 The discussion that follows is based on answers to the following questions:

1. Which dialect(s) of Akan do you use at Home? To whom?
2. If you met a townsman who can speak another Akan dialect which you also speak, which of these dialects would you use? Why?
3. If you met somebody you know who speaks some other Akan dialect which you also speak, which dialect would you use? Why?
4. Would you still use this dialect if you were emotionally involved e.g. in a quarrel, argument, prayer etc.? Why?
5. If you met a stranger, which dialect/language would you use? Why?
6. If you were asked to give a talk to the local people or make an announcement on the local radio station, which dialect would you use? Why?

3.01 These answers will be discussed within the framework of the three factors which Herman considers important in determining language choice. These are:

- (i) personal needs
- (ii) the background situation, and
- (iii) the immediate situation

3.02 In discussing the determinants of language choice, Herman says: "It is useful to look at the speaker who is in the position of having to choose between two (or more) languages as a person in an overlapping situation..... One situation may correspond to the person's own need or desire to speak a particular language (e.g. the language in which he is most proficient); the other may correspond to the norms of his group, which may demand of him the use of another language." However in a context where none of these two situations is important or relevant, such as in a task-oriented situation where there is no emotional involvement and the need for group identification is absent, the individual is likely to respond to the demands of the immediate situation. In any given context therefore, the individual is subject to three forces arising from his "personal needs", "group demands" (or "background situation") and "the immediate situation", and the language choice will be determined by which of these three sources has the greatest potency.

3.1 Herman suggests that the conditions under which personal needs are likely to be dominant are:

1. Where the setting is private rather than public.
2. Where the situation provokes insecurity, high tension or frustration.

3. Where it touches the central rather than the peripheral layers of the personality.

3.2 Those for the background situation or group demands are:

1. When the activity takes place in a public rather than a private setting.
2. When the behaviour in the situation may be interpreted as providing cues to group identifications (including social status) or conformity to group norms.
3. When the person involved in the activity wishes to identify (or to be identified) with a particular group or to be dissociated from it, or desires (or feels obliged) to conform to the norms of a reference group.

3.3 Conditions in which the immediate situation is dominant are those in which "personal needs" and "group demands" are not important. These are:

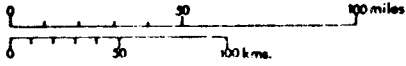
1. When the person is not concerned about group identifications.
2. When the behaviour is task oriented.
3. When well-established patterns of behaviour characterise a relationship.

3.4 The present writer finds Herman's definition of "immediate situation" rather unsatisfactory, because it seems to be determined negatively in relation to his first two factors. Although it may be possible to tell whether or not a person is concerned about group identification, it may very well be that what Herman describes as the "well-established patterns of behaviour [that] characterise a relationship" may have been established by "group demands", as is the case of the Brong speaker in a village who speaks Brong to any "stranger" he meets in the street. The well-established behaviour may also be due to personal needs, as in the case of the Brong wife who speaks Asante to her Asante husband and Brong to her parents.

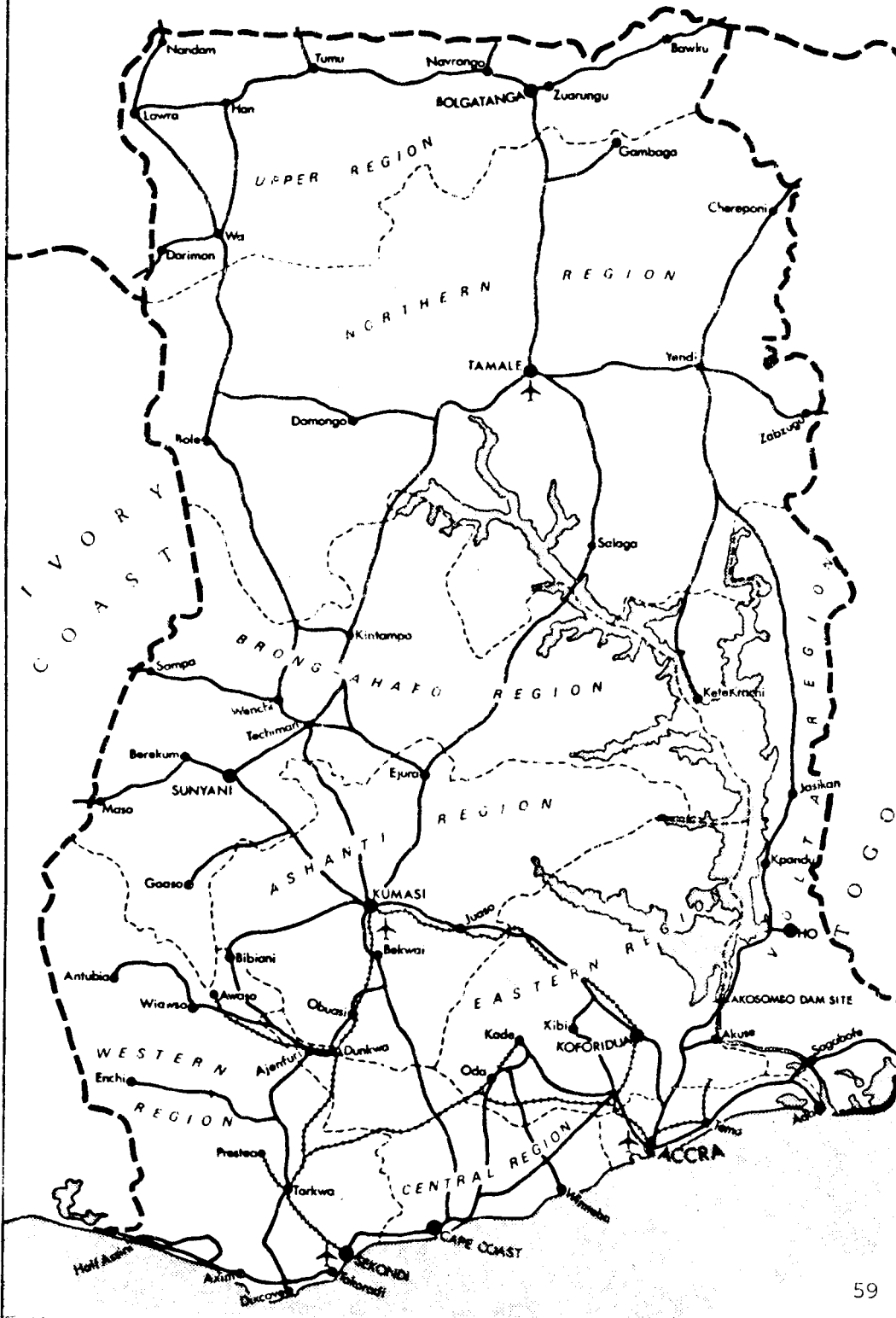
3.5 Since the situations in which a dialect choice has to be made do not include a task-oriented one, Herman's second condition for "immediate situation" to be dominant is not relevant to the present study. What in the present study could be discussed under the factor "immediate situation" is the need to be understood or the desire for effective communication, for very often the reasons given by Brong speakers who said they spoke Asante in certain given situations were "Everybody speaks Asante;" "He (i.e. the person spoken to) may not understand Brong;" "I want everybody to understand me."

3.6 It seems to me that this desire for effective communication properly belongs to the first condition, "personal needs", and in

# GHANA



U P P E R V O L T A





the discussion that follows, the factors that determine dialect choice for the bi-dialectal are personal needs and group demands.

4.0 For the purposes of this section on dialect choice by bi-dialectals, a close study will be made of the responses to the questionnaire in two relatively rural communities - Suma-Ahenkro and Japekrom, and two relatively urban communities - Wenchi and Sunyani.

4.1 Question One: Which dialect of Akan do you use at home? To whom?

91 out of the 138 informants (i.e. 66%) said they use Brong and 43 said they use Asante (see Table 3), and in both cases this is the dialect spoken to parents, children and other members of the family. Of the 43 who spoke Asante at home 37 either had an Asante spouse or one Asante parent. Four (4) out of the 138 said they use both Brong and Asante at home; and of these 3 were married to Asantes, and they spoke Asante to the spouse and Brong to their children and other members of the family. The other one had a Brong spouse and she spoke Brong to the spouse and older relations and Asante to her children, younger relations, and tenants in the house, some of whom were Asante. It can be seen from Table 3 that fewer people (12%) in the rural setting speak Asante at home as compared with those in the urban setting (44%).

4.11 From these answers it would appear that the factor that has high potency in determining dialect choice in this context is "personal needs". The respondents are here not concerned about "group identification," especially for those who spoke a different dialect to different members of the household such as the spouse, children, older relations, tenants, etc. Moreover this is a private rather than a public setting, one of the conditions in which "personal needs" is dominant.

4.2 Question Two: If you met a townsman who can speak another Akan dialect which you also speak, which of these dialects would you use? Why?

45 out of 51 in the rural setting (i.e. 88%) and 32 out of the 87 in the urban setting (i.e. 37%) said they would speak Brong, the reasons being "We are all Brong," "We are the same people," "Brong is our dialect." 61 (i.e. 44%) of the 138 respondents said they would speak Asante because they are fluent in it or because everybody speaks it. These answers indicate that in the rural setting the choice of dialect in this context is determined mainly by the background situation or "group demands". The rural setting consists of a relatively small community where the individual feels the need to conform to the norms of the group. Speaking Asante to another Brong in a Brong village will be looked upon as a betrayal of the group, an indication of the speaker's wish to identify with a group he considers superior to his own. The background situation (or group demands) then has the highest potency in this particular context.

4.21 In the urban setting however, where the community feeling and the need for group identification that one finds in the rural setting is not so predominant, and where a fairly large number of the population is non-Brong, it appears even the Brongs get used to speaking Asante to everyone they meet outside the home. This predominant use of Asante in the urban community seems to be a fairly well-established pattern of behaviour, and this is a setting in which Herman's condition, "immediate situation", could be applicable as a dominant force in the choice of dialect. The main reason for the choice of Asante was "Everybody understands Asante." This may also account for the observation made earlier that outside the Brong area it is quite common for Brong speakers to communicate with each other in Asante. It may well be that the desire to be understood is so dominant in most people that outside the home setting Asante is the obvious dialect choice. In the urban setting therefore, it is personal needs that are the dominant factor in the choice of dialect.

4.3 Question Three: If you met somebody you know who speaks another Akan dialect which you also speak, which dialect would you use? Why?

(The "somebody" referred to in this question excluded the townsman so that this person may or may not be a native Brong speaker.)

To this question only 10 out of the 138 (i.e. 7%) said they would speak Brong, the reasons being "It is my dialect," "I am a Brong." 128 (i.e. 93%) said they would speak Asante, the reasons for 112 of them being "He may not understand Brong," "Everybody understands Asante," and for the remaining 16, "People laugh at us when we speak Brong."

4.31 For the 10 who said they would speak Brong, it is quite clear that it is the background situation that has the highest potency in dialect choice. For the majority (112, i.e. 81%) however, the determinant for dialect choice is "personal needs", which in this context refers to the desire to be understood, or the desire for effective communication.

4.32 The 16 who said they would speak Asante for fear of being laughed at included both educated and uneducated respondents, with ages ranging from 16 to 47 years. 14 of them had said they would speak Brong to a townsman, their reasons being "We are all Brong," "It is my dialect," which is an indication of their desire to be identified with the Brong. In answer to question 6 they all said they would speak Brong on the radio for the same reasons.

4.33 For these people, there clearly is a conflict between personal needs and group demands. The conflict arises from the fact that, as can be seen from their answers to questions 2 and 6, they want to identify themselves with the Brong. However in the situation under discussion where the person involved in the conversation is

already known, and his attitude to the Brong dialect is also well known to the informant, it is the fear of being laughed at or ridiculed and made to feel inferior that determines the choice of dialect. This is a situation which may be described as one which "provokes insecurity, high tension or frustration," and it is personal needs that gain higher potency in the conflict between personal needs and group demands.

4.34 It is quite possible that this is the determinant in dialect choice for the majority of the 128 who said they would speak Asante in this situation, for when 3 of the 112 informants referred to in Section 4.31 were asked whether they would speak Asante if the other person understood Brong, their answer was "Asantes pretend they do not understand Brong" which seems to indicate the Brong speaker's awareness of the rather superior attitude of some Asante speakers to the Brong dialect. They would therefore speak Asante and avoid being laughed at or being told that what they had said was incomprehensible.

The answers to this question in particular show that the choice of dialect by various persons in a given situation may be determined by different factors.

4.4 Question Four: Would you still use this dialect if you were emotionally involved in a quarrel, argument, prayer etc? Why?

75 (i.e. 54%) out of the 138 said they would use Brong in this situation, the reasons being: "It comes naturally," "I am more fluent in it," "I can express myself better in it." 60 (i.e. 44%) said they would speak Asante so that the other person involved in the situation would understand what they were saying. Three (3) said they would speak Brong or Asante depending on the situation, that is whether the other person understood Brong or not.

4.41 For the 60 who said they would speak Asante it is clearly the desire to be understood that is the determining factor. For these people and the 75 who said they would speak Brong because it is the dialect in which they are more proficient, it is personal needs that have the highest potency in dialect choice, and this is the factor that is dominant when a speaker is emotionally involved in a situation.

4.5 Question Five: If you met a stranger which dialect/language would you use? Why?

The answers to this question varied according to whether the respondent lived in a small village or a big town. 32 out of 51 (i.e. 63%) interviewed in the village setting said they would speak Brong, the reasons being "He will understand it;" "This is what we use in this village." 75 out of 87 (i.e. 86%) interviewed in the urban setting said they would speak Asante, the reasons being "He may not understand Brong;" "Everybody speaks Asante;" "People laugh at us when we speak Brong." 12 (i.e. 14%) said they

would speak Brong because "It is my dialect." Included in the 75 who said they would speak Asante are 5 people, all from Sunyani, who said they would also speak English in this situation. English is the language of communication between educated Ghanaians who do not share a common Ghanaian language.

4.51 In the village setting, where the population is more or less homogenous, the people one meets in the street are likely to be indigenous to the village and therefore native Brong speakers, so that for these respondents this question is more or less the same as question 2, for they can safely assume that the 'stranger' they meet is a townsman, and they therefore feel the need to use the dialect that the community expects them to speak to a townsman. The dominant force for this context, as for question 2, in the village setting is group demands.

4.52 In the urban setting however, where the stranger may very well not be a townsman, the individual may not feel the need to identify, or be identified, with the Brong. In fact as pointed out in Section 4.21 the informants in the urban setting would speak Asante to a townsman because this is the accepted pattern of behaviour. For them as for those who would speak Asante because the other person is more likely to understand Asante than Brong, dialect choice seems to be determined by the desire to be understood. For the 13 who would speak Asante for fear of being laughed at if they spoke Brong, the determinant of dialect choice is also personal needs.

4.53 For the 44 out of the 138 (i.e. 32%) who said they would speak Brong to a stranger, it is the background situation (or group demands) that determines the choice of dialect. It is interesting that, in contrast to the situation in Question 3, here where the other person in the conversation is a complete stranger whose attitude to the Brong dialect is not known, more people are prepared to speak the Brong dialect.

4.54 It is worth pointing out however, that some of the people who said they would speak Brong to a stranger spoke Asante to the interviewer who is a mono-dialectal Asante speaker, while the rest spoke a form of Brong which had fewer of the more marked regional characteristics, indicating that in that context the desire to be understood was the dominant factor. This raises the question as to the reliability of some of their responses, for they seemed to be unaware of the contradiction between their response and their performance in this particular situation. Perhaps in the context of interviewer-interviewee, where the latter attaches importance to the information being elicited from him and therefore feels the need to be understood, there could be a conflict between personal needs and group demands.

4.6 Question Six: If you were asked to give a talk to the local people or make an announcement on the local radio station, which dialect would you use? Why?

73 out of the 138 bi-dialectals (i.e. 53%) said they would speak Asante, the reasons being "I want everybody to understand me," "Brong is not understood by everybody," and "Brong is not used on the radio." This last reason may in part account for the rather large number of people who said they would speak Asante, for to such people the use of Asante on radio is a well-established convention and it was not easy to make especially the uneducated among them understand that it is possible to broadcast in any language or dialect on the radio if necessary.

4.61 This is a "public setting" in which, according to Herman, the back-ground situation has very high potency, but it is quite clear that for most people the desire to be understood outweighs all consideration about group identification, and it would appear that for many of the informants it is personal needs in the sense of the desire for effective communication that are dominant in dialect choice in this context.

4.62 It is interesting however, that of the 65 who said they would speak Brong, 35 are educated, 22 of whom live in an urban setting where there is a large number of non-Brong speakers. None of the 22 had said they would speak Brong to a stranger, but their reasons for speaking Brong on the radio were "It is our dialect," "I want everyone to know that I am a Brong," and "Brong is also good for use on radio." These are all sentiments that reflect a desire for group identification, and they confirm the observation made in section 4.53 that for those who would not speak Brong to another Akan speaker or to a stranger for fear of being laughed at, the conflict between personal needs and group demands is indeed a real one. These people are prepared to broadcast in Brong and are anxious to be identified with the Brong as long as there is a certain "anonymity" about the situation. In so far as it is not a face-to-face situation where they are likely to feel insulted because the person spoken to laughs at the Brong characteristics of their speech, they are happy to speak Brong and are proud to be identified as such, and for these people it is the background situation (or group demands) that has the highest potency in dialect choice in this context.

5.0 The analysis of the responses to the questions has been summed up in Tables 2 and 3 in the Appendix. Table 2 gives the details of the choice of dialect for the educated and the uneducated informants in each of the ten localities in which the interviews were conducted. It can be seen from the table that Sunyani, the Brong-Ahafo regional capital, the largest town in the region and the one which has the largest number of Asante and other Akan-speaking residents of the ten localities in this survey, has the largest number of people for whom Asante is the dialect choice in this situations being considered. And this is true for both the educated and the uneducated.

5.1 In contrast to this the figures for Suma-Ahenkro show a community for whom Brong is the first dialect choice in most of the six situations. None of the uneducated informants speaks Asante at home or to a townsman, and only 2 of the 13 educated people would speak Asante in these contexts. The only context in which Asante is the dialect choice for most of them is when it comes to speaking to another Akan speaker who is not a townsman. It can be seen from this table that Sunyani and Suma-Ahenkro represent, within the context of this survey, two ends of the urban-rural scale.

5.2 The summary of the situational use of dialect in Table 3 for Suma-Ahenkro, Japekrom, Wenshi and Sunyani is self-explanatory, showing for each of the six situations the number and percentage of people who would choose one dialect or the other, as well as the difference in dialect preferences for people living in a rural community and those living in an urban one. For each dialect, the percentage of frequency of dialect use is in relation to the total number of times that dialect could have been used taking into account the number of people involved in the survey in the four localities and the six situations in which a choice of dialect had to be made. These figures in Table 3 show that the use of Brong among bi-dialectals is on the decline, especially in the urban centres, although in the rural setting it is the dialect that the majority of bi-dialectals will use in the six situations.

6.0 The conclusion that may be drawn from these facts is that although the desire for group identification is quite strong among Brong speakers living in the Brong area, the pressures of modern socio-economic demands have made even the most "nationalistic" Brong feel the need to use Asante as a vehicle for effective communication with people outside his own group. It is not surprising therefore that group demands are not such a predominant factor in determining dialect choice for the 138 Brongs in the four localities under consideration. The predominant factor is "personal needs," which in this context mainly refers to the desire to be understood - "Everybody understands Asante."

6.1 There are many more situations in which the Brong bi-dialectal has to use verbal communication, but the six used as the basis for the present study are considered to be those in which the speaker to a large extent has the greatest freedom to choose which dialect to use, or is not unduly constrained by the setting in which the speech activity takes place. For example, cultural situations such as consulting the priest of a local shrine or pouring libation at a funeral ceremony or during the celebration of the annual yam festival normally demand the use of the dialect of ethnic identity, and the speaker will not be in a position to make a choice of dialect. The importance that is attached to this section of the study therefore lies in the fact that it deals with situations in which conversation can be in one dialect or the other, and therefore situations in which as far as it is possible to speak of the individual in society as a free agent, the speaker is at liberty to choose the dialect of conversation.

6.2 The more or less equal importance of both group demands and personal needs as determinants of dialect choice among the Brong of Ghana is significant in indicating that Brongs will for a long time remain bi-dialectal. However the summary of the situational use of dialects in Table 3 shows that there are only three contexts in which more Brong bi-dialectals will speak Brong rather than Asante, and these are: at home, to a townsman, and in an emotional situation. In the urban setting even fewer people will speak Brong to a townsman. All this indicates that unless Brong speakers continue to learn Brong as their first dialect, and also continue to speak it at home to members of the family so that people can still say it is the dialect they can express themselves best in, there will continue to be still fewer Brongs who will choose to speak the Brong dialect, especially as more and more Brongs become educated, and the villages grow into bigger towns and their population becomes less and less predominantly Brong.

6.3 For the moment, however, the loyalty to the Brong dialect among many Brong speakers is so strong that even though one can see all Brongs becoming bi-dialectal in the not too distant future, it is very unlikely that they will give up their dialect for Asante. It will be retained as the symbol for group identification.

#### 7.0 Situational Use of Dialects in Locality

7.1 Respondents were asked to indicate which of the two dialects, Brong and Asante, was normally used in the particular locality: in the market, drinking and chop bars, the church, the classroom, the school playground, at the local shrines, and in the performance of traditional rituals such as the pouring of libation at outdoorings and funeral ceremonies. The information is summed up for each locality in Table 4.

7.2 Since some of the respondents were not familiar with what went on in one or more of the places mentioned in the questionnaire, what is presented in Table 4 is a summary of the general impression gained of dialect choice in these contexts taking into account the total number of people who answered the particular question. On the table 'xxx' indicates a predominant use of the particular dialect in that situation; 'xx' indicates a moderate use of the dialect and 'x' only a slight use of the particular dialect in the situation dealt with. If in a given situation 'xxx' is marked for both Brong and Asante, this means that almost all the respondents said that both dialects are used equally in the particular situation.

7.3 It is worth noting that the information indicated in Table 4 is only based on the respondents' impressions of what went on in the locality, and therefore not as reliable as one would want it to be. A more dependable information could have been obtained through personal observation by the researcher, but this was not possible within the time available for the survey.

7.4 From the information summarised in Table 4 one can identify 2 major types of situations:

I. Culture-bound situations which include

- a) traditional 'setting' e.g. shrines, rituals
- b) foreign 'setting' e.g. school, church

II. Culture-free situations which include the market and the drinking and 'chop' bars.

7.5 One can also identify the difference between dialect choice in the relatively rural setting represented by Suma-Ahenkro and Japekrom and the relatively urban setting, represented by Wenchi and Sunyani.

7.6 In those situations that are dominated by traditional culture - consulting a local shrine, pouring libation at a festival, outdoor-ing or funeral - Brong is the dialect that is most often used, whether the setting is a rural or urban one. This is not surprising for these are situations that call for a people's cultural identity and therefore the use of the language of ethnic identity. In the more rural localities Brong is the only dialect used in such situations, while some Asante is used in the more urban setting. This may be a concession that some Brong speakers have learnt to make for the benefit of the large non-Brong communities in such localities.

7.61 In those situations dominated by foreign culture, such as at church and in the classroom, the dialect mostly used in both the rural and urban settings is Asante. Christianity and formal education are both elements of foreign European culture that were introduced into the Brong area from the southern part of the country, and it is not surprising that Asante, the dialect that is spoken to the south of the Brong area, should be the dialect choice in these situations. Moreover, as stated earlier, Asante is the medium of instruction in the first 3 years of school and it is also the dialect in which the Bible and the Hymn Books used in church worship, as well as the materials used in teaching are written.

7.62 Asante is therefore the obvious dialect choice in these situations. Some Brong is used however, when for example, a preacher who is a Brong speaker conducts the church service, or when in the classroom Brong-speaking pupils answer questions, or when a Brong-speaking teacher feels the need to speak Brong in order to get a point across to the pupils more effectively. This classroom use of Brong is however more common in the rural setting than in the more urban setting where a sizeable number of the pupils are non-Brong.

7.7 In the culture-free situations - including the markets/bars and school playground - the difference in dialect choice between the rural and urban settings becomes more obvious - Brong being



the predominant dialect in the rural setting, where most of the people are native Brongs, and Asante in the urban setting. This confirms the observation made in Section 4.21 that people living in the urban centres where there is a sizeable non-Brong population tend to speak Asante more often than Brong because this is an accepted pattern of behaviour, and also possibly because they are afraid of being laughed at.

## 8.0 Attitude to Akan Dialects

Although this paper deals mainly with the choice of dialect in certain specified situations, this section will deal briefly with the respondents' attitude to Asante and Brong and to other dialects of Akan. Table 5 sums up the answers of respondents to the questions:

1. Which dialect of Akan would you like to speak most? Why?
2. Which dialect of Akan do you dislike most? Why?
3. Which dialect of Akan would you like your child to speak? Why?
4. Would you correct him if he spoke another Akan dialect? Why?

### 8.1 Question: Which dialect of Akan would you like to speak most? Why?

The only significant thing about the responses to this question is the fact that more people opted for Brong than Asante in the more rural setting, but the choice is more or less balanced in the more urban setting. The main reasons for the choice of Brong were "It is my dialect;" "It is what God gave to my people;" and the major reason for those who preferred Asante was that Asante is generally understood and one can therefore get around more easily with it, especially if one intended to travel outside the Brong area. Those who chose other Akan dialects said they liked the sound of that particular dialect, which does not give much information about the dialect.

### 8.2 Question: Which dialect of Akan do you dislike most? Why?

Only a few people answered this question. Most of them had no opinion to express, as can be seen from Table 5. Almost all the people who said they disliked Asante said so because "Asantes look down on Brongs;" "Asantes are very haughty;" "Asantes are too proud." One person even put this feeling more forcefully: "I will never allow my child to marry an Asante, they are too proud." Obviously the answer to this question is dictated by the Brong speaker's attitude to the Asantes as a people, and not to their form of speech. In fact two of those who said they dislike Asante, had said, in answer to the earlier question, that Asante is the dialect they would like to speak most because it is generally understood by most people.

8.21 Those who said they disliked Brong had as their main reason the fact that Brong is laughed at or looked down upon by other Akan speakers. For these people and for those who said they dislike Asante, there appears to be a deep feeling of resentment at the way Asantes, and possibly other Akan speakers look down on the Brong dialect. Indeed it would appear that this is the significant information that this question elicited from the informants.

8.22 Four of those who said they disliked Brong indicated that they did not like some sub-dialects of Brong because they had difficulty in understanding speakers of these sub-dialects. This is also the reason given by those who said they did not like other Akan dialects such as Fante, Kwahu and Akuapem which indicates that even the few that answered this question did not have any serious objections to the other dialects of Akan, and this may be an indication of a certain degree of tolerance towards other people's form of speech.

8.3 Question: Which dialect of Akan would you like your child to speak? Why?

With the exception of respondents in Techiman, the majority of the people interviewed in all the localities would like their children to learn Brong first. The reasons were: "It is his (child's) dialect;" "It is the dialect given to us by God and we must treasure it;" "He must know he is Brong." etc. These reasons point to a desire for maintaining their identity as Brong people.

8.31 Those who said they would like their children to speak Asante gave as their main reason the fact that it is widely spoken and the child will need it to travel outside the Brong area. This number included the man who said he would not let his child marry an Asante, and this seems to indicate the man's awareness of the fact that Asante is the dialect of economic activity and education, and the child must be proficient in it in order to get on in the world. Eight (8) of those who chose Asante were married to Asantes, and would like their children to learn the language of the other parent.

8.32 Twenty-two (22) of the respondents wanted their children to be bi-dialectal in Asante and Brong because: "It is the same language;" "We are the same people."

8.4 Question: Would you correct him if he spoke another Akan dialect? Why?

As can be seen from Table 5 the majority said they would not correct their children if they did not speak pure Asante or Brong. The main reason for this attitude was: "Brong and Asante are the same language;" and for those who would like their children to speak Brong first, they would not mind if the child spoke Asante as well because he will learn Asante in the long run anyway.