

## **Extinction of the Indigenous Languages: Implication for National Development**

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**Abstract.** *Language is an integral part of cultural identity. When a language becomes extinct (disappears), a vital aspect of a community's heritage is lost. This loss can lead to a sense of disconnection, marginalisation and the erosion of intergenerational transmission of cultural values and knowledge. This has the tendency of posing serious danger to the cultural heritage, social cohesion and cognitive diversity of a given community and in the long-run, national development. Hence, there is need to ensure that languages spoken by people of different communities are maintained and preserved. This paper explores the issue of language extinct; the dangers associated with language extinction; the need for maintaining and preserving the indigenous languages by ensuring that languages are maintained; and the implication of language extinction on national development. It was therefore concluded that there is need for the indigenous languages to be maintained and preserved in order to avoid their being extinct and thus hinder national development. Some of the recommendations made are as follow: All indigenous languages should be properly documented; investment should be made on language revitalisation programmes by providing resources for language learning, teaching materials, and community engagement activities; Individuals should be sensitised of the importance of the indigenous languages; Public awareness should be raised through campaigns and the media to foster support for language maintenance and preservation efforts.*

**Key words:** *Language, Language Extinction, Indigenous Languages, Language Maintenance and Preservation, National Development.*

### **Introduction**

Linguists estimate that humans are living in a time of mass language extinction, with a language going extinct (disappearing) every two weeks. In many cases, these disappearing languages belong to indigenous people. The United Nations declared 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages, aiming at raising awareness not only to benefit the people who speak these languages, but also for others to appreciate the contributions the languages to the world's cultural diversity.

Indigenous languages are vital when it comes to cultural preservation. They help in passing down traditions, values and stories from one generation to another. It is alarming that over 90 per cent of the world's 7,000 languages are likely to go into extinction in the next century (United Nations, 2019).

Nigeria is one of the eight countries of the world that endangered languages are located, the others being India, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Cameroon. Being a multicultural and multilingual nation with more than 200 million people, 300 ethnic groups, over 500 languages, there are many distinct religious and regional differences in Nigeria. It is one of the world's most culturally diverse countries. This diversity is a source of pride and rich cultural heritage. In Nigeria presently, about 29 minor languages have become extinct, while another 29 minor languages are in danger of extinction, and more than half of over 400 languages in Nigeria are endangered (UNESCO 2003; Oti, 2014).

Most alarming is the fact that nine local languages are already extinct. The languages, as listed by the National Council for Arts and Culture are: Ajawa spoken in present day Bauchi, Basa-Gumna of Niger State; Auyokawa spoken in Jigawa State; Gamo-Ningi, a Kainji dialect in Bauchi State; Homa of Adamawa State, Kubi of Bauchi State, Kpati formerly spoken in Taraba State, Odut used to be spoken in the Odukpani area of Cross River State, and Teshenawa formerly spoken in Jigawa State, points to the extinction of Ishekiri language in the next 50 years, while the Linguistic Association of Nigeria reportedly said unless proactive steps are taken, more than 50 minority languages in the country might become extinct in a few years. There is a clarion call for language maintenance and preservation (The Guardian Newspapers, 2022; Punch Newspapers, 2020).

There is a growing awareness that indigenous languages do not simply serve as cultural artifacts, rather, they equip their users with an invaluable skillset and expertise in different fields, from the environment to education, the economy, social and political life, and family relations (UNESCO, 2003). It is a fundamental right for an individual to speak his own language, use it in expressing his identity, his culture and his history. The indigenous language of a peoples enables them communicate their philosophies and their rights. When a language becomes extinct, it has several potential impacts on linguistic diversity. Imagine being denied this fundamental right as a people! The consequences of losing ones' indigenous language are huge.

The role of indigenous languages is indispensable. They play crucial roles in human society and national development. These roles are so vital that social organisations and national development would be completely impossible without them. It is thus, disheartening that most of the languages are at the verge of becoming extinct. Maintaining and preserving the indigenous languages is a major concern to linguists, educators, language activists and families. Indigenous languages need to be maintained and preserved for generations to come, and if the nation is to experience development. It is on this note that this paper x-rays the issue of language extinction and its implication for national development.

## **Language**

The use of language is central to the growth and strength of any nation, as no business can be translated effectively without the use of language. Language is a useful tool that can be used in mobilising the populace for various purposes. It is man's most important endowment. It can be seen as a system of communication consisting of words, sounds, and grammar used by a specific community or group of people to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions. It is the vehicle through which the culture of people is passed from one generation to another. The functional role of language is communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release. It is language that differentiates human beings from other animals. The ultimate aspect of a people's culture is their mother tongue (MT). Indigenous languages are treasures of culture and self-identity. In other words, language is the indicator of history and self-identification (Solanke, 2006).

Language is not just a means of communication but a fundamental aspect of human existence. Its importance extends to the identity, culture, knowledge acquisition, social integration, cognitive development, and creative expression of individuals. Recognising and valuing the significance of language is essential for promoting understanding, diversity, and the overall well-being of

individuals, communities and nations. Language fosters a strong sense of identity and belonging among indigenous communities. It is an indispensable cultural legacy with which all forms of human interactions are carried out. It also connects people to the environment, as many indigenous languages have deep connections to local ecosystems and landscapes. It is the key to the heart of the people. If the key is lost, the people will be lost. If the key is treasured and kept safe, it will unlock the door to wealth and affluence, and thus bringing about growth and development (Nwadike, 2004).

Nigeria is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with over 525 languages spoken. The official language and lingua franca in Nigeria remains the English language. English was the language of Colonial Nigeria. 30 million people speak Nigerian Pidgin, an English-based creole. English is less commonly spoken in rural areas and among less educated people. In addition to English, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulfulde, Ibibio, Kanuri, and Tiv are also widely spoken (Ndimele & Williamson, 2002).

### **Indigenous Language**

Indigenous language refers to the original and first language spoken by the native or original inhabitants of a particular community, region or country before the advent or invasion of foreign individuals, cultures or colonial powers. It is the language that is native to a particular group of people and spoken by the indigenous people living in the locality. An indigenous language is often closely connected to a particular region's culture, traditions and heritage. It reflects the cultural values and wisdom of its speakers. More often than none, the indigenous reduced to the status of minority (Falobi, 2020).

Indigenous languages are source of pride to a community and the nation. Speaking the indigenous language can be a powerful tool for social cohesion and empowerment within a community. The following are some major reasons why indigenous languages need to be maintained, preserved, learnt and valued:

- **Connectivity:** Indigenous languages connect individuals to their root. It acts as a medium to connect people to the deep elements of their culture, modes of expression like dance, visual art, song and symbolism. Every single word in an indigenous language is a world of its own, revolving around other words.
- **Preservation of Culture:** Culture encompasses language. A culture or language that is not transmitted will die, sooner or later. Language is one of the ways to preserve a given culture or heritage. When the individuals understand their indigenous languages, they get hold of their culture and then, they will be able pass it down to the younger generation.
- **Aids the Learning of Other Languages:** Generally, learning new languages help the cognitive ability of individuals; help them understand other languages. Having an in-depth knowledge of the indigenous language can help the individual have a good command of the English Language.
- **Broadens and Sharpens the Horizon and the World-view of Individuals:** Understanding of ones' indigenous language(s) has the tendency of broadening the individual's horizon and at the same time, sharpens the individual's perception and views about life.

### **Language Extinction**

Language extinction refers to the gradual loss and disappearance of languages over time. Before a language goes into extinction, it first becomes endangered. A language is endangered when its speakers cease to use it, or when it is used in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to next. Half of the roughly 6,900 languages spoken around the world today are endangered and the rate of extinction is accelerating. The disappearance of a community's language signifies a weakening connection to their cultural heritage. Language is not just a means of communication; it carries within it the collective wisdom, history, values, and unique perspectives of a culture. As a language declines, essential cultural knowledge, traditions, and oral histories may be lost as well. This loss of linguistic diversity can have significant cultural, social, and environmental impacts (UNESCO, 2003).

Language loss and loss of cultural identity are closely related. A language can get to a point where it loses all its speakers. When it happens, the knowledge and traditions that are passed down through it are lost as well (Anderson, 2018). The following are some of the reasons for language go into extinction:

- **Lack of Use in Educational Setting:** Indigenous languages are rarely used/taught in school, despite the stipulation in the National Policy on Education. The teaching of indigenous languages in schools is declining. The decline can be attributed mainly to the advent of the two major religions, Christianity and Islam in Nigeria.
- **Lack of Use at Home:** Most Nigerians parents do not to speak their indigenous language at home with their children/ward. This is a practice common among the elites, who prefer to speak the English language. The implication of this attitude is that their children/ward will lose touch with the indigenous language and will have none to pass on to their own children. As time goes on, that language will cease to be in existence and the owners of the language will face the danger of that losing their identity as a people.
- **Inter-Ethnic Marriage:** Children born into families where both parents do not speak the same language often have problem of the indigenous language to speak as a result of contention that arises from father's and mother's language. Such children might end up not speaking any of the languages (Ogo & Ofuani, 2014).
- **Vocabulary:** It is pertinent to note that most of the local languages are not rich enough in vocabulary to be used in educational institutions at an advanced level.

### Effects of Language Extinction

Language is a vessel for expressing cultural nuances, and its decline can lead to a diminished sense of identity and belonging. People who cannot communicate in their native language suffer disconnection from their roots, leading to a sense of cultural alienation. This can contribute to the erosion of traditional practices and customs, as well as distancing the community from its heritage.

Losing the indigenous languages means losing a great part of human heritage. This is because a language is more than a spoken or written word and sentence; it is the means through which cultures, knowledge, and traditions are preserved and transmitted between generations. The following are some of effects of language extinction:

- **Loss of Cultural Identity:** Language is closely tied to a community's culture and traditions. When a language becomes extinct, there will be loss of valuable cultural knowledge and practices. This may bring about loss of identity for the people of the community. The loss of a language hence means the loss of unique cultural knowledge, beliefs, and traditions that are encoded in that language and the eventual erosion of cultural diversity and the homogenisation of societies.
- **Decreased Linguistic Diversity:** Language extinction reduces the overall linguistic diversity in the world. Each language carries unique ways of expressing thoughts, ideas, and experiences. When languages disappear, this diversity is diminished, and human communication becomes more standardized, thereby erasing the peoples' cultural identity.
- **Disconnection from Ancestral Heritage:** Languages spoken in many communities are deeply connected to their ancestral heritage. Extinction of such languages can sever this connection, making it difficult for future generations to understand and appreciate their roots.
- **Loss of Traditional Knowledge:** Inherent in indigenous languages is deep knowledge about local ecosystems, medicinal plants, and sustainable practices. Extinction of these languages implies the extinction of the traditional knowledge they carry. This can negatively impact environmental conservation efforts and sustainable development.
- **Social and Psychological Impacts:** Language provides a sense of belonging and social cohesion. It is intricately linked to our thoughts, emotions, and self-expression. When a language dies, individuals who once spoke it may experience a loss of personal and collective memory, which can contribute to feelings of sadness, grief, and a diminished sense of belonging. It can be



challenging for individuals to express themselves fully and articulate their thoughts and emotions. Moreover, the community affected might feel marginalised, leading to feelings of isolation, alienation and loss. This can have very huge negative impact on social and mental well-being on the individuals whose language is lost.

- **Economic Disadvantages:** Language extinction can also have economic consequences. Communities that lose their language may face challenges in education, employment, and economic development. It may limit their ability to access resources, participate in the global economy, and engage with wider markets.
- **Social Isolation and Exclusion:** Language is a crucial tool for communication and social interaction. When a language becomes extinct, speakers of that language may face difficulties in communicating with others who do not speak their language. This can lead to social isolation, a sense of exclusion from mainstream society, and reduced opportunities for social participation and integration.
- **Intergenerational Disconnect:** Language carries intergenerational knowledge, stories, and traditions. When a language becomes extinct, there may be a breakdown in the transmission of cultural values and practices between generations. This can lead to a sense of disconnect between older and younger members of a community, impacting family dynamics and cohesion.
- **Academic and Educational Challenges:** Language extinction can also have implications for education and learning. The loss of a language can result in limited access to educational resources and materials in that language, making it difficult for future generations to learn about their cultural heritage or pursue certain academic disciplines.

Perhaps, the effect of language extinction can be summed up with the following excerpt:

The extinction of each language results in the irrevocable loss of unique cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge. Each language is a unique expression of the human experience of the world...the knowledge of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions of the future. Every time a language dies, we have less evidence for understanding patterns in the structure and function of human language, human prehistory, and the maintenance of the world's diverse ecosystems. Above all, speakers of these languages may experience the loss of their language as a loss of their original ethnic and cultural identity (Bernard, 1992; Hale 1998 in UNESCO, 2003:2)

Considering the devastating effects of language extinction, there is therefore need to maintain and preserve our indigenous languages.

### **Maintenance and Preservation of Indigenous Language**

Majority of the indigenous languages are under the influence of the power of a dominant language and so are under the threat of extinction. For instance, English is a dominant language in Nigeria. It is a unifying language; It is the language of politics, education, media, and religion; it is the language of the elites. The tendency of other indigenous languages becoming extinct is unarguable as majority of the languages lose grounds to the English language. This is a sign of language shift, and eventually, language extinction. If conscious efforts are not taken in order to maintain and preserve the indigenous languages, they will definitely be extinct. It is saddening that many Nigerians today do not understand their native languages let alone, speaking them.

Language maintenance is concerned with the retention of the minority language by its speakers when it is in a constant contact with the majority language. It 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 such as home, school, religious setting. It is the continuous use of the mother tongue, regardless of the cultural pressures from a more prestigious or politically more dominant language. Language preservation however, is the intentional efforts aimed at maintaining, revitalising and safeguarding languages that are at the risk of disappearing or being extinct. It can be viewed as the active attempt to keep languages from extinction. A language needs to be protected in order for it to be preserved (Baker, 2011; Benrabah, 2004; 98<sup>th</sup> Percentile, 2013).

Maintaining and preserving a language is necessary in order to surmount the threat of language shift and language extinction. The following factors can enhance the maintenance and preservation of indigenous languages:

- **The Family:** The family has a major role to play in the maintenance and preservation of an indigenous language. It is in the family setting that language acquisition and learning begin for children. Studies have shown that maintenance and preservation of the native language is based on the role of the family at home. No language will survive the next generation unless it is transmitted in the home, within the family. The family environment is a motivating factor in the promotion of successful intergenerational maintenance and preservation of the community language (Clyne, 2003, 2005; Letsholo, 2009; Pauwels, 2005; Velázquez, 2012).
- **Ethnic Identity:** Language is the key factor representing ethnic identity in multilingual and multicultural settings, and so there is a strong connection between language and identity. Maintaining and preserving communities' languages is significantly related to the maintenance and retention of individuals' identity. Minority languages are important tool for expressing cultural heritage and ethnic identity. The destruction of a language is the destruction of a rooted identity, and the loss of the language may also lead to a loss of identity (Clyne, 1991; Fishman, 1989, 1991, 2000).
- **Institutional Support Factors:** The maintenance and preservation of indigenous languages can be influenced by the presence or lack of governmental/non-governmental institutions such as media, religious and educational organisations. The availability of these institutions may contribute to the maintenance and preservation of the indigenous language, while their absence may lead to language extinction (Baker, 2011; Clyne, 2003, 2005; Fishman, 2000).
- **Media:** The benefits of the media in encouraging indigenous languages to be stronger in the face of the dominant culture cannot be over-emphasised. Through the media, a large amount of the language can be used in the public domain whether in print, video and audio recordings, or even multimedia formats. This has the capacity of maintaining and preserving their stability in terms of the number of speakers, and also giving the language the status and prestige to be used publicly, rather being restricted to the private domains (Pauwels, 2005; Cormack; 2007; Baker, 2011; Namei, 2012).
- **Education:** The Nigerian nation recognises the importance of mother tongue education hence stipulates a language policy as contained in the National Policy on Education (NPE) that the language of instruction in the primary schools for the first three years should be the child's mother tongue or language of the immediate community (FRN, 2014). A strict implementation of this policy will be the right step in the right direction towards maintaining and preserving the indigenous languages.
- **Religion:** Religion can be a strong and important vehicle for the maintenance of the majority and minority languages. The use of classical Arabic in Islam, Hebrew in Judaism, and German among the Protestant Old Order Amish in Pennsylvania show that religion can serve as a tool through which a language can be preserved (Baker, 2011; Clyne & Kipp, 1999; Clyne, 2005; Fishman 1991, 2000). By implication, the use of Indigenous languages in local religious places like the church, mosque, etc., will yield tremendous result. This can be achieved by teaching the people about religious practices in their mother tongue, translating religious books into local languages, engaging the services of Indigenous religious leaders, etc. Apart from the fact that this will encourage the use of the local languages, it will also help the people to have better understanding of the knowledge of their religion since local languages have better ways of clarifying things.

### **Strategies for Maintaining and Preserving Languages**

Maintaining and preserving a language often involves revitalising cultural practices, building a stronger community bond, and reaffirming a shared sense of identity. Efforts to prevent language loss are vital for safeguarding a community's cultural richness and maintaining a strong sense of who the

speakers are (Babalola, 2002). There are several measures that can be taken towards curbing language extinction, maintaining and preserving endangered languages. The following are some of them:

- **Language Documentation:** Collection and preservation of records of endangered languages through comprehensive documentation efforts will help ensure their future study. Documenting languages in audio and video forms, dictionaries, grammar guides, etc., can all be valuable resources for future generations. Without adequate documentation, a language that is extinct can never be revived (UNESCO, 2003).
- **Language Education and Revitalisation:** Providing support for language revitalisation initiatives can help endangered communities maintain and preserve their linguistic heritage. This can include funding language teaching programmes, language immersion programmes for both children, and adults' bilingual education. A national media policy making it mandatory that a large percentage of programmes should be done in the indigenous languages, will go a long in maintaining and preserving indigenous languages.
- **Encouraging Multilingualism:** Promoting the use of multiple languages, including endangered languages, is another effective way to prevent language extinction. Policies that support and value linguistic diversity can help communities sustain their languages and promote their continuous use.
- **Digital Technologies:** We are in an era of technological advancements. Technological advancement offers new avenues for language preservation and learning. Such digital technologies like mobile apps, online resources, and digital platforms can provide easier access to endangered languages, making it possible for people to learn and use them even if they are not physically present in the community where the language is used for everyday activities.
- **Collaboration and Awareness:** Collaborating with language speakers, scholars, and local communities is crucial for effective language preservation efforts. Building awareness among the general public about the importance of language diversity and the threats facing endangered languages can also help get support and resources for language revitalisation initiatives.
- **Translations of Essential Texts into the Indigenous Languages:** Texts such as the Holy Bible and other sacred books, when translated into the indigenous languages, people will be bound to keep abreast with the languages, and thus save the languages from dying.
- **Regular use of the Indigenous Languages at Home:** Parents should make it a point of duty to communicate with their children in their native languages while at home. Moreover, children should be taken to their home towns at the end of every academic season for long vacations so as to mingle with their locals to help them learn their languages better. Oti (2014) proffered establishing socio-cultural centers where children and youth can have extra-curricular activities may help to preserve the language.
- **The Role of Governments and Institutions.** The importance of governmental support and policies, linguistic researchers, and organizations dedicated to language preservation. The National Policy on Education (NPE), states that Nigerian children should be taught in the language of their localities in their first three years. The issue of funding and resource allocations for language revitalisation projects should be maintained. Language revitalisation programmes, documentation, and encouraging multilingualism can help mitigate the risks associated with language extinction.
- **Promoting Awareness and Appreciation of Indigenous Languages:** The importance of raising public awareness about language preservation and the dangers of language extinction should be made a priority. This is made possible by celebrating linguistic diversity through language festivals, events, and media platforms. It is essential to recognize that language revitalization is a long-term process that requires sustained effort, resources, and collaboration.

By implementing the above strategies and supporting the preservation of endangered languages, efforts will be put in place towards curbing language extinction and ensuring a more diverse and inclusive future that will bring about national development.

### **National Development and Language**

Development is a multidimensional term, referring to positive change which affects majority of individuals in a society socially, politically, economically and culturally. Any study on development must be concerned with social change which is geared towards making life better for all the citizens of a given society. It is qualitative and quantitative positive transformation of the lives of the people which enhances not only their material well-being, but also ensures their social well-being, and the restoration of human dignity. It involves the appropriate transformation of sociocultural, political and economic belief system of the society. Development has a purpose, and the purpose is the liberation of man. Development hence is for man, by man, and of man (Nyerere, 1978 in Ochoma, 2015; Sadan, 1981; Osagie, 1985; Sudan, 1992).

National development is a term that can be used to refer to the strength of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens. It is concerned with the provision and creation of conditions by which the citizens of a nation attain the fulfillment of their basic needs. It has to do with the improvement of the total circumstances of man on earth, satisfying his social, economic and material needs and granting him mastery of his environment. Meeting the social, economic, cultural, political and material needs of man is a vital theme in national development (Okoh, 2012 in Ikechi & Ochoma, 2017).

National development cannot be separated from language. Language is the vehicle that conveys the mind of the government to the people. Every language in a nation is important, just as every individual. Language plays a vital role in national development especially in the area of reasoning, formation of ideas, policies and programmes capable of moving any nation forward. This shows that the development and growth of the society can never be separated from language which links the people together. It has been observed that the use of Nigeria's native languages particularly in specialised domain is a sine qua non for national development. Moreover, the rapid and genuine technological, political, social and economic empowerment of vast majority of Nigerians so as to enable them utilise scientific and technological knowledge in creating wealth, and to contribute meaningfully to national development, can only be possible through the medium of their own native languages (Owolabi, 2006).

The indigenous languages, just like foreign languages, have the capacity to cater for the people's needs, aspirations, challenges and exigencies. The role of indigenous languages in national development can be best appreciated from the following perspectives:

- Indigenous languages, literature, culture and national development;
- Indigenous languages, civic responsibility and democracy; and
- Indigenous languages and technological development.

**Indigenous Languages, Literature, Culture and National Development:** A tripartite relationship exists among languages (indigenous), literature and culture. There is no literature without language, and culture and language are inseparable. The trios are intricately interwoven. They all play vital roles in an individual's education as well as national development. Literature in indigenous languages is an art which entertains and instructs. It warns people of danger and instructs by opening people's eyes to a wide range of experiences and a deeper understanding of these experiences. Literature presents situations, interactions and oppositions. It suggests a wide range of value and attitudes.

To understand a people and their culture, one may have to turn to their oral and written narratives; their drama and poetry. A good piece of literature can be regarded as an authentic mirror image of its society and time. For instance, through satire, proverbs and symbolism, literary artists communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings about social ills in the society which they criticise with prussic diction. Proverbs give lessons relating to issues such as prudence, generosity, patience, wisdom, etc., which are indispensable to the guidance of mankind and the stability of the society at large (Ogiri, 2017).



Literary artists use indigenous languages to ridicule and sometimes, condemn anti-social behaviours such as corruption, assassination, political thuggery, religious intolerance, oppressive rule or dictatorship, any form of human degradation and unacceptable practices. Through historical literature, our knowledge of the society is widened. Historical literature about seemingly immortal despots and their ignoble and sorrowful end, and that their mysterious death was engendered by the avalanche of atrocities and carnage they had masterminded and executed. This knowledge helps people in charting new and humanistic sociopolitical and economic course, which leads to a new world order (Olaoye, 2002; Isyaku, 2004; Asade, 2000; Fatokun, 1992).

Furthermore, culture is generally believed to be the whole way of life of a people; the social heritage that the individual acquires as a member of his group. It comprises of the attitude, perception and specific traits of civilization that are conferred to a people and its place in the universe. These traits include speech norms, etiquette, ideologies, ethics, stereotypes, artifacts, technologies, intellectual production. Without doubt, Indigenous language is a mark of a people's identity. The core values of our people must be the pivot for national reforms. These core values are reflected in the people's identity, cultures, traditions and systems, most times encapsulated in their languages. A child that grows up guided by the positive values of the society will possess a healthy and progressive mind in adulthood. Therefore, the teaching and learning of indigenous languages, literature and culture will afford the learner an understanding of the problems of the society in particular, and the nation in general. This understanding will inform their actions positively, which will definitely impact the society/nation which they belong (Fani-kayode, 2006; Opega, 2004).

**Indigenous Languages, Civic Responsibility and Democracy:** It is only through civic education that people can know their rights and civic duties/responsibilities. Indigenous language is a great tool for political, social and cultural education. Government's policies and programmes are usually projected in English language technical terms above the understanding of the common people. Government uses terms like privatization, commercialization, deregulation, federal character, economic melt-down, geo-political zones, zero allocation, federation account, monetisation policy, nascent democracy, national re-branding, gubernatorial candidates, etc. Translating government's pronouncements, policies, the National Anthem, Pledge and programmes into languages will make more meaning to the illiterate masses, and will bring about political awareness, which in turn will encourage participatory democracy which will reduce political apathy, and open citizens' eyes to their rights and privileges, thus reducing the chances of voter intimidation and rigging. The end result will be national development.

**Indigenous Languages and Technological Development:** Language is a vehicle of thought and the expression of culture. It expresses a people's way of life, their perception of things and their world view. This embodies their ideals and innovations which embrace respects for technological and scientific innovations (Ishima, 2004). Science and Technology can be acquired and better understood through the indigenous languages. For indigenous languages to be used for teaching and learning science and technology these MTs need to be developed in terms of their orthographies, spelling and vocabulary, etc. When this is achieved the nation will advance technologically. The decline of a language however, can contribute to backwardness in technological development of a nation.

Indigenous language is the most important tool with which society is organised. It is hardly possible to talk of development at any level – individual, community or national without considering the language with which the people formulate their thoughts and ideas.

### **Language Extinction: Implication for National Development**

When languages die, communities are torn apart, and this affects development processes in such communities that makeup the nation. In the long run, the development of the nation is affected. Language is not just a means of communication; it is a repository of knowledge, history, and identity. When a language becomes extinct, valuable insights into human cognition and linguistic diversity are also lost. Language extinction can lead to the erosion of cultural diversity and the dominance of a few major languages, which can have negative social, economic, and political consequences. The dangers

of language extinction are significant and far-reaching. When a language dies, an entire culture and way of life can be lost forever (Harrison, 2007).

It is therefore crucial to recognize the importance of language preservation and take proactive measures to protect and revitalize endangered languages. Furthermore, the paper notes the extinction of some languages in Nigeria and that despite the fact that there are enabling national and state laws favouring mother-tongue education, some languages have not been actively used at the levels stipulated by the policies and laws.

Language extinction can have several negative consequences. It leads to the loss of cultural diversity, erasing unique ways of expression and knowledge. It can also disconnect generations from their heritage and make it difficult to pass down traditions. Furthermore, it may hinder scientific, medical, and ecological understanding if local knowledge encoded in languages disappears. Language extinction can have social and psychological consequences for the communities that used to speak the language. People's sense of identity and belonging may be negatively affected when their language is no longer spoken or recognized. This can lead to feelings of marginalisation, isolation, and loss of cultural heritage.

Overall, language extinction can significantly impact social and psychological well-being by eroding cultural identity, contributing to social isolation, affecting mental health, disrupting intergenerational connections, and limiting educational opportunities. Efforts to preserve endangered languages are essential not only for linguistic diversity but also for maintaining the social and psychological well-being of individuals and communities.

## **Conclusion**

Language is an important variable in national development. Development in any viable nation will be totally impossible without the phenomenon of human language especially the indigenous language; the language that everyone within a linguist region - the educated and non-educated, can expressly use in communication. When both the majority and minority languages are passed on from one generation to the other, language becomes a means of preserving our culture and custom without which there is no nation. There is need hence for the indigenous languages to be maintained and preserved in order to avoid their being extinct and thus hinder national development.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the discourse above, it is clear that the issue of language extinction requires urgent attention. The following are therefore recommended:

- All indigenous languages should be properly documented. Documentation will ensure that these languages are preserved for future generations.
- Investing on language revitalisation programmes by providing resources for language learning, teaching materials, and community engagement activities, etc., will help revive endangered languages. Such programmes should involve collaboration between linguists, educators, and community members to ensure cultural authenticity and sustainability.
- Language communities should be engaged and empowered for successful language preservation. Community-based initiatives such as language immersion programmes and intergenerational language transmission efforts for instance, can help revitalise endangered languages, and strengthen cultural identity.
- Peoples should be sensitised of the importance of the indigenous languages. When people become conscious and safe-guard their languages by intentionally using it, the issue of language loss will gradually become a thing of the past in no distant time.
- Public awareness can be raised through campaigns and the media to foster support for language maintenance and preservation efforts.

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