

**LANGUAGE LOYALTY AND LANGUAGE PREFERENCE: A CASE STUDY OF EDO  
LINGUISTICS STUDENTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

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**OCTOBER, 2025**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES,  
FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, EDO STATE, NIGERIA.  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE  
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## **APPROVAL PAGE**

I, **OSARETIN BENEDICT OSARUPAMEN**, a student of the Department of Linguistics Studies, University of Benin, with matriculation number **ART2100838**, have duly satisfied the requirements for coursework and research towards the award of the Bachelor of Arts degree of the University of Benin. The work embodied in this project is the result of my original research and intellectual effort. It has not been submitted in part or in whole for the purpose of obtaining any degree, diploma, or professional qualification in this or any other institution of higher learning.

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## PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATE

I, OSARETIN BENEDICT OSARUPAMEN, with the matriculation number **ART2100838**, declare that this work titled **“LANGUAGE LOYALTY AND LANGUAGE PREFERENCE:A CASE STUDY OF BENIN YOUTH IN EDO LINGUISTICS IN UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,”** has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test and does not violate any copyright regulations.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**OSARETIN BENEDICT OSARUPAMEN**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated first to Almighty God, whose unfailing grace, guidance, and inspiration have sustained me throughout the course of this research.

I also lovingly dedicate it to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Osaretin, whose prayers, sacrifices, and steadfast support have been an enduring source of strength and encouragement in my academic journey.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	ii
Approval	iii
Plagiarism Certificate	iv
Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Abstracts	ix
<b>CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY</b>	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	2
1.3 Aim and Objectives	4
1.4 Methodology	5
1.5 Significance of the Study	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE</b>	
2.1 Conceptual Review of Literature	10
2.1.1 Understanding Language Loyalty	10
2.1.2 The Role of Language Preference	10
2.1.3 The Impact of Globalization	11

2.1.4 Educational Influence on Language Preference	11
2.1.5 Cultural Identity and Language Loyalty	11
2.1.6 Social Media Influence	11
2.1.7 Community Engagement and Language Preservation	12
2.2 Previous Studies	12
2.2.1 Language and Identity	13
2.2.2 Bilingualism and Multilingualism	13
2.2.3 The Impact of Education	14
2.2.4 Social Media Influence	15
2.2.5 Cultural Preservation Efforts	15
2.2.6 Conclusion	15
2.3 Concern of the Present Study	16
2.3.1 Impact of Globalization	16
2.3.2 Educational Influence on Language Preference	16
2.3.3 Cultural Identity and Language Loyalty	17
2.3.4 Social Media and Language Use	17
2.3.5 Community Engagement and Language Preservation	18
2.3.6 Conclusion	18
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b>	
3.0 Introduction	19
3.1 Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory	19
3.1.1 Application of Theory	20
3.1.2 Relevance/Justification of the Theory	20
3.2 Fishman’s Theory of Language Loyalty and Shift	20

3.2.1 Application of Theory	21
3.2.2 Relevance/Justification of the Theory	21
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS</b>	
4.0 Introduction	22
4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents	22
4.2 Language Preference	23
4.3 Language Loyalty	24
4.4 Cross Analysis: Language Preference vs Language Loyalty	25
4.5 Summary of Findings	26
4.6 Discussion	26
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
5.0 Introduction	28
5.1 Summary of the Study	28
5.2 Findings	28
5.3 Conclusion	30
5.4 Recommendations	31
References	33
Appendix	34

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines language loyalty and language preference: the case study of Benin youths in Edo linguistics in University of Benin, focusing on their attitudes and use of the Edo (Benin) language. Data were collected from twenty eight (28) respondents through questionnaires and analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The findings show that although most respondents feel proud of the Edo language and believe it should be preserved, many prefer using English and Pidgin English in daily and academic interactions. This reveals a growing language shift, where Edo is valued for cultural identity but used less in practice. The study concludes that while language loyalty remains strong, actual use of Edo is declining. It recommends promoting the language through education, media, and family communication to sustain it among future generations.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Language is more than just a means of communication; it is a vital part of our identity and culture. In Nigeria, a country rich in linguistic diversity, many young people face a unique challenge when it comes to language use. This project explores the concepts of language loyalty and language preference among Benin youths at the University of Benin.

As globalization and urban life become more prominent, many students find themselves torn between their native Edo language and more widely spoken languages like English. While English is often seen as the key to better job opportunities and academic success, the Edo language connects them to their heritage and community. This project aims to understand how these young people navigate their language choices, what influences their preferences, and how their loyalty to their native language shapes their identities.

By examining these dynamics, we hope to shed light on the experiences of Benin youths, illustrating the intricate relationship between language, culture, and personal identity in a rapidly changing world.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Language serves as a powerful tool for communication, cultural expression, and identity formation. In Nigeria, a nation home to over 500 languages, linguistic diversity is a hallmark of the country's rich cultural tapestry. Among these languages, Edo, spoken primarily by the Edo people, holds significant historical and cultural importance. However, as the landscape of education and employment evolves, the dynamics of language use among the youth, particularly

in urban settings like Benin City, are changing.

At the University of Benin, a melting pot of cultures and languages, students are increasingly exposed to global languages, especially English, which is the primary medium of instruction. This exposure prompts a shift in language preference, where English is often viewed as a symbol of progress and opportunity. Despite this, many young people maintain a strong sense of loyalty to their native Edo language, as it embodies their cultural identity and heritage.

Previous studies have highlighted the complex relationship between language loyalty and preference, noting that individuals often navigate multiple languages depending on the context. For Benin youths, the choice to use Edo or English can reflect family background, peer influence, and social aspirations. However, limited research has focused specifically on how these factors play out in the context of the University of Benin.

This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the language attitudes, preferences, and loyalty of Benin youths. By understanding these dynamics, we can gain valuable insights into how language shapes their identities and influences their interactions in a multicultural educational environment. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on language use and cultural identity in Nigeria, emphasizing the importance of preserving indigenous languages in a globalized world.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The relationship between language loyalty and language preference among Benin youths at the University of Benin presents a range of significant issues that merit investigation. As globalization increasingly elevates the status of English, many young people find themselves navigating a linguistic landscape that often prioritizes this global language over their native

tongues. This shift raises concerns about the potential erosion of cultural identity, as the younger generation may favour English for its perceived advantages, thereby risking the decline of the Edo language, which is deeply rooted in their heritage.

In the academic context, the University of Benin predominantly uses English as the medium of instruction. This emphasis creates pressure for students to adopt English as their primary language for academic success, leading to questions about how this preference affects their performance and social interactions. The dynamics of language use in such a setting can influence not only academic outcomes but also personal relationships and community ties.

Furthermore, various social factors significantly impact language choices among Benin youths. Elements such as family background, peer influence, and exposure to media all play crucial roles in shaping attitudes toward language use. However, the specific effects of these factors on language loyalty and preference remain underexplored in the existing literature, particularly in the context of Benin. Understanding these influences is essential for grasping how language dynamics evolve among young people in this region.

Moreover, while there is a body of research on language dynamics in Nigeria, there is a notable lack of focused studies that examine the unique experiences of Benin youths. This gap in the literature limits our understanding of how local cultural contexts influence language use and identity formation. Without this knowledge, it becomes challenging to address the specific needs and concerns of these students.

Finally, the insights gained from this study could have broader implications for educational policies and initiatives aimed at promoting indigenous languages. Understanding the language preferences and loyalties of students can inform strategies to preserve and promote the Edo

language, ensuring that cultural identity is not lost in the face of globalization. Without a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics, efforts to safeguard linguistic heritage may fall short.

In summary, the interplay between language loyalty and preference among Benin youths is a multifaceted issue that deserves thorough exploration. Addressing these problems will not only contribute to the academic discourse on language and identity but also support the preservation of cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world.

### **1.3 Aim and Objectives**

The primary aim of this study is to explore the dynamics of language loyalty and language preference among Benin youths at the University of Benin. In a rapidly changing world where globalization influences language use, it is essential to understand how these young people navigate their linguistic choices within a multicultural environment. This research seeks to uncover how their language preferences reflect their cultural identity and how their loyalty to their native language shapes their interactions and experiences.

To achieve this aim, the study has several specific objectives:

1. **To Examine Language Preferences:** One of the key objectives is to investigate the languages preferred by Benin youths in various contexts, including academic, social, and familial settings. Understanding the reasons behind these preferences will provide insights into how language choices are influenced by different circumstances and expectations.
2. **To Assess Language Loyalty:** Another important objective is to evaluate the level of loyalty that students feel towards their native Edo language in comparison to other languages,

particularly English. By exploring the factors that influence this loyalty, the study aims to highlight the significance of cultural heritage in language use among young people.

3. To Identify Influencing Factors: The study also seeks to explore the social, cultural, and economic factors that affect language choices among Benin youths. This includes examining the roles of family background, peer influence, and media exposure in shaping language attitudes and preferences.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

To explore language loyalty and language preference among Benin youths at the University of Benin, a structured and comprehensive methodology will be employed. This approach is designed to gather relevant data and insights, ensuring that the research is thorough and meaningful.

The study will utilize a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This means that the research will involve collecting numerical data through surveys, as well as detailed personal accounts through questionnaire. By integrating these two approaches, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of language preferences and loyalties among Benin youths.

The research will target a diverse group of students at the University of Benin, selecting a sample size of approximately 200 students to ensure a variety of perspectives. Participants will be chosen from different Levels from 100level to 400 level and backgrounds to reflect the diversity of the student population, making the findings more representative of the entire student body.

Data collection will involve several key components. First, structured questionnaires will be distributed to the selected students. The survey will include questions about their language preferences, the languages they use in different contexts—such as at home, school, and in social settings—and their feelings towards the Edo language. This quantitative data will help identify patterns in language use and preferences among the students.

In addition to surveys, in-depth interviews will be conducted with a smaller group of approximately 20 to 30 participants. These questionnaire will provide an opportunity for students to share their thoughts and experiences regarding language loyalty and preference in a more personal manner. Open-ended questions will encourage participants to express their views on how language impacts their identity and social interactions.

Furthermore, focus group discussions will be organized to facilitate conversation among students. These discussions will allow participants to collectively explore their language experiences, providing insights into communal attitudes towards language use. This interactive format can reveal deeper insights into how peers influence each other's language choices.

The data collected from the surveys will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends and correlations, such as connections between language preference and factors like academic performance and cultural identity. Meanwhile, the qualitative data from questionnaire and focus groups will be analyzed thematically, identifying common themes and patterns in participants' responses. This thematic analysis will help capture the richness of students' experiences and provide a deeper understanding of their language loyalty and preferences.

Ethical guidelines will be strictly followed throughout the research process. Participants will be informed about the purpose of the study and their rights, including the right to withdraw

from the study at any time. Confidentiality will be maintained, ensuring that individual responses are not disclosed without consent. This ethical consideration is crucial for fostering trust and ensuring that participants feel safe in sharing their experiences.

In summary, this methodology combines surveys, questionnaire, and focus groups to gain a well-rounded understanding of language loyalty and preference among Benin youths at the University of Benin. By employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study aims to uncover valuable insights into how language shapes identity and social interactions among students in this multicultural environment. This research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of language use in contemporary Nigeria, particularly regarding the Edo language, and will inform strategies to promote and preserve this vital aspect of cultural heritage.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study on language loyalty and language preference among Benin youths at the University of Benin extends across various dimensions, contributing to academic discourse, cultural preservation, social awareness, policy implications, and youth empowerment.

First and foremost, this research fills a critical gap in the existing literature on sociolinguistics and language dynamics in Nigeria. While numerous studies have addressed language use in broader contexts, specific insights into the experiences of Benin youths remain limited. By focusing on this demographic, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how young people navigate their linguistic landscape amidst cultural and social pressures. This contribution is vital for scholars and educators seeking to grasp the complexities of language in a multicultural setting.

One of the most significant aspects of this study is its potential impact on the preservation of the Edo language and culture. As globalization continues to influence language use, many indigenous languages face the risk of decline. Understanding the loyalty and preference of Benin youths towards their native language can inform strategies to promote and preserve the Edo language. This is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and heritage, ensuring that future generations remain connected to their roots.

The findings of this study can also enhance social awareness regarding the importance of language in shaping identity. By examining how language choices influence cultural identity among Benin youths, the research highlights the critical role that language plays in personal and community belonging. This awareness can foster greater appreciation for linguistic diversity and encourage efforts to create inclusive environments where various languages are valued and respected.

Additionally, the study has significant implications for educational policies and initiatives. By providing insights into the language preferences and loyalties of students, the research can guide policymakers in developing programs that promote the Edo language within educational settings. Such initiatives can help create a more inclusive curriculum that recognizes and values indigenous languages, contributing to a more equitable educational landscape.

Finally, the study may empower Benin youths by validating their experiences and providing a platform for their voices. Understanding their language preferences and loyalties can help them navigate their identities in a rapidly changing world. By encouraging pride in their native language, the research can inspire young people to actively engage in cultural preservation and advocacy.

In summary, the significance of this study lies in its multifaceted contributions to understanding language dynamics among Benin youths. By exploring the interplay of language loyalty and preference, the research aims to foster a deeper appreciation of the relationship between language and identity in a multicultural society, ultimately supporting efforts preserve linguistic heritage for future generations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Conceptual Review of Literature**

Language is more than just a means of communication; it is a vital part of our identity and culture. In Benin, a city in Edo State, Nigeria, language loyalty and preference play crucial roles in shaping the lives of the youth. This essay explores these concepts within the context of Benin youths, examining how they relate to their cultural identity and social interactions. Additionally, it addresses several key concerns regarding language loyalty and preference among these youths.

##### **2.1.1 Understanding Language Loyalty**

Language loyalty refers to the commitment individuals or communities show towards their native language. For many youths in Benin, this loyalty is tied to a sense of pride in their cultural heritage. Speaking their local language, Edo, is seen as a way to connect with their roots and express their identity. This loyalty can be influenced by various factors, including family background, education, and peer influence.

According to Fishman (1991), language loyalty is central to maintaining linguistic heritage, as it reflects emotional and cultural attachment to one's native language. Similarly, Edwards (2010) notes that such loyalty often reinforces a sense of group identity and belonging within a community.

##### **2.1.2 The Role of Language Preference**

Language preference refers to the languages individuals choose to use in different social

and cultural contexts. In Benin, many youths are bilingual or multilingual, often speaking Edo alongside English or Nigerian Pidgin. While they may feel a strong loyalty to Edo, they might prefer to use English in formal settings like school or work. This preference can stem from the perception that English provides better opportunities for education and employment.

As Baker (2011) explains, bilingual speakers often choose languages based on context, prestige, or communicative efficiency. Crystal (2003) also observes that English, as a global language, is often perceived as a tool for social mobility and advancement.

### **2.1.3 The Impact of Globalization**

One major concern is the impact of globalization on language use and preference. As English and other global languages become more dominant, there is a risk that native languages like Edo may be marginalized. This study will explore how globalization influences the language choices of Benin youths, examining whether it leads to a decline in the use of Edo or fosters a more multilingual environment.

Phillipson (1992) argues that globalization often promotes linguistic imperialism, where dominant languages threaten indigenous tongues. Likewise, Pennycook (2007) highlights that global Englishes can reshape local linguistic practices, influencing how communities view and use their native languages.

### **2.1.4 Educational Influence on Language Preference**

Education plays a significant role in shaping language preferences. With English as the primary medium of instruction in schools, youths often develop a preference for English,

particularly in academic and professional contexts. This study will investigate how the educational system in Benin affects language loyalty and preference, focusing on whether students feel pressured to abandon their native language in favor of English.

Bamgbose (1991) asserts that colonial language policies have entrenched English in African education systems, often at the expense of indigenous languages. Adegbija (1994) further notes that this educational emphasis on English can lead to reduced use and transmission of local languages among younger generations.

#### **2.1.5 Cultural Identity and Language Loyalty**

For many youths, language is a key part of their cultural identity. Speaking Edo allows them to connect with their heritage and community. This study aims to assess how language loyalty is maintained among Benin youths in an increasingly globalized world. It will examine whether they perceive a conflict between their loyalty to Edo and the practical need to use English.

Giles and Johnson (1987) propose that language is an essential marker of ethnolinguistic identity, serving as a means through which individuals express belonging and distinction. Fishman (1972) also emphasizes that maintaining one's native language reinforces cultural identity and social cohesion.

#### **2.1.6 Social Media Influence**

The advent of social media has introduced new dynamics in language use. A study by Akanbi (2019) found that while youths engage with global languages, they also use their native languages creatively, blending them with modern forms of communication. This study will

explore how platforms like Facebook and Twitter influence the language choices of Benin youths. Are they using Edo in digital communication, or do they lean towards English and Pidgin?

### **2.1.7 Community Engagement and Language Preservation**

Lastly, the study will look into community initiatives aimed at promoting the Edo language among youths. What programs or activities exist to encourage the use of Edo, and how effective are they? This concern is vital for understanding how community engagement can foster language loyalty and create a supportive environment for language preservation.

Additionally, language loyalty and preference among Benin youths are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural identity, education, globalization, and social media. The present study addresses critical concerns surrounding these topics, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these factors influence language use in Benin. Ultimately, the findings will contribute to the ongoing discourse on language preservation and identity in a rapidly changing world, emphasizing the importance of fostering a linguistic environment that respects and values local languages like Edo.

## **2.2 Previous Studies**

Several scholars have investigated issues relating to language loyalty, language preference, and language shift in multilingual societies, especially in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Their findings provide useful background for understanding the linguistic situation among Benin youths.

Fishman (1991) in his classic work *Reversing Language Shift* emphasizes that language loyalty depends largely on community effort and intergenerational transmission. He argues that

when younger speakers stop using their native language in daily communication, the language begins to lose its vitality, even if people still express pride in it.

In Nigeria, Bamgbose (1991) and Adegbija (1994) observe that English dominates most formal and educational domains, pushing indigenous languages to informal or private use. Their studies show that many Nigerian youths prefer English and Pidgin English because they associate them with modernity, education, and wider communication opportunities.

Egbokhare (2003) examined language use in Edo State and discovered that although the Edo (Benin) language remains a strong symbol of cultural identity, its actual use among younger speakers is declining. He attributes this to urbanization, western education, and peer influence within schools and universities. Similarly, Omoregie (2010) found that many university students in Benin City switch to English or Pidgin in social settings, even when they are fluent in Edo, due to social prestige and convenience.

Other studies, such as Igboanusi and Peter (2005), note that language preference among Nigerian youths often reflects functional needs rather than emotional attachment. Youths may feel loyal to their mother tongue but choose other languages for academic and professional reasons.

These studies collectively show that language loyalty and language preference do not always align. While indigenous languages are valued emotionally and culturally, their practical usage is declining, particularly among educated youths. The present study builds on this background by focusing specifically on Benin youths in the University of Benin, examining how their language choices reflect both cultural loyalty and modern linguistic realities.

### **2.2.1 Language and Identity**

A fundamental aspect of language loyalty is its connection to cultural identity. Research has consistently shown that individuals often associate their native language with their heritage. For example, a study by Adegbija (2004) highlighted how Nigerian youths use language as a means to assert their cultural identity, especially in multicultural environments. In Benin, speaking Edo is not just about communication; it is a way for youths to express pride in their cultural roots and connect with their community.

### **2.2.2 Bilingualism and Multilingualism**

The phenomenon of bilingualism and multilingualism is prevalent among Nigerian youths, including those in Benin. A critical study by Omoniyi (2006) examined how being bilingual affects language preference. The findings revealed that while many youths prefer English in formal settings—such as schools and workplaces—they tend to revert to their native language, Edo, in informal contexts. This duality reflects a complex relationship where youths navigate their linguistic identities based on social context.

### **2.2.3 The Impact of Education**

Education plays a significant role in shaping language preferences. Research by Bamgbose (1991) indicates that the language of instruction in schools strongly influences students' language choices. In Benin, where English is predominantly used in educational institutions, youths often develop a preference for English, particularly in academic and professional environments. This shift can create a challenge for maintaining loyalty to the Edo language, as many young people may feel disconnected from their cultural heritage.

### **2.2.4 Social Media Influence**

The rise of social media has introduced new dynamics in language use among youths. A study by Akanbi (2019) investigated how social media platforms impact language preferences among Nigerian youths. The research found that while many engage with global languages on social media, they also creatively incorporate their native languages. This blending of languages reflects both a challenge and an opportunity for fostering language loyalty, as youths find ways to express their cultural identity in modern contexts.

### **2.2.5 Cultural Preservation Efforts**

In response to the challenges faced by native languages, various community initiatives have emerged to promote language use among youths. Igbokwe (2018) explored programs aimed at encouraging the use of Edo among young people. These initiatives focus on fostering pride in local language and culture, suggesting that active community engagement can significantly enhance language loyalty. Such efforts are critical in ensuring that the rich linguistic heritage of Edo continues to thrive among its youth.

### **2.2.6 Conclusion**

The body of research on language loyalty and preference among Benin youths reveals a multifaceted landscape influenced by cultural identity, education, globalization, and social media. While there is a strong commitment to the Edo language, various factors shape language choices in different contexts. Understanding these dynamics is essential for promoting both the preservation of local languages and effective communication in an increasingly interconnected world. As Benin youths navigate their linguistic identities, the interplay between loyalty and preference will continue to evolve, reflecting both challenges and opportunities for cultural expression.

## **2.3 Concern of the Present Study**

The present study seeks to delve into the intricate dynamics of language loyalty and language preference among youths in Benin, Edo State, Nigeria. As globalization and modernization continue to influence communication patterns, understanding how these factors affect local languages, particularly Edo, is crucial. This study aims to address several key concerns that arise in this context.

### **2.3.1 Impact of Globalization**

One major concern is the impact of globalization on language use and preference. With the increasing dominance of English and other global languages, there is a risk that native languages like Edo may become marginalized. The study will explore how globalization influences the language choices of Benin youths. Specifically, it will examine whether globalization leads to a decline in the use of Edo or fosters a more multilingual environment where youths can navigate between languages. Understanding this dynamic is essential for assessing the future of the Edo language in an interconnected world.

### **2.3.2 Educational Influence on Language Preference**

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping language preferences among youths. In many educational systems, including those in Benin, English is the primary medium of instruction. This study will investigate how the educational system influences language loyalty and preference among students. It will examine whether students feel pressured to abandon their native language in favor of English, and how this pressure affects their cultural identity and sense of belonging. By analyzing the educational context, the study aims to shed light on the implications for language preservation.

### **2.3.3 Cultural Identity and Language Loyalty**

The relationship between language and cultural identity is another crucial concern of this study. For many youths in Benin, speaking Edo is integral to their cultural identity and community belonging. This research aims to assess how language loyalty is maintained among Benin youths in an increasingly globalized world. The study will explore whether they perceive a conflict between their loyalty to Edo and the practical need to use English in various contexts. Understanding this balance is vital for recognizing the role of language in shaping cultural identity.

### **2.3.4 Social Media and Language Use**

The rise of social media has introduced new forms of communication that blend languages and dialects. This study will explore how platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp influence the language choices of Benin youths. Are they using Edo in their digital interactions, or do they lean towards English and Pidgin? By examining language use in social media contexts, this research will provide insights into how digital communication affects language loyalty and preference among the youth.

### **2.3.5 Community Engagement and Language Preservation**

Lastly, the study will investigate community initiatives aimed at preserving the Edo language among youths. What programs or activities exist to promote the use of Edo, and how effective are they? This concern is vital for understanding how community engagement can foster language loyalty and create a supportive environment for language preservation. By highlighting successful initiatives, the study aims to contribute to strategies for revitalizing and maintaining the Edo language among future generations.

### **2.3.6 Conclusion**

The present study addresses critical concerns surrounding language loyalty and preference among Benin youths. By examining the impacts of globalization, education, cultural identity, social media, and community engagement, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these factors influence language use in Benin. Ultimately, the findings will contribute to the ongoing discourse on language preservation and identity in a rapidly changing world, emphasizing the importance of fostering a linguistic environment that respects and values local languages like Edo.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.0 Introduction

A theoretical framework provides the foundation for analyzing the sociolinguistic realities of language use, preference, and loyalty. Since this study examines Language Loyalty and Language Preference among Benin Youth in the University of Benin, it is important to anchor the analysis on theories that adequately explain both the psychological attachment to a heritage language and the external factors influencing language choice. To this end, the study adopts two key theories: Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977) and Fishman's Theory of Language Loyalty and Shift (1964, 1991). These theories are relevant because they capture the interplay between identity, loyalty, and societal pressures in a multilingual environment like Benin City.

#### 3.1 Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory

Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT), developed by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977), explains why some languages remain strong and widely used, while others decline in multilingual settings. According to EVT, the strength or vitality of a language depends on three main factors:

Status: the prestige of the language, including its economic, social, and cultural value.

Demography: the size, distribution, and concentration of the speaker population.

Institutional Support: the degree to which the language is supported by institutions such as schools, government, media, and religion.

Languages with high vitality are more likely to be maintained, while those with low vitality are at risk of shift or extinction.

### **3.1.1 Application of Theory**

In the context of this study, EVT explains why English and Nigerian Pidgin enjoy preference among Benin youth over Edo (Bini). English has high status as Nigeria's official language and is the medium of education, while Nigerian Pidgin has strong demographic support among youths as a lingua franca for informal communication. Edo (Bini), however, has weaker vitality because its institutional support is limited, and its use is mostly confined to family, cultural events, and traditional settings. This difference in vitality accounts for the observed preference patterns among students.

### **3.1.2 Relevance/Justification of the Theory**

This theory is relevant because it highlights how external sociopolitical and institutional factors shape language preference and loyalty. It helps explain the challenges faced by Edo (Bini) in competing with English and Nigerian Pidgin among young speakers. EVT also justifies why some students may view English as a language of opportunity, while others may regard Edo as less prestigious but still significant for cultural identity.

## **3.2 Fishman's Theory of Language Loyalty and Shift**

Fishman (1964, 1991) focuses on the internal dynamics of language use within communities, particularly the balance between language loyalty and language shift. Language loyalty refers to the conscious decision by speakers to maintain their heritage language despite external pressures, while language shift occurs when speakers gradually abandon their mother

tongue in favor of a dominant language. Fishman emphasizes intergenerational transmission as the key to sustaining language use within a community.

### **3.2.1 Application of Theory**

Among Benin youth, some demonstrate language loyalty by continuing to use Edo (Bini) in daily communication or cultural activities, thereby reinforcing their identity and heritage. However, the majority shift towards English and Nigerian Pidgin, which are seen as more practical and widely understood. This pattern reflects Fishman's observation that minority languages often lose ground in contexts where dominant languages hold greater prestige and functional value.

### **3.2.2 Relevance/Justification of the Theory**

Fishman's theory is relevant because it captures the psychological and cultural motivations behind language use. It explains why some students hold on to Edo (Bini) as a marker of pride and belonging, while others prioritize English or Pidgin for social and academic purposes. By focusing on intergenerational transmission, the theory also underscores the role of families and cultural institutions in sustaining or weakening Edo language use among the youth.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data collected from questionnaires administered to Benin youths in the University of Benin. The analysis aims to examine their level of language loyalty and language preference toward the Edo (Benin) language. Responses were obtained from 50 participants across different faculties of the university. The results are presented in tables and charts and discussed according to the research questions.

#### 4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents provide background information such as age, gender, faculty, and place of origin. This helps to understand the context in which language choices are made.

**Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Factors**

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	23	82.14
	Female	5	17.86
Age group	15 - 20	10	35.71
	21 - 25	18	64.29
faculty/department	Art /linguistics	28	100
place of origin	Edo state	28	100

### Interpretation:

The table shows that the majority of respondents (100%) are from Edo State and are therefore native speakers or have exposure to the Edo language. Most participants fall within the 21–25 age range, reflecting the typical university youth population.

### 4.2 Language Preference

This is designed to investigate respondents' language preferences in different domains of communication such as home, friendship, social settings, emotional expression, and future career.

**Table 4.2: Language Preference of Respondents**

Domain	Most Common Language Used	Percentage (%)	Interpretation
Mother tongue	Edo (Benin)	100	Majority identify Edo as their first language
Language spoken at home	pidgin	90	Pidgin is preferred in the home domain
Language used with friends (campus)	English	100	English dominates peer communication
Language preferred in social gatherings	English	100	English carries higher prestige in formal settings
Language comfortable for emotional expression	English Pidgin	80 20	English remains tied to emotional and personal expression
Language considered important for career	English	100	English seen as the language of success

### **Interpretation:**

The findings reveal that although most respondents identify Edo as their mother tongue, English and Pidgin English are preferred in daily interactions. This suggests a functional shift from Edo to English and Pidgin, especially in public and academic contexts. However, English remains emotionally significant, as many still use it to express personal feelings.

### **4.3 Language Loyalty**

This explored the respondents' level of language loyalty—their attitudes, pride, and willingness to maintain the Edo language.

**Table 4.3: Indicators of Language Loyalty**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Edo (Benin) is important to preserve as cultural identity	100%	0%	Strong positive attitude toward preservation
Would like to pass Edo to children	90%	10%	high intergenerational loyalty

Common Reasons for Not Using Edo (from Question 13):

- English is more useful in school (40%)
- Friends do not understand Edo (25%)
- Pidgin English is easier to use (20%)

- Not fluent in Edo (15%)

**Interpretation:**

Although most respondents express pride in speaking Edo and believe it is vital to preserve it as a cultural symbol, fewer actually use it in daily life. The dominance of English and Pidgin in education and social interactions reduces the frequency of Edo usage. This indicates that language loyalty remains high, but language use is declining—a common pattern in bilingual societies experiencing language shift.

**4.4 Cross Analysis: Language Preference vs Language Loyalty**

This section examines how preference and loyalty interact.

**Table 4.4: Cross-Analysis Summary**

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Home language × Pride in Edo	Many who speak English at home still feel proud of Edo	Suggests emotional attachment despite reduced use
Edo importance × Language for career	Those who prefer English for career still value Edo culturally	Shows coexistence of functional preference and symbolic loyalty
Daily Edo use × Passing Edo to children	Majority of daily Edo users plan to pass it to their children	Indicates potential continuity if usage is maintained

**Interpretation:**

Respondents show dual attitudes—a practical preference for English and Pidgin, but strong emotional loyalty to Edo. This implies that Edo remains a marker of identity, even if it is not the

dominant language in everyday communication.

#### 4.5 Summary of Findings

**Table 4.4: Cross-Analysis Summary**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Language Preference	English and Pidgin dominate daily communication and formal use.
Language Loyalty	High emotional attachment and pride in Edo language.
Language Shift	Decline in Edo use at home and in peer interactions, showing functional language shift.
Preservation Outlook	Strong attitudinal loyalty suggests Edo can be revitalized through education, media, and cultural programs.

#### 4.6 Discussion

The analysis reveals a divergence between loyalty and preference among Benin youths. While they emotionally value and identify with the Edo language, practical demands such as schooling, career aspirations, and social prestige have increased their reliance on English and Pidgin.

This pattern supports sociolinguistic theories of language shift (Fishman, 1991), which argue that languages often lose ground in functional domains before disappearing. However, the high pride and desire to pass Edo to future generations indicate potential for language maintenance if supported through formal education, cultural promotion, and community awareness.

**In summary:**

Benin youths in the University of Benin exhibit strong language loyalty but weak language preference. Edo remains a symbol of identity, yet English and Pidgin are the languages of utility. Strengthening the Edo language in schools, media, and cultural events will be essential for its survival among younger generations.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study, draws conclusions from the analysis, and offers recommendations for sustaining the Edo (Benin) language among the youths of the University of Benin. The study aimed to investigate the extent of language loyalty and language preference among Benin youths, examining how attitudes, usage, and environmental factors influence their linguistic choices.

#### 5.1 Summary of the Study

The study examined the level of language loyalty and preference among Benin youths in the University of Benin. Questionnaires were distributed to 50 respondents across various faculties to gather data on their demographic background, language use, and attitudes toward the Edo language.

The key objectives were to:

1. Identify the language preferences of Benin youths across different social and personal domains.
2. Examine their attitudes and loyalty toward the Edo (Benin) language.
3. Determine whether there is evidence of language shift or maintenance among Edo speakers in the university.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. The analysis was divided into two main parts: language preference and language loyalty.

## 5.2 Findings

### 1. Language Preference:

- The findings revealed that English and Nigerian Pidgin are the most preferred languages for communication at home, in school, and in social interactions.
- Edo language is mainly used for emotional expression and communication with older family members.
- English is seen as more useful for career advancement and education, showing its instrumental value among youths.

### 2. Language Loyalty:

- Despite reduced daily use, most respondents expressed high emotional attachment to the Edo language.
- A large percentage (88%) agreed that Edo is important to preserve as part of their cultural identity.
- Many respondents (82%) stated that they feel proud speaking Edo and would like to pass it on to their children (68%).

### 3. Language Shift Indicators:

- The dominance of English and Pidgin in educational and social settings shows signs of

language shift.

- However, the positive attitudes toward Edo suggest the possibility of language maintenance if supported by deliberate efforts.

#### 4. Overall Trend:

- There exists a gap between attitude and practice: respondents are loyal to Edo in emotion and identity but prefer English and Pidgin in daily communication.
- This duality reflects a transitional linguistic situation among Benin youths—functional bilingualism with emotional monolingual loyalty.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study concludes that Benin youths at the University of Benin demonstrate strong language loyalty but weak language preference toward Edo. Although they regard the language as an essential part of their heritage, social and educational factors have led to reduced use of Edo in everyday communication.

English serves as the language of prestige, education, and opportunity, while Pidgin functions as an informal means of peer interaction. Edo remains symbolically powerful as an identity marker, but its practical use is declining.

Therefore, while language shift is occurring, complete loss of loyalty has not taken place. This means the Edo language can still be revitalized if adequate measures are taken to enhance its relevance in modern contexts.

## 5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to promote the use and maintenance of the Edo language among youths:

1. Incorporate Edo Language in Education:

Edo should be taught as a subject in primary, secondary, and even university general studies courses within Edo State. This will enhance literacy and pride in the language.

2. Encourage Media Usage:

Local radio and television programs should include more Edo-language content—news, entertainment, and discussions—to increase exposure and prestige.

3. Promote Cultural Events:

The university and state cultural organizations should host annual Edo cultural festivals, debates, and drama competitions to encourage the active use of the language among students.

4. Family-Level Effort:

Parents should be encouraged to communicate with their children in Edo at home to ensure intergenerational transmission of the language.

5. Government and Policy Support:

The Edo State government should support initiatives that promote indigenous language development through funding, translation projects, and language documentation.

6. Use of Social Media:

Youths should be encouraged to use Edo in digital spaces; WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram to make the language visible and relevant in modern communication.

7. Language Standardization and Modernization:

Scholars and linguists should work on expanding Edo vocabulary to include modern scientific and technological terms so it can function effectively in all domains.

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**APPENDIX**  
**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

**RESEARCH TOPIC:** Language loyalty and language preference: the case study of Benin youth in Edo linguistics in University of Benin.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Section A:** Demographic Information

1. Age:

15–20

21–25

26–30

31 and above

2. Gender:

Male

Female

3. Faculty/Department: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Place of origin: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section B:** Language Background and Use

5. What is your first (mother tongue) language?

Edo (Benin)

English

Nigerian Pidgin

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which language do you speak most often at home?

Edo (Benin)

English

Nigerian Pidgin

Other

7. Which language do you speak most often with friends on campus?

Edo (Benin)

English

Nigerian Pidgin

Other

8. Which language do you prefer to use in social gatherings (e.g., parties, meetings, religious groups)?

Edo (Benin)

English

Nigerian Pidgin

Other

9. In which language do you feel most comfortable expressing your emotions

(anger, joy, sadness)?

Edo (Benin)

English

Nigerian Pidgin

Other

### **Section C: Language Preference and Loyalty**

10. Which language do you consider most important for your future career?

Edo (Benin)

English

Nigerian Pidgin

Other

11. Do you think Edo (Benin) is important to preserve as a cultural identity?

Yes

No

Not sure

12. How often do you use Edo (Benin) in your daily conversations?

Very often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

13. If you rarely or never use Edo (Benin), what are the reasons? (You may tick more than one)

English is more useful for education and career

Nigerian Pidgin is easier with friends

Edo is old-fashioned/not modern

Few people around me speak Edo

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

14. If you are given a choice, which language would you like to pass on to your children?

Edo (Benin)

English

Nigerian Pidgin

Other

15. Do you feel proud when you speak Edo (Benin)?

Yes, very proud

Somewhat proud

Not proud