

Language contact and linguistic stereotypes: The case of Lamnso'

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Stereotypes are largely communicated by means of language and revealed through interpersonal discourse. Such stereotypes are even more obvious in situations of intercultural contact. In the case of Lamnso', a Bantoid language spoken in the North-West region of Cameroon, speakers exhibit interesting stereotypical behaviors which remain blurred to existing research. Based on an ethnographic study, it was observed that in spite of the fact that the Lamnso' language contains sounds such as /o/ and /u/, the speakers face severe difficulties in pronouncing the /əʊ/ sound in English. In fact, whenever they encounter sounds such as /əʊ, ɔɪ, and ɜː, etc./ in words such as [gəʊt] "goat", [bɔɪ] "boy" and [gɜːl] "girl" in their use of the English language, they end up articulating them as [gʊt], [bʊɪ] and [gəl] respectively. Interestingly, the linguistic stereotype observed is not only with regard to the verbal behaviour of a Nso speaker, but on the influence they exert on non-speakers of Lamnso'. In this regard, further data on the linguistic behavior of non Nso' speakers obtained by means of questionnaires revealed a stereotypical behavior wherein, when faced with the English language, they deliberately mispronounce words such as [guːgəl] "Google" and [bɜːd fluː] "bird flu" as [gʊgəl] and [bɜːd fləʊ] respectively because of the fear of being regarded as Lamnso' speakers. Such findings shed light on the bidirectional nature of linguistic stereotypes which help further our understanding of the phenomenon in language contact situations.