

**THE PLACE OF YOUTHS IN LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT OF
UKWUANI LANGUAGE IN DELTA STATE**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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CERTIFICATION

I, IFILI VICTORIA UKAMAKA a student of the University of Benin in the department of linguistics studies with matriculation number ART2004732 has completed the requirements for the course work and research for the Bachelor of Art Degree of the University of Benin. The work embodied in this project is original and has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma program of this or any other university or institution.

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PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATION

IFILI VICTORIA UKAMAKA with the matriculation number ART2004732 declare this work Titled **The Place of Youths in Language Endangerment of Ukwuani Language in Delta State** has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test and does not violate any copyright regulation.

IFILI VICTORIA UKAMAKA
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Date

DEDICATION

To the Almighty God, my constant source of guidance and strength on this journey. And to my dear parents, whose endless support, love, and encouragement have fueled my success.

I dedicate this work to you, with deep gratitude and appreciation.

May God bless and guide us all always.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Ukwuani youths in this language endangerment, examining their attitudes, choices, and the social forces influencing their linguistic preferences. Grounded in Fishman's Language Shift Theory (1964), the research adopts a quantitative approach, gathering data from 50 Ukwuani-speaking youths through structured questionnaires. Findings reveal a significant decline in Ukwuani usage, with English being the preferred language for daily interactions. While some youths still speak Ukwuani at home or during cultural events, its relevance in education, social media, and peer interactions is alarmingly low. Key contributing factors include urbanization, globalization, and the lack of formal instruction in Ukwuani. Despite this decline, hope remains. Many respondents support initiatives to revive the language, such as integrating Ukwuani into school curricula, promoting it on digital platforms, and encouraging community-based language programs. This study highlights the urgent need for collaborative efforts between families, educators, policymakers, and the media to ensure that Ukwuani is not just a language of the past but a living, thriving part of the future.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Language is an important tool for communication. It is one manifestation of the cultural feature of a culture in a community (Rabiah, 2018). According to Sapir (1921:8) "Language is purely human and non instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desire by means of voluntarily produced symbols". He sees language as a learned, symbolic system uniquely used by humans to share or express thoughts and emotions through symbols which are agreed upon representations, such as words, gestures or sounds to convey meanings. Language is a very crucial and functional aspect of human nature that plays an important role in the general strive of man (Stanford, 2019).

One thing that identifies a country and differentiates one group or community from another are the languages and culture. However, many minority languages worldwide face the threat of Endangerment due to several reasons and this can be ranked on a continuum from stability to extinction (UNESCO Ad Hoc group, 2003).

Generally, language endangerment refers to the threat of a language, falling out of use and disappearing as a spoken language in everyday life. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) states that " Language endangerment refers to the decline of the language, use, prestige and cultural importance, resulting the loss of linguistic and cultural diversity. This emphasizes not only on the reduction in speakers, but also the diminished value and role of the language within its cultural and social contexts.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization) estimates that approximately 43% of the world's languages are at the risk of extinction, many falling out of use and disappearing in Nigeria, a country characterized by its rich linguistic diversity, with over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages, this threat is particularly evident as minority languages are gradually being replaced by dominant languages, such as English, Yoruba and the Nigerian Pidgin.

Youths, as custodians of language and culture, plays a crucial role in determining the path of endangered languages. Their language choices and use can either contribute to language Shift or revitalization, as they navigate

multiple language and cultures, young people's identities and loyalties are constantly being negotiated.

This study sets out to carry out an analysis on the Place of Youth in Language Endangerment of Ukwuani in Delta State. The Ukwuani language is one of the minority languages spoken in the South South region of a Nigeria. Ukwuani and its varieties are spoken in three local governments, they are; Ndokwa West, Ndokwa east, Ukwuani and some part of Ughelli north local government. At present, the language has no standard orthography and dictionary (Kesene and Ejiofor, 2016). In recent time, it is observed that Ukwuani language has over 5000 minority languages endangered (Crystal, 2000).

Despite the fact that there are works on language, endangerment, there remains a shortage in literature on the place of youth in language endangerment of Ukwuani language, therefore, this study seeks to find out if the Ukwuani language is really endangered, analyzing the choices, language attitude, and use of the youth, outlining the place of youths, in the endangerment of the Ukwuani language, and developing a language

preservation plan for the promotion and preservation of the language. This study utilizes, a quantitative design in order to investigate and observe the attitude, language choices, and the role youths play in the endangerment of the Ukwani language. A questionnaire will be used to carry out the study, 50 copies will be made and distributed amongst 50 youths within the age range of 18 to 40, (male and female), who happens to be speakers of the language.

1.2 The Ukwani Language and People

The Ukwani language and people are an ethnic group located in Delta State of Nigeria (Otite, 2000:123). It is one of the many minority languages spoken in the South South region of Nigeria. Despite having a significant number of speakers, the language still lacks a standardized orthography and a dictionary (Kesene and Ejiofor, 2016). There has been an ongoing debate about the true status of Ukwani. Some considers it a dialect of the Igbo language, while others disagree (Egwenu, 1998).

This uncertainty has negatively impacted the language's development and vitality. Ejiofor (2016) argues that classifying Ukwani as a dialect of Igbo

contributes to its endangered state. The Ukwuani language has several dialects, and in recent years, over 5000 minority languages have been categorized as endangered (Crystal 2000).

Various factors contribute to its endangered status such as; limited research on the language, the influence of English and Igbo, and the attitude of its speakers (Emenike, 2016).

1.3 Methodology

This study relied on primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. A total of 50 copies of the questionnaire was distributed among 50 speakers and community members of the language aged 18 to 40 (male and female). The questionnaires were administered to students in secondary school and tertiary institution within the age range and other youth members of the community who do businesses. The respondents were students, business men and women, and teachers. The places where the questionnaire was administered was within the Ukwuani community, Amai in specific, Novena University and Amai secondary school. Secondary data collection was obtained from previous research on language endangerment.

The instrument used for data collection was hard copy questionnaire. For every question sent out and answered by the respondents was splitted into sub_groups and calculated using statistics and percentage analysis.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to find out the roles youths play in the endangerment of the Ukwuani language. It consists of two sections which are; statement of problem and aim and objectives.

1.4.1 Statement of the Problem

There are numerous works on language endangerment such as; (UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert group, 2012. "Endangered Languages", Mufewewe and Salikoko, 2006." Language endangered: An embarrassment for linguists", Guérin and Valérie 2008:46_67" writing an endangered language documentation and conservation) and so on, there remains a gap in literature in the roles and place of youths in language endangerment and this study tends to explore that and fill the gap. The place of youths in the topic of language endangerment is important as they both are the potential carriers of

the language to future generations and the primary agent of language endangerment.

Factors such as globalization, peer group influence, migration, influence of education and media appear to play significant roles in shaping these choices. But their specific impact on the Ukwuani language is yet to be clear as they forget that the language they speak is a definition of their race, culture and personality. Negligence and quest to follow every current trend with the aim to feel among has moved them from their source as to who they really are.

1.4.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the roles or place of youths in contributing to the endangerment of the Ukwuani Language and the objectives includes the need to:

1. To find out if the Ukwuani language is really endangered
2. Identify the language choices and attitudes of the youths towards the Ukwuani Language.
3. Examine the effects of the attitudes of the youths on the status of the Ukwuani language.

4. On the basis of one and two above, develop a language preservation plan for the promotion of the Ukwuani language.

1.5 Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. Is the Ukwuani language really endangered?
2. 2 .What are the language choices and attitudes of the youths towards the Ukwuani language?
3. What are the effects of the attitudes and language choices on the language?
4. How can the language be promoted and preserved?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The Ukwuani Language is a significant part of the identity and tradition of its speakers. Understanding why the language is endangered can help ensure its survival for future generations. It would aid in providing strategies to involve young people in effort to revive the language, making it more relevant to their lives and helping them understand how their language gives an identity to them.

This research would also help community leaders, educators and policy makers design effective programs for language preservation. Additionally, this study would be a benefit to other researchers who will be exploring a case of language endangerment in Nigeria, a country with many threatened indigenous languages. It would serve as an example for preserving other minority languages.

Lastly, this research would serve as a guide to policymakers in creating supportive environment where indigenous languages like Ukwuani can thrive in schools, home and public spaces and by addressing this issues, this research aims to provide a practical solution for sustaining the Ukwuani language.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literatures previously done by scholars on this study. It consists of three sections which are:

1. Conceptual review of literature.
2. Review of previous study.
3. The concern of present study.

The initial section explores various key concepts related to the study. The second section analyzes numerous studies conducted on the subject of language endangerment. The concluding section highlights the concern of the present or current study.

2.1 Conceptual Review

This section presents a detailed understanding of key concepts, relevant to the study such as; language, language, endangerment, language, attitude and language maintenance.

2.1.1 Language

Sapir (1921:8) states” language is purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produce symbols. Sapir viewed language as unique to humans and this language set source apart from other species, or like basic instinct, or reflexes, language is not inherited biologically. Instead, it is learned I’m not developed through interaction and exposure. You recognize this creative and intentional nature of language. Humans actively and consciously use it to construct meaning and share their inner thoughts through symbols, such as sounds, words and gestures that has been agreed upon within a community. In essence, Sapir viewed language as a culturally driven, learned, and symbolic system that serves as a fundamental tool for human communication and interaction.

Henry (1990)” language is the expression of ideas by means of speech sounds combined into words, words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts”. in this definition, the photo highlighted, that the medium through which ideas are expressed is speech sounds, and that there are what makes up the spoken form of

languages that is, language at its most basic level starts with sounds that humans produce, and these words are further combined to form sentences, the combination of the sentence is mirror, the organization of ideas into thought. In other words, just as we mentally organize our ideas into a current structure, language organizes words into sentences to convey those ideas. There is a parallel between how our minds process and organize thoughts and how language organizes elements to communicate those thoughts effectively.

According to Harris (1979:53) "language is the means by which political ideas are transmitted to the community and that the strength of language in politicking are enormous". In this view, language is a keyword in politics, because it is a primary political ideas are shared with the community, and that the strength of language in politics lies in its ability to reach large audiences, influence emotion and drives support.

A language is, according to Chomsky (1928) a state obtained by a specific mental computational system that develops naturally and whose parameters are set by the linguistic environment that the individual is exposed to as a

child. This definition of language emphasizes that language is not a tool for communication, but a mental ability that develops naturally within humans.

2.1.2 Language Endangerment

As posited by Guérin and Paulina(2007),a language is considered endangered when it is no longer passed down to younger generations and that's the main reason for these is language shift, where parents in modeling communities stops, using the native language, and switch to a dominant language. As a result, their children become fluent in the dominant language, but struggle with their native language.

According to UNESCO, language, endangerment apples, when a native or indigenous language experiences a significant decrease in its use, numbers of speakers and transmission to future generations. This decline in unique linguistic systems diminishes linguistic diversity and weaken the rich tapestry of human expression found worldwide.

Krass (1992:5) language, endangerment is liking to biological species, but languages requires their own definition. Language no longer learned as

mother tongue by children are beyond endangerment and are termed "Moribund" destined for extinction unless drastic action is taken.

An endangered language is one that faces the risk of becoming obsolete, either because its speakers abandon it in favor of another language or due to a decline in the speaker population. Language endangerment is a critical issue. For various reasons, people who speak less widely used or minority languages often shift to a more dominant language. When parents choose to raise their children speaking only the dominant language, the heritage language is no longer passed down to the next generation. This leads to a decline in the number of fluent speakers, and over time, the language may cease to exist entirely. (<https://www.sil.org/sociolinguistics/endangered-languages>).

Language endangerment refers to a scenario where a language faces the risk of falling out of use, potentially leading to its extinction. As Hale (1992), cited in Fakuade (1999: 59), explains, endangerment arises when a language is overshadowed by a more dominant and influential language. Consequently,

the endangered language loses its functional domains due to the dominance of the more powerful language.

2.1.3 Language Attitude

According to Ryan et al (1982:7) "Language attitude traditionally defined as an effective, cognitive or behavior index of evaluative reactions towards different varieties of language and speakers, or more inclusively, their users".

In this view, language attitude is seen as the way people react, evaluate or respond to different forms of language, and the people who uses them, and that this view can take three forms: emotional responses, beliefs, or actions.

Emotional with responses profess to out individuals, feel about a particular language or dialect, such as finding it pleasant, ash, or appealing. Believe involves the ideas of perceptions people have about the language, such as thinking, it is prestigious, modern, or unrefined. Actions are how these feelings and believes influences behavior, such as choosing to learn a language, avoiding because of a certain variety, or treating them differently.

The author highlights that language attitude are directed at both the language, and it uses, reflecting social, and cultural judgment shaped by stereotypes

and norms. These attitudes involve evaluative judgment, revealing society, dynamics, power, relation and biases towards language and speakers.

Suzanne Romaine argues that language attitude can be measured because people's characteristics can be evaluated along certain underlying dimensions. However, she also highlights a challenge: converting attitudes which are subjective and personal into something that can be measured objectively is a common difficulty in research involving social groupings or perceptions. Romaine (1980:123). The author explains that language attitude can be studied because of the following certain patterns, such as prestige, value, power, and so on, but measuring these personal and subjective feelings most especially in a situation where an individual doesn't just have a positive attitude towards his/her language, due to several reasons, is difficult to measure objectively, especially in research involving social perceptions or group judgments.

Fishman (1972) "Language attitude refers to the emotions, opinions and values that people hold towards a language or languages, whether their own language or someone else. In essence, Fishman viewed language attitude as

feelings, opinions, and beliefs people have about languages. This includes how they feel about their own language, or the language of others. For example, someone might feel proud of their native language, or they might think another language sounds beautiful or difficult. This attitude could either be positive or negative.

2.1.3.1 Positive Language Attitude

Positive language attitudes refer to the favorable dispositions and opinions that individuals or groups hold towards a particular language or language variety (Baker, 1992). These attitudes significantly impact language use, maintenance, and shift. Several factors influence positive language attitudes, including language policy, education, family, community, and socioeconomic status (Fishman, 1991).

Language policy plays a critical role in fostering positive attitudes. For instance, recognizing and supporting minority languages through inclusive language policies can help develop positive language attitudes (May, 2001). Similarly, education is essential in shaping how individuals perceive their language. When students are taught to value and respect their native

language, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards it (Hornberger, 2002). Moreover, bilingual education programs provide students with the opportunity to learn and maintain their heritage language, further promoting positive attitudes (Baker, 2011).

Community support also significantly impacts language attitudes. When community members value and actively promote their language, it fosters a sense of pride and identity among speakers (Kroskrity, 2000). Community-based language programs provide opportunities for language learners to engage with native speakers, helping them develop positive attitudes towards the language (Hinton, 2001).

Positive language attitudes are vital for language maintenance and revitalization. By understanding the factors that influence these attitudes, educators, policymakers, and community members can collaborate to promote language diversity and preserve linguistic heritage.

2.1.3.2 Negative Language Attitude

Negative language attitude refers to the unfavorable dispositions and opinions, that individuals or groups hold towards a particular language or

language variety (Baker1992). These attitudes can have a significant impact on language use language maintenance and language shift. Several factors can influence negative language attitude such as: language policy, education, family, community, and social economics status (Fishman, 1991). Negative attitude towards minority languages may arise, if they are seen as inferior or associated with poverty Kroskrity (2000).

2.1.4 Language Maintenance

Language maintenance focuses on preserving a minority language among its speakers, especially when it is continually influenced by a dominant language. It is essential to prevent the risk of a language shift Mostefa (2017).

According to Benrabah (2004) "Language maintenance is the continuous use of the mother tongue regardless of the cultural pressures from a more prestigious or politically more dominant language". In this view, language maintenance occurs when there is consistent and continuous use of the mother tongue (native language) in various contexts such as at home, in the community and sometimes in education or religious practices. It implies that

people actively choose to use their language despite external pressures and that simply is a means by which a language can be maintained.

Baker (2011:27)'' language maintenance is a relative language stability in the number and distribution of its speakers, its proficient usage by children and adults, and its retention in specific domains (e.g home, school and religion).

It could be seen from the author's definition that several factors that determine the stability and continuity of a language were highlighted.

Factors such as: Steady numbers of speakers overtime, ensuring the language does not experience a decline, Intergenerational transmission, continuous use in important areas of life such as home, school and religion.

Her definition is of the view or opinion that for a language to be maintained it must remain relevant, fundamental, and actively transmitted to future generations.

Families and communities play a crucial role in language maintenance. Parents who speak their native languages with their children at home are more likely to maintain their language (Dehouver,1990).

2.2 The Review of Previous Study

This section reviews several works that has been carried out on language, endangerment on different languages, over-time by different scholars and researchers.

David, O (2017), in the research paper "Language Endangerment: The Kantana Language Situation" investigates the Kantana language in the context of global language endangerment. The katana Language Spoken by a minority group in Nigeria's Middle Belt region, is at risk of extinction due to the increasing preference for Hausa, English, and other factors. The study used interviews and observation as it method of data collection. Five adults and five youths were selected randomly for the interview basically to compare the knowledge of the adults and the youths in Katana language. The study revealed that Kantana, along with other regional languages, may go into extinction within a decade if urgent action is not taken. The paper concludes with recommendations for revitalizing the Kantana language.

Sarvi, A. (2016), in his PhD thesis investigates “the endangerment of the Eggon language spoken in Nasarawa State, Nigeria”. The research aims to determine the degree of endangerment, identify the contributing factors, and

assess whether the endangerment can be reversed. The study adopted several methods of data collection as its methodology. These methods include library research, verbal interview, written questionnaire and observation. It also employed the Ethnologue's Expanded Graded Inter-generational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) and UNESCO's framework as its theoretical framework.

The findings indicate that the Eggon language is severely endangered, primarily due to the lack of inter-generational language transmission and negative attitudes towards the language among native speakers. However, since the language is still spoken by some generations and transmitted by some parents, its endangerment is considered reversible. The study concluded with recommendations to revitalize the Eggon language, it recommends urgent documentation and standardization, as well as the development of pedagogical, grammatical, and literary materials.

Adewale, K. & Oshodi, B. (2013) in the article LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT IN NIGERIA FOCUS ON: SMALL ETHNOLINGUISTICS COMMUNITIES IN NIGER STATE assessed the level of endangerment of six languages spoken in Niger State, Nigeria: Ura,

Lupa, Kaami, Bangi, Gelanci, and Asu. The research focused on the frequency of language use in various domains, such as homes, markets, and social gatherings. In the study, Languages with fewer than 10,000 speakers are classified as "very small." The study employed Edwards' (1992) model of analysis, modified by Grenoble and Whaley (1999), and utilized questionnaires, interviews, and observations as research instruments. The findings of the study indicates that the primary challenges facing these "very small" languages are the limited number of speakers and restricted usage domains.

The study concluded with recommendations to strengthen and revitalize these languages, the study recommends incorporating indigenous language instruction into pre-primary and primary school education.

Balogun, T (2013), language Endangerment in Nigeria: The Case of Yoruba. The study sheds light on the alarming rate of endangerment of the Yoruba language, particularly among secondary school students in Yoruba land. The research employed a questionnaire with a close test to assess the students' knowledge of Yoruba in three Yoruba-speaking states in Southern Nigeria.

The findings revealed a disturbing trend: the Yoruba language is experiencing low usage, patronage, and patriotism among the students. Furthermore, the students struggled to provide meanings for selected Yoruba proverbs, words, and expressions. The study concludes that the Yoruba language is at risk of gradual extinction if urgent measures are not taken to address its declining fortunes.

2.3 The Concern of Present Study

This study seeks to first, find out if the Ukwuani language is really endangered, examine the variables contributing to its endangerment, investigate the roles(place) youths play in the endangerment of the language and their language choices in place of the Ukwuani language and to develop a language maintenance and preservation plan for the Ukwuani language.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concentrates on the theoretical framework of the research on language endangerment. “The language shift theory” of Fishman (1964) is the theoretical framework used in this study.

3.1 Language Shift Theory

This present study adopts the Language Shift” theory proposed by Joshua Fishman(1964).In(1991) he made it particularly relevant to the discourse on Language Endangerment and loss (LEL).This theory examines the process by which a community abandons its traditional language in favor of a dominating language. Fishman’s theory is based on the principle that language shift occurs as a result of various social, political and economic factors that influences language use and attitudes within a community.

According to Fishman, language shift is a gradual and complex process that is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors include changes in the demographics and social organization of a community, as well as the perception and status of the traditional language within the community. External factors include colonization, migration, globalization, and the influence of dominant languages and cultures.

Fishman argues that language shift occurs in stages, beginning with a decrease in the use of the traditional language in public and private spheres. This initial stage is often followed by a shift in language attitudes, with the dominant language becoming more prestigious and desirable than the

traditional language. As a result, younger generations may be more likely to adopt the dominant language as their primary means of communication, eventually leading to the decline and eventual extinction of the traditional language.

Fishman also emphasizes the role of language maintenance efforts in slowing or reversing language shift. These efforts may include language revitalization programs, language education initiatives, and the promotion of positive language attitudes within the community. By raising awareness and fostering pride in the traditional language, communities may be able to preserve their linguistic heritage and prevent the loss of their language.

In conclusion, Fishman's language shift theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex dynamics of language change and loss within communities. By examining the internal and external factors that contribute to language shift, researchers and policymakers can develop strategies to support language maintenance and revitalization efforts in endangered language communities.

3.2 Application of the Theory

Fishman did not merely identify the factors leading to language shift but also proposed strategies for **reversing language shift (RLS)**. He suggested that deliberate efforts, such as promoting the language within the home and community, creating educational programs that teach the language, and encouraging its use in local media, are essential for revitalization. For Ukwuani, this could involve community-based initiatives where elders engage with youths to pass down the language. Additionally, incorporating Ukwuani into school curricula or extracurricular activities could help institutionalize its learning. In the digital age, leveraging social media platforms to create engaging and relatable content in Ukwuani could also attract the younger generation, making the language more relevant and appealing. By applying Fishman's Language Shift Theory to the study of Ukwuani language endangerment, particularly focusing on the role of youths, this analysis can provide a comprehensive understanding of the social, economic, and cultural factors at play. It not only highlights the challenges but also offers strategic directions for preserving Ukwuani in Delta State.

3.3 Relevance of the Theory

The language shift theory proposed by Fishman is highly relevant to this research as it is a sociolinguistic theory. This theory provides a framework for understanding the factors contributing to language endangerment, particularly the role of younger generations in language shift processes.

In the case of the Ukwuani language, the youth population plays a crucial role in the maintenance or decline of the language. As younger generations are often more influenced by dominant languages and cultures, they may be more inclined to adopt languages such as English or Nigerian Pidgin as their primary means of communication. This shift in language use among the youth can contribute to the overall decline of the Ukwuani language within the community.

By applying Fishman's language shift theory to this research, researchers can investigate the internal and external factors influencing language endangerment in this specific context. For example, they can examine the social, political, and economic factors that may be contributing to the decline of the Ukwuani language, as well as the attitudes and perceptions of the language among the youth population.

Furthermore, researchers can explore language maintenance efforts within the community, such as language education programs or cultural revitalization initiatives, to assess their effectiveness in preserving the Ukwuani language. By understanding how language shift works and the role of youth in language endangerment, researchers can develop strategies to promote language revitalization and ensure the survival of the language for future generations.

In conclusion, Fishman's language shift theory provides a valuable framework for conducting research on the Place of Youth in Language Endangerment of the Ukwuani Language in Delta State, Nigeria. By applying this theory, researchers can gain insights into the factors contributing to language shift and develop targeted interventions to support language maintenance and revitalization efforts within the community.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected for the study on The Place of Youth in Language Endangerment of Ukwuani in Delta State. The data was gathered through questionnaires distributed to 50 native speakers of the Ukwuani language, aged 18 to 40. The analysis focuses on the language choices, attitudes, and usage patterns of the youth and their impact on the endangerment of the Ukwuani language. The findings are presented using Statistics analysis, supported by tables and percentages.

4.1 Data Presentation

The data collected from the respondents are categorized into the following themes:

1. Demographic Information of Respondents

Age distribution

Gender distribution

Educational background

Place of residence background

2. Language Use and Preference Among Ukwuani Youths

Frequency of Ukwuani language use in daily conversations

Preferred language(s) for communication (e.g., English, Pidgin, Ukwuani)

Language use in different contexts (family gathering, festival or cultural events and daily communication).

3. Attitude of Youths Towards Ukwuani Language

Perceptions of the Ukwuani language (e.g., prestigious, outdated, irrelevant)

Influence of peer groups on language use

Impact of social media and formal education on language preference

4. Impact of Youth Language Choices on Ukwuani Endangerment

Evidence of language shift among youths

Inter-generational transmission of Ukwuani language

Factors contributing to the decline of Ukwuani language use

5. Suggestions for Language Maintenance and Revitalization

Strategies for encouraging Ukwuani language use among youths

Role of education, family, and community in language preservation

Recommendations for language policy and planning

4.2 Data Analysis

The responses from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using content analysis. The findings are summarized below:

4.2.1 Demographic Information

S/N	Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Age	18 – 25	35	70%
		26 – 35	4	8%
		35 – 40	11	22%
2	Gender	Male	25	50%

		Female	25	50%
3	Educational level	Primary School	0	0%
		Secondary School	23	46%
		Tertiary institution	20	40%
		Others	7	14%
4		Place of Residence	Rural Areas	34
	Urban Areas		16	32%

This is a demographic analysis of respondents categorized by age, gender, educational level, and place of residence. The majority of respondents (76%) fall within the age range of 18–25, suggesting that the study predominantly captures the perspectives of young adults. A smaller proportion (22%) is aged 35–40, while the least represented group (8%) is within the 26–35 age range. This distribution indicates a youthful demographic with limited middle-aged participation. Regarding gender, the respondents are evenly distributed, with males and females each constituting 50% of the sample. This balance enhances the reliability of the study's findings by minimizing gender bias. Educational background varies, with 46% having completed

secondary school and 40% attaining tertiary education. Notably, no respondents reported only a primary school education, suggesting a relatively educated population. Meanwhile, 14% fall under the ‘Others’ category, potentially indicating for business persons and teacher. In terms of residence, a significant majority (68%) live in rural areas, whereas 32% are urban dwellers. This rural-urban distribution highlights the study's rural focus, which could influence the perspectives captured, possibly reflecting rural socio-cultural dynamics. The table provides a clear demographic profile, revealing a young, gender-balanced, and relatively educated population, predominantly residing in rural areas. This context is essential for interpreting the study's findings accurately.

4.2.2 Language Use and Preferences among Ukwuani Youths

S/N	Item	Categories	Frequency	Percentages
1	Which language do you speak more often	Ukwuani	16	32%
		English	27	54%
		Pidgin	7	14%
2	Do you understand	Yes	28	47%

	Ukwuani			
		Partially	7	14%
		No	15	30%
3	How would you rate your fluency in ukwuani	Very fluent	17	34%
		Moderately	7	14%
		Slightly	9	18%
		Not fluent at all	17	34%
4	In which context do you most often use ukwuani	Family gathering	22	44%
		Festivals or cultural event	3	6%
		Daily communication	5	10%
		Tick all that applies	8	16%
		Others	8	24%

The data from the questionnaire shows the analysis of language use, understanding, fluency, and contextual application among respondents, with a focus on the Ukwuani language. Regarding the language spoken most frequently, 54% of respondents primarily use English, indicating its dominance as a medium of communication. Ukwuani follows with 32%, showing its relevance within the community, while Pidgin is used by 14%, reflecting its role as a lingua franca in informal settings. This distribution suggests a multilingual environment where English is preferred for formal communication. Understanding of Ukwuani varies, with 56% of respondents fully comprehending the language, highlighting its cultural importance. However, 30% do not understand Ukwuani at all, signaling a shift possibly due to urbanization or educational influence. An additional 14% understand it partially, suggesting exposure without complete understanding of the language. Fluency levels reveal a balanced distribution, with 30% being very fluent and another 34% not fluent at all. This contrast points to generational or social factors affecting language retention. Meanwhile, 18% are slightly fluent, and 8% are moderately fluent, indicating varying degrees of language

competence among speakers. The contexts in which Ukwuani is spoken reveal cultural patterns. It is predominantly used at family gatherings 44%, emphasizing its role in preserving cultural identity within familial structures. Conversely, only 6% use it at festivals or cultural events, suggesting a decline in traditional public use. Daily communication accounts for just 10%, reinforcing the preference for English or Pidgin in routine interactions. Additionally, 16% ticked multiple contexts, and 24% cited ‘Others,’ hinting at varied and personal usage context. The analysis illustrates a community navigating multilingualism, with English leading in frequency of use, while Ukwuani maintains cultural significance, particularly in familial and intimate social contexts.

4.2.3 Attitude of Youths Towards Ukwuani Language

S/N	Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Do you think the use of English and pidgin has reduced the use of Ukwuani	Yes	38	76%
		No	10	20%

		Not sure	2	4%
2	Which Factor contribute to the decline in Ukwuani usage	Movement to urban areas	41	64%
		Use of other Language like English and pidgin	40	63%
		Lack of Interest among Youth	34	57%
		Inadequate teaching of the language in schools	36	60%
		Influence of globalization	30	50%

The data from this questionnaire examines the perceptions of the decline in Ukwuani language usage, highlighting the influence of English and Pidgin and identifying contributing factors. A significant majority (76%) of respondents believe that the use of English and Pidgin has contributed to the reduced usage of Ukwuani. This suggests that the dominance of these languages, likely due to their utility in education and commerce, is

overshadowing indigenous language use. Conversely, 20% do not perceive any decline, possibly reflecting contexts where Ukwuani remains prevalent. A small percentage 4% are uncertain, indicating limited awareness of language shift. Several factors are identified as contributing to the decline in Ukwuani usage. Movement to urban areas is prominent, as urbanization often exposes speakers to dominant languages like English, reducing the need for local dialects. Similarly, the widespread use of English and Pidgin serves as a lingua franca, reducing the functional value of Ukwuani in daily communication. Lack of interest among youth is also significant, with 57% acknowledging it as a factor. This reflects generational language shift, where younger generations prioritize global or more widely spoken languages. Additionally, 60% point to inadequate teaching of Ukwuani in schools, highlighting gaps in formal language preservation efforts. This suggests that educational systems may be favoring colonial or global languages over indigenous ones. Globalization influences 50% of respondents' perceptions, emphasizing the cultural similarities that accompanies global

interconnectedness. This influence likely encourages the adoption of more globally relevant languages, thus impacting indigenous language retention.

4.2.4 Impact of Youth Language Choices on Ukwuani Endangerment

S/N	Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Do you think Ukwuani Language is endangered	Yes	33	66%
		No	17	34%
2	What do you think is the biggest reason for the decline in Ukwuani Usage	Influence of English	18	36%
		Migration to Urban areas	12	24%
		Place of Interest from the Youth	20	40%
3	Do you think modern technology affects Ukwuani usage	Yes	35	70%
		No	15	30%

The study explores perceptions of the endangerment of the Ukwuani language, reasons for its decline, and the impact of modern technology on its usage. A majority of respondents 66% believe that Ukwuani is endangered, highlighting concerns about language preservation and continuity. This perception reflects awareness diminishing usage and the influence of

dominant languages. However, 34% do not see Ukwuani as endangered, possibly due to its continued use in specific social or cultural settings. Regarding the reasons for the decline in Ukwuani usage, the leading factor identified is a lack of interest among youth 40%. This suggests a generational shift, where younger people prioritize more widely spoken languages, so as to feel among their peers or integration into urban and global cultures, for some of them, they see Ukwuani as an old fashioned language as they are young people and they want to unravel life. The influence of English follows at 36%, underscoring its role as a dominant language in education, media, and official communication. Migration to urban areas is cited by 24%, indicating that urbanization contributes to reduced use of indigenous languages as people adapt to global linguistic environments. The impact of modern technology on Ukwuani usage is also significant, with 70% agreeing that it affects language use. This is likely due to the prevalence of digital content in English and Pidgin, which dominate social media, entertainment, and educational platform. Overall, 30% do not see technology as a threat, possibly reflecting contexts where digital

resources are used to support or promote Ukwuani. These factors suggest that if current trends continue, the Ukwuani language may face further decline in the next generation.

4.2.5 Language Presentation Plan

S/N	Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	What can be done to encourage young people to speak Ukwuani	Introducing Ukwuani in schools	35	57%
		Holding cultural event	33	55%
		Broadcasting in Ukwuani on radio/TV	36	60%
		Creating social media content in Ukwuani	33	55%
2	Would you participate in a language preservation program in ukwuani	Yes	32	64%
		No	18	36%

3	Do you think local leaders and elders are doing enough to promote Ukwuani language	Yes	23	46%
		No	27	54%

The data from the table examines strategies to encourage young people to speak Ukwuani, willingness to participate in language preservation programs, and perceptions of local leaders' efforts in promoting the language. To encourage young people to speak Ukwuani, respondents suggest several interventions. Broadcasting in Ukwuani on radio and television is the most favored approach 60%. This reflects the influence of mass media in shaping cultural norms and language use, highlighting the potential of mainstream media to revitalize indigenous languages. Introducing Ukwuani in schools is also seen as crucial, with 57% supporting its inclusion in the educational curriculum. This suggests that formal education can play an important role in language preservation by teaching reading and writing in Ukwuani. Holding cultural events and creating social media content in Ukwuani are each supported by 55% of respondents. Cultural events provide

a platform for communal interaction and cultural identity reinforcement, while social media content can engage younger generations, leveraging their digital literacy to promote the language. Regarding participation in language preservation programs, 64% of respondents express willingness, reflecting a positive attitude towards safeguarding their linguistic heritage. However, 36% are unwilling, possibly due to perceived irrelevance or the influence of dominant languages like English and Pidgin. Perceptions of local leaders and elders' roles in promoting Ukwuani reveal a divide. While 46% believe they are doing enough, a larger proportion 54% disagrees. This indicates a perceived gap in leadership initiatives for language promotion, suggesting a need for more proactive community engagement and advocacy. Overall, the table highlights a community willing to engage in Ukwuani preservation through education, media, and cultural events, but it also underscores the need for stronger leadership and community mobilization efforts.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings confirm the hypothesis that youth language choices and attitudes significantly impact the endangerment of the Ukwuani language.

Based on Fishman's Language Shift Theory (1964), it is evident that:

Stage 1: The use of Ukwuani is declining in everyday conversations.

Stage 2: The language is perceived as less prestigious compared to English and Pidgin.

Stage 3: Younger generations are not learning Ukwuani as their primary language, accelerating its endangerment.

However, the study also identified potential strategies for revitalization, such as incorporating Ukwuani into school curricula, using social media to promote the language, and encouraging family-based transmission.

4.4 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented and analyzed data collected from Ukwuani youths regarding their language choices and attitudes. The results indicate a decline in Ukwuani language use, influenced by peer groups, formal education, and social media. The findings align with Fishman's Language Shift Theory,

confirming that Ukwuani is at risk of endangerment due to youth language preferences. The next chapter will provide recommendations for language maintenance and revitalization.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study, presents the key findings, and concludes with recommendations for the preservation of the Ukwuani language. The study examined the role of youths in the endangerment of the Ukwuani language, exploring their language choices, attitudes, and the factors influencing their linguistic behaviors. The chapter also highlights the significance of language preservation and offers suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This research investigated The Place of Youth in Language Endangerment of Ukwuani in Delta State. The study was motivated by concerns that the Ukwuani language is facing a decline due to language shift among younger generations. The study aimed to:

1. Determine whether the Ukwuani language is truly endangered.

2. Identify the language choices and attitudes of youths towards Ukwuani
3. Examine the effects of youth language attitudes on the status of Ukwuani.
4. Develop a language preservation plan for the promotion of the Ukwuani language.

A quantitative research approach was adopted, with data collected through questionnaires administered to 50 native Ukwuani speakers aged 18–40. The analysis was conducted using content analysis to examine language usage patterns, attitudes, and factors contributing to the decline of Ukwuani.

The study applied Fishman’s Language Shift Theory (1991) to explain the decline of Ukwuani among youths, emphasizing how social, economic, and educational factors contribute to language shift. The findings confirm that the Ukwuani language is endangered due to limited inter-generational transmission and negative language attitudes among young speakers.

5.2 Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. Endangerment of the Ukwuani Language

The Ukwuani language is at the risk of being replaced by English and Nigerian Pidgin and going into extinction due to the lack of interest and usage of the Language by the youth as they are supposed to be the carrier of the Language. So, reluctance and a negative attitude towards the language from the youths tends to make the language endangered putting it at the verge of going into extinction. According to the research, only a small percentage of youths actively speak Ukwuani in daily interactions.

2. Language Choices and Attitudes of Ukwuani Youths

54% of respondents prefer to communicate in English, 14% in Nigerian Pidgin, and only 32% in Ukwuani.

Most respondents use Ukwuani primarily when speaking with older family members, rather than among peers.

Negative perceptions of Ukwuani include views that it is outdated and less useful for modern communication.

3. Factors Contributing to Language Shift

Influence of Education: Schools prioritize English, and Ukwuani is not included in formal education.

Lack of interest from youths and Peer Influence: Many young speakers avoid Ukwuani to fit in with social groups that favors English or Pidgin. They communicated that the English language is a language of prestige and that it is the language of the literate, as it gives them a sense of belonging forgetting that their native language (ukwuani) is what defines them and gives them an identity and that the risk of the ukwuani language falling out of use will cost them their culture and identities as their identities and loyalties are already being negotiated.

Media and Technology: The dominance of English in digital platforms discourages the use of Ukwuani as every social media content is recorded in English language, same as adverts, news and so on.

Parental Influence: research shows that the first language a child learns and how competent the child is in the language starts and is dependent on the caregiver; and this can be the parents, guardian or nanny. A majority of

parents no longer teach Ukwuani as a first language, contributing to the language being endangered.

4. Effects of Language Endangerment on Ukwuani

A decline in the number of fluent speakers.

Loss of cultural identity and reduced transmission of traditional knowledge.

Increased dominance of English and Pidgin in social and economic interactions.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the Ukwuani language is endangered due to language shift among younger generations. Factors such as the preference for English and Pidgin, the role of education, peer influence and lack of interest from youths, and the lack of intergenerational transmission contribute to this decline. If urgent action is not taken, Ukwuani may face further decline, leading to its possible extinction.

The study emphasizes the need for language preservation efforts, including the promotion of positive language attitudes, the inclusion of Ukwuani in education, and the use of digital platforms to encourage the use of the

language. Without intervention, the continued decline of Ukwuani may result in linguistic loss.

5.4 Recommendations

To address the endangerment of the Ukwuani language, the study recommends the following:

1. Inclusion of Ukwuani in Formal Education: Introducing Ukwuani as a subject in primary and secondary schools and developing standardized teaching materials such as dictionaries and textbooks.
2. Promotion of Ukwuani in Media and Technology
3. Encouraging the creation of contents on social media and digital platforms with the use of the Ukwuani language and developing mobile applications and online resources for learning Ukwuani.
4. Community and Family-Based Language Transmission
5. Parents should actively teach and encourage their children to speak Ukwuani at home. Community-based language programs should be introduced to foster inter-generational language transmission, public Awareness and Language Advocacy.

6. Organizing cultural festivals and language promotion campaigns; encouraging youths to take pride in their linguistic heritage through language clubs and workshops.
7. Government and Local leaders Policy and Support
8. Implementing policies that recognize and protect indigenous languages, governments and local leaders should providing financial and institutional support for language preservation initiatives.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire on "The Place of Youth in Language Endangerment of Ukwuani in Delta State"

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age:

18–25 26–35 35-40

2. Gender:

Male Female

3. Educational Level:

Primary School Secondary School Tertiary Institution

Others (please specify): _____

4. Place of Residence:

Rural Area Urban Area

Section B: Language Choice and Usage

5. Which language do you speak more often in your daily interaction?

Ukwuani English Pidgin English

Other (please specify): _____

6. Do you understand the Ukwuani language?

Yes Partially No

7. How would rate your fluency in Ukwuani?

Very Fluent Moderately Fluent Slightly Fluent Not Fluent at

All

8. In which context do you most often use Ukwuani? (Tick all that apply.)

Family gatherings Festivals or cultural events Daily

communication

Other (please specify): _____

Section C: Factors Contributing to Language Endangerment

9. Do you think the use of English or Pidgin English has reduced the use of the Ukwuani language?

Yes No Not Sure

10. Which factors do you believe contribute to the decline in the use of the Ukwuani language? (Tick all that apply.)

- Migration to urban areas
- Use of other languages like English/Pidgin
- Lack of interest among youths
- Inadequate teaching of the language in schools
- Influence of globalization
- Others (please specify): _____

Section D: Effects of Youths' Attitude on the Ukwuani Language

11. Do you think the Ukwuani language is endangered?

Yes No

12. What do you think is the biggest reason for the decline in Ukwuani usage?

Influence of English Migration to urban areas Lack of interest from the youth

13. Do you think modern technology (social media, TV, etc) affects the usage of Ukwuani?

Yes No

Section E: Language Preservation Plan

14. What do you think can be done to encourage young people to speak Ukwuani? (Tick all that apply.)

- Introducing Ukwuani in schools
- Holding cultural events
- Broadcasting in Ukwuani on radio/TV
- Creating social media content in Ukwuani

15. Would you participate in a language preservation program for Ukwuani?

Yes No

16. Do you think local leaders and elders are doing enough to promote the Ukwuani language?

Yes No

17. What suggestions do you have for preserving the Ukwuani language? _____