

# Sociolinguistic Survey, Advancement of Indigenous Languages in Relationship to the use of English Language in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Sociolinguistic information is needed for proper diagnostic survey of indigenous languages in a society where multilingualism strives. The survey discussed here which is cross sectional, is designed to provide information on the parameters in a multilingual community. There are several languages in the Southern part of Cross River State of Nigeria where the survey is carried out. The English language is the official language spoken in the area of study. The study presents a macro sociolinguistics profile of the languages of the Southern Senatorial District of the State, shows where loss and endangerment are strong and appropriates measures for revitalization and maintenance. As a qualitative research, we use the participant observation and content analysis methods to elicit the survey in order to determine the need to use English language as the official language of the State and at the same time enhance, maintain and develop the indigenous languages to avoid endangerment. Inter-generational transmission theory of Fishman (1991) is applied in this study as a key to revitalizing the indigenous languages spoken. The study is carried out to find a way of balancing the use of English and advancing the indigenous languages.

**Keywords:** indigenous languages, Cross River State, maintenance, intergenerational transmission, multilingualism, revitalization, survey.

## 1. Introduction

When speakers of two or more languages are in regular and significant contact, it is likely over time that the speakers and the languages will change in some way. Both languages might hold their own; one might give way entirely or partially to the other; or a new language may be formed. This is an assertion of a sociolinguistics situation as proffered by Burnaby (1996).

In order to understand better the areas this study deals with, it is best to have a clear view of the people and the sociolinguistics area under discourse. Cross River is a State in the South-South of Nigeria. Nigeria as a multilingual nation has over five hundred and fifteen (515) languages. Out of this languages, five hundred and five (505) are still living indigenous languages eight (8) are extinct, while two (2) are second languages (Grimes, 2000:66). Of the eight (8) that are extinct, two (2) are found in Cross River South – Efut and Kiong. The linguistics situation in Nigeria is simply chaotic, and these languages are spoken by about three hundred and seventy three (373) ethnic groups (Otite, 2000:14-20).

Nigeria's official language is English. It is the official lingua-franca, while the Nigerian pidgin is the unofficial lingua franca. In southern Cross River which is located in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, several languages and dialects exist. This Niger-Delta region occupies the South Eastern belt of the country. The region is one of the heterogeneous areas of the country. It has about 118 languages, with Cross River State topping the list (Udoh and Okon. 2008:16).

Cross River has three (3) Senatorial Districts – North, Central and South. Our concern for this study is the Southern Senatorial District made up of seven (7) Local Government Areas – Akpabuyo, Akamkpa, Biase, Bakassi, Calabar Municipality, Calabar South and Odukpani. Thirteen (13) indigenous languages and dialects are spoken in these seven (7) LGAs, with Efik and Ejagam being the dominant languages.

Multilingualism strives in this senatorial district because of the high number of languages spoken here. However, English, Nigerian Pidgin and Efik are more motivated because of extra linguistic factors such as education, religion, politics, governance and socio-cultural activity that stand out as accomplishments that follow outstanding languages. The average Cross River South indigene is a multilingual person because they speak the three languages mentioned above in addition to their mother tongue. English and probably Efik are holding their own: the mother tongue languages are gradually giving way partially to the English language. The younger generation are not motivated enough to speak their L<sub>1</sub>. What mitigates against minority languages are

low-prestige varieties. However, in a way, in spite of the pressure exerted on them by the English language and Efik, there are still surviving because of the informal ties of kin and friendship.

The goals of this study is finding out how to balance the use of English and at the same time advancing the use and maintaining the indigenous languages. The study also carries out alongside the identification of the languages in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State and survey the multilingual nature of the area. The scope of the study centers around Cross River South Senatorial District taking into cognizance the thirteen (13) languages spoken, then looking at their survival and advancement.

## 2. Sociolinguistic landscape of the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State:

The sociolinguistic landscape of Cross River South portrays a heterogeneous area with thirteen (13) languages. Efik and Ejagam are the two dominant languages spoken in the senatorial district, but there are still among the minority languages spoken in Nigeria. Efik has been a lingua franca in this area for a very long time indeed. It is a liturgical language. Efik is homogeneous in the following Local Government Areas -Akpabuyo, Bakassi and Calabar south. The language is gradually assimilating other language spoken in Akamkpa, Odukpani and Calabar Municipality. The main language groupings in this district are distributed in the table below:

Table 1. Language groupings of Cross River South, (Offiong, 2004:218)

S/N	LGA	LANGUAGE GROUP/CLUSTER	MAJOR TOWNS/VILLAGES (WHERE LANGUAGES
1	Akamkpa	Efik, Ejagam, Korop, Ukwa, Oti	Akamkpa, Uyanga, Ojor Ikot Eberem, Akansoko, Ifung Nsung, Ikang, Aningeje, Mbarakom, Nkorokum, Isoba, Ekong Mfamosing, Old Netim Awi
2	Akpabuyo	Efik	Idundu, Ikot, Edem Odo, Ikot Eyo, Eneyo, Ikang,
3	Bakassi	Efik	Abana
4	Biase	Nne, Ubagara, Umon, Mehu, Isanginyoinyo, Iyoniyong, Agwagune	Agwagune, Erei, Adim, Abini, Etoro, Biakpan, Ikun, Bechie, Akpasip, Bagani, Berekpe, Ikot Okpora, Akpet; Ehom, Iwuru, Ewen, Ekpiri, Ibami, Akwa Ibami, Idoma, Akpanti-Okopedi, Agbangana, Atokpot.
5	Odukpani	Ejagam, Efik, Ito, Odot, Kung (Extinct)	New Netim, Creek Town, Adiabo Ikoneto, Anaku, Onim Ankiong, Eniong, Eki, Ito, Obom Itiat, Akpap, Okoyong, Inua-Akpa, Ndodua, Ubambat
6	Calabar Municipality	Efik, Ejagam	Calabar, Ikot Ekpo, Ikot Effenga, Ikot Ansa, Ishic Town, Archibong Cobham Town, Ediba, Akim Qua, Abeyung, Ikot Awatim, Obutung Essien Town, Ikot Eyo, Ikot Eka Edem, Big Qua, Bacoco.
7	Calabar South	Efik, Efut (Extinct)	Calabar, Anatigha, Duke Town Nsidung

Language, according to Ugot (2009:28) who quotes Stockwell (2002), is not just a symbol of nationalism but also a major badge of ethnicity, that is, racial, cultural or family origins. This is generally so in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria and Cross River south in particular. As observed in table 1, several languages are spoken in this senatorial district. But this is in addition to English and the Nigerian pidgin. These two are strong languages which cuts across this area in addition to Efik that is considered the second language of communication. The situation found here is that there is the creation of compound bilinguals, in fact, multilingual which makes communication easier. Multilingualism is an asset which can aid language choice for different purposes in a nation because different languages and varieties are used for different purposes depending on the situation (Ugot 2009:28). The focus is therefore, on using sociolinguistic survey study, the balancing of the use of English and advance the enhancement of the indigenous languages spoken in the district.

By indigenous language we mean the various languages spoken in the Southern Senatorial district of Cross

River State. These are languages that are aboriginal to the people. Only very few of these languages have written forms. This area which they are located, allocate each of these language specific linguistic roles to play. However, some of these languages are only recognized by members to which there are first language.

### 3. Methodology and theoretical framework

We have used a number of methods to elicit data for this study. One of the various ways employed is the participant observation method. The researchers being indigenes of the district and intuitively involve, have aided the examination of the attitude of the informants under study and have been able to expose the endangered languages that require maintenance. This assignment has taken the researchers to the length and breathe of Cross River South Senatorial District. We had to determine the various indigenous languages spoken in each ethnic area. We were also observing their use of the official language – English and the Nigerian pidgin. We initiated discussion with most village heads as we also participated in current issues in the villages. Issues of interest which we got ourselves involved with where, farming which led to the most important concern for them - climate change. Other discussion areas were attitude of the youths, education, government effects in rural and urban areas. Most of these discussions were initiated by us so that we could participate. In certain cases, we conducted flexible intensions with educated residence of the various areas. The reason varied for this interviews and observation. Since we were in a relaxed mood, we wanted to see which language were mostly spoken in a particular area? Which was paramount – English, Nigeria pidgin or the native language or more or less Efik? We sought to investigate how multilingualism strives. As we were observing, we were collecting our data and adjudged that it was appropriate to the population. The events we were observing where recorded as they occur.

This study also employed the methods of content analysis of intergenerational transmission which is referred to as documentary analysis of Fishman's theory. Different documents which are relevant to this study are surveyed to bring out the sociolinguistics information which aids the landscaping of the senatorial district. We used both official and public documentary sources because we had access to them. The frequency of language usage in the entire study district aided us identify which language they preferred in normal conversation. The documentary analysis will draw out this frequency.

The theoretical assumption that underpins this work is the central component of Fishman's (1991) intergenerational transmission which surround reversing language shift (RLS) theory. It demonstrates the dynamic fluid and varied nature of intergenerational transmissions in the senatorial district under study. We are finding out how crucial Fishman's model is to the theory and practice of minority language survival (King: 2001.) Reyhner (1999) points out that Fishman believes that the intergenerational transmission of language in the home from parent to young children is the key to keeping indigenous languages alive; however, schools can play either a positive or negative role in supporting the efforts of indigenous parents and communities. In 1991, Fishman postulated a continuum of eight stages of languages loss with eight being the closes to total extinction and one being the closes to dynamic survival. The summarized eight stages are found in the figure 1 below: The health of the thirteen languages found in the area of study vary. We will ascertain which approximates the various stages of Fishman

#### **Current status      Suggested interventions strengthen language of language**

##### **Stage 8:** only a

few elders speak  
the language.

Implement Hinton's (1994) 'Language Apprentice' Model where fluent elders are teamed one-on-one with young adults who want to learn the language. Dispersed, isolated elders can be connected by phone to teach others the language (Taff, 1997)

**Stage 7:** only adults  
beyond child bearing  
speak the language.

Establish "language nests" after the Maori and Hawaiian, models where fluent older adults provide pre-school child-care care where children are immersed in their indigenous language (Anonby, this volume: Fishman, 1991)

**Stage 6:** Some inter-  
generational use of  
language in home

Develop places in community where language is encouraged, protected, and used exclusively. Encourage more young parents to speak the indigenous language with and around their young children.

<b>Stage 5:</b> Language is still very much alive and used in community	Offer literacy in minority language. Promote voluntary programs in the community institutions to improve the prestige and use of the language. Use language in local government functions, especially social services. Give recognition to special local efforts through awards, etc.
<b>Stage 4:</b> Language is Required in elementary schools	Improve instructional methods utilizing TPR (Asher, 1996), TPR- Storytelling (Cantoni, this volume) and other immersion teaching techniques. Teach reading and writing and higher level language skills (Heredia & Francis.1997) Develop two – way bilingual programs where appropriate where non-speaking elementary students learn the indigenous and speaker learn a national or international language. Need to develop indigenous language text-books to teach literacy and academic subject matter content.
<b>Stage 3:</b> Language is used in places of business and by employees in less	Promote language by making it the language of work used throughout the community (Palmer, 1997). Develop vocabulary so that workers in an office could do their day-to-day work using their indigenous language (Anonby, specialized work areas this volume).
<b>Stage 2:</b> Language is used by local government and in the mass media in the minority community	Promote use of written form of language for government and business dealings/records. Promote indigenous language newsletters, newspapers, radio stations, and television stations.
<b>Stage 1:</b> Some language use by higher levels of government and in higher education (Reyhner, 1999)	Teach tribal college subject matter classes in the language. Develop an indigenous language oral and written literature through dramatic presentation and publications. Give tribal/national awards for indigenous language publications and other notable efforts to promote indigenous languages.

Figure 1. suggested interventions based on different stages of language endangerment (adapted from Fishman's (1991, 88-109) graded intergenerational description scale for threatened languages.

#### 4. **Endangerment, retention, language maintenance.**

##### 4.1. Endangerment

The data drawn on in this paper which is mainly from interviews and observations made it possible to unveil the fluency of mother tongue in majority of the communities. Handing over of L<sub>1</sub> from parents to children has becomes a problem. In majority of the households observed surreptitiously, parent speak their L<sub>1</sub> among themselves, but speak English and sometimes Efik (a little proportion) to their children. From a random sampling basis, we observed and also interviewed five families from each of the seven local government areas under study.

In all the five families, the parent failed in the area of transmitting the L<sub>1</sub> to their children, thereby endangering their native languages. The failure of transmission was strongest in Calabar Municipality and Calabar South. The degree of failure was reduced as the Local Government Areas that harbored rural families became further away from the cities. Bakassi, Biase had more parents speaking their mother tongue more at home than in Akpabuyo, Akamkpa and Odukpani local government areas. This is not to say that parents that communicated with their children with the English language were not much in these areas. What this shows is that in urban areas, intergenerational transmission is less evident as compared to being more evident in the rural areas. As parents became more conscious of sending their children to school, they abandon speaking their mother tongue in preference to English. Because Efik had been a lingua Franca in this part of Cross River State, some parents instead speak Efik to their children. In most churches, Efik is the major language of worship and it becomes fashionable for parents to speak Efik with their children. Sallabank (2007) maintain that there are a number of obstacles to intergenerational transmission which are both attitudinal and physical. In the case of this study, it is mainly attitudinal and not physical. They all fail to realize that they are giving up their mother tongue. Of the approximately one hundred and seventy five population observed and interviewed, fifty or twenty nine

percent (29%) of them from Calabar Municipality and Calabar South Local Government Area did not make any effort to speak their mother tongue at home and at school. 60% or one hundred and fourteen of them spoke English more than their mother tongue or L<sub>1</sub>. Eleven percent (11%) or nineteen of them were compound bilinguals. That is, they communicated in their mother tongue and English fluently. This suggests that language spoken in Biase and Bakassi – Agwagune, Nne, Ubagara, Umon, Mehu, Isanginyo, Iyonigong and Efik respectively still stand strong as the languages that are not likely to be extinct or suffer loss in the next two generations. Filmore (2000: 208) indicates that both internal and external factors lead to the loss of the native language. The external pressure comes from socio-political reasons and the internal factors come from parents and grandparents.

With the contact with English, the proficiency in the indigenous languages is gradually fading away. The current generation of the speakers of the indigenous language are more or less speaking more of English than their parents or grandparents generation. There are thus now very few children learning to speak their mother tongue fluently. They do not speak at home. Reading and writing in the L<sub>1</sub> is almost ruled out.

The major factors leading to endangerment of these languages or the cause of gradual shift of the indigenous languages to the English language is the economic strength and function that is attached to the English language. Holmes (2008:60) points out that in countries using English as its official language, people learn English in order to get jobs. She also says that “communities see no reason to take active steps to maintain their ethnic language. They may not see it as offering any advantages to their children for example”. Again, according to her, “they may not realize that it is in any danger of disappearing”. Urbanization contributes to language loss or death. There are demographic factors. Rural communities meet most of their social needs in ethnic or minority language. Inferiority complex situations make lots of native speakers of language look down in their language. In this case they go for English and sometimes they speak Efik.

#### 4.2 Retention (Revitalization)

Most of the languages in Cross River Southern Senatorial District are endangered. Intergenerational transmission is seen by Fishman (1991) as the key to revitalizing endangered languages. This study is investigating the processes of how a few people maintain their ancestral language and transmit it to their children, while others give it up. Sallabank (2007:197) mentions that “Fishman’s (1991) contention that intergenerational transmission is a key to language survival”. It is possible to see these languages regaining their versatility. The respondents when confronted are expressing regret of the decline of their languages. Their argument is that they were not conscious of the fact that they were losing their languages. The younger generation blame their parents for not teaching them or even speaking their L<sub>1</sub> to them. These arguments are neither here nor there. Each generation trades blames. This study has identified the true position of the indigenous languages in terms of their degree of endangerment.

As we place the indigenous languages of different Local Government Areas to the eight stages of language loss model by Fishman (1991:88-109), we will determine how these languages will be revitalized if at all they can be. Efut and Kiong in Calabar South and Odukpani Local Government Areas are in stage eight - only a few elders speak the languages. Ukwu, Ito and Korep in Akamkpa and Odukpani are in stage seven - only adults speak the languages. Nne, Ubagara, Mehu in Biase Local Government Area are in stage six. In this stage, some intergenerational use of the languages are noticeable. Iyonigong, Isanginyo Inyo in Biase Local Government Area are in stage five – the languages are still very much alive and used in the community. Umon and Agwagune in Biase are in stage four - languages are required in elementary schools. Ejagam in Akamkpa, Odukpani and Calabar municipality are in stage three – languages are used in places of business and by employees in less specialized work areas. Efik spoken in Calabar municipality, Calabar south, Akpabuyo, Bakassi and Odukpani Local Government Area as a first language and in Akamkpa and Biase as a second language is in stage two. Of all the languages spoken in this district, Efik and Ejagam are strongest. Their levels of endangerment are not as high as others. There are two languages still having problems because of English language. This is because English is the official language used by the government and in schools. Other languages are at various stages of endangerment as indicated above. However, reversing them to healthy languages will require the suggested interventions as suggested by Fishman. It should be stated here that none of the languages in the district is as healthy as stage one sample.

Efforts are being made to ensure that languages within stages two and three are revitalized by government, linguists, scholars, educationists and politicians. Of all the languages only Efik, Ejagam, Agwagune and Umon have developed orthographies. Others are not written, therefore, making it very difficult to revitalize them. Parents are strongly encouraged to use these languages at home for the sake of transfer to their children. Reyhner (1999) supports this as he says “with guidance and support from elders, we can teach our children our language values.....”.

Another problem these languages have especially from parents in terms of transmitting it to their children is that of choice of language. There are several parents in this district that speak different languages because of

inter-ethnic marriages. Usually mothers might be Efik and fathers from Ejagam or vice versa or any other ethnic area in the district. Offiong and Mensah (2012:108) opines that:

The focus on the need to foster on the choice of language used by two people who came together in marriage with different languages to live together as one is a consequence of the conflict situations that inter-tribal marriage all over the world are facing. Several couples based in Calabar provide the data to actually verify what transpires in their marriages terms of language use.

It is in this recognition that the causes and consequences of language choice transcend ethnic regional and national boundaries, that it has been made an issue of global concern. Choice reflects here because these parents immediately settle for the English language during family communication. This makes it impossible for the children to learn to speak either the languages of the father or that of the mother. Because the choice of speaking English in the family house has made these children lose their culture. Wolfram (1998) says “the basic notion underlying sociolinguistics is quite simple: language use symbolically represents fundamental dimensions of social behaviors and human interaction”. He further explains that “the ways in which languages reflects behaviors can often be complex and subtle”. Cultural affinity subtly goes along with language usage. The behaviors of the children in the society of study showed how they totally lack the basic culture of their ethnic groups. They have imbibed a lot from the English and sometimes the Efik culture which language they speak more often. This study is the beginning of bringing up the consciousness of what is happening to the indigenous languages of this study area. In addition to the consciousness, the prolific intergenerational transmission serves as a desirable factor to change the attitude of parents and policy makers of this society.

In a broad sense, to revitalized these indigenous languages based on the fundamental problems discovered in the cause of carrying out this research is to adapt what Fishman (1991:345) sees as important and successful efforts to maintain minority languages. These include the need for sacrifice, self-help, self-regulation, and the establishment of boundaries. He logically locates the key to minority languages preservation in the intergenerational transmission of the languages in the home of families, not in government policies and laws. He writes that, “the road to societal death is paved by languages activities that is not focused on intergenerational continuity”. He strongly advocates that grassroots efforts focused on using indigenous languages in homes and at community social occasions should be encouraged.

As mentioned, majority of our respondents, eighty percent (80%) of them could not read or write their mother tongue. Except for Efik and Ejagam (not as developed as Efik) others had problems of orthography. In hierarchy of needs, writing is not a priority to them. It could as well wait. That Efik was written was because the Christian missionaries had settled in Calabar after the slave trade period. They brought in Christianity. This led to the translation of the bible and other religious materials into Efik. These missionaries also trained teachers in Efik language. These teachers were not very tolerant and thus did not encourage students learning in their speech community. There was a social cost of that attitude which affected the community. But, it is glaring that the respondents are very willing to change this unfavorable attitude at any social cost.

Different levels of Fishman’s intergenerational transmission are associated with the languages of this study. Transmission of language has been identified as the single most important factor noticeable language shift. Lewis and Simons (2009) implies that the locus of language revitalization efforts should be among individuals and within the home domain and local community. This is clearly the case for stage six and below. However, above stage seven, we see the increasingly important role of institutions outside of the home as transmission and use expand. The essence of this analysis is more for the sake of maintenance. It is difficult to maintain Efut and Kiong in stage eight. Ukwa, Ito and Korep in stage seven require strong institutions like government, policy makers, politicians etc to revitalize them. No language in the district of our study is in stage one because none of the language have international coloration. Efik is the language closes, but it still has a long way to go. There are several lexical items especially in the area of science, mathematics, medicine, information technology, that cannot be found in the Efik lexicon. It will take a very long time before this can happen. The meta language situation in Efik is not adequate enough for codes that are strange in the system.

From Lewis and Simons (2009) point of view:

... majority of minorities communities are in stages six (three, four and five - my input on this study), and since the focus of revitalization and maintenance efforts is to strengthen the status of the language one can only conclude there are five stages below that has to be worked through in order to reach the safest status of one. But the result is that this implied agenda for minority language revitalizers is virtually impossible, well beyond the reach of most language communities even with outside assistance.

New insight into the dynamics of language shifts, and its reversal are apparent as it applies in the contact of efforts for language preservation, language revitalization and language development.

#### 4.3 Language maintenance

Apart from Efik, Ejagam and the languages spoken in the rural areas, other languages mentioned in this study are

gradually experienced loss. This loss is more of shift from the indigenous languages to English, Efik and the Nigerian pidgin. English is gradually taking over in one domain after another from these indigenous languages. The domain in which speakers use these languages are shrinking and the younger speakers are becoming less proficient. The younger generation use English for most purposes and their mother tongue is shrinking and shrinking. Holmes (2008:60) says the reasons for language shift are often economic and also political. Majorly, bilingual setting are the necessary precursor for language shift. This is happening to most of our respondents. They are not seeing any reason to take active step to maintain their native languages because they are not realizing that their language is disappearing. One of the strong areas of this papers is active languages maintenance because shifts is dominant among this group. English is the dominant second language in the length and breadth of Cross River South, closely followed by Efik and the Nigeria Pidgin. These languages are shifting and gradual loss is being experienced. Holmes (2008:60) indicates that “the social and economic goals of individuals in a community are very important in accounting for the speed of shift”. He says “rapid shift occurs when people are anxious to ‘get on in a society where knowledge of the second language is a prerequisite for success’. Young upwardly mobile people are like to shift fastest”. The treasure of languages and cultures of various communities are of benefit to them. “It fosters intergroup understanding and realizes greater dividends in form of originality, creativity and versatility” (Holmes 2008:64). The minority languages group which is under study, experience several factors and it seem to retard wholesale language shift. The people of Efik, Ejagam, Umon and Agwagune regard their language as very important for preventing their identity and culture. This has already strengthened the languages as compared to others in the same geographical zone.

The degree and frequency of contact with those based in within their home land contributes to the maintenance of the language. Even though respondents mentioned that they were not conscious of the fact that their language was undergoing a process of shift but they were ready to keep their languages alive. Ejagam, Nne, Isanginyo Inyo, Iyoniyong and Agwagune languages have the advantage of fact that, their villages had the ‘age grade’ system where communication must always be in their native language. This stands as a motivation to maintain their languages.

Language choice in inter-ethnic marriages is another factor. In Umon, Ubagara and Mehu, inter-ethnic marriages are discouraged for the reason that they want their language group to expand. If women from Umon marry from outside Umon, it is mandatory that their children must speak Umon as the  $L_1$  before any other language.

With recent awareness, especially from the gingering of Efik scholars and linguists, Efik is being used in schools, radio and television programs, church worships and even in local government affairs. This serves as an Efik language maintenance. Indigenous languages in the world despite the rhetoric of tribal policies are threatened. Corson (1995) looks at the position steps being taken to effectively revitalize these languages. He says efforts should be made to support indigenous languages. In as much as children learn English, they should do that along with their indigenous languages. English does not have to be purchased at the price of losing one’s indigenous language.

Efik happens to be the most conspicuous language that is being taught in schools in the Calabar area. Efforts are being made by linguists to ensure that the language has a meta language collation. Also the traditional king of Calabar (The Obong of Calabar) has formed a language development committee to ensure that the Efik language is continuously maintained (Offiong, 2005:128). Other languages in this geographically belt do not have orthographies, neither do they have linguistic scholars who will soon developed these languages. Agwagune and Ejagam closely follow Efik in the area of maintenance. This is attributed to its being used on radio and television for broadcasting in the State. Also they is an Agwagune linguistics scholar who is doing her best in the area of writing out scholarly journals and books.

The attitude towards language building is very positive in supporting the indigenous languages. Reyhner (1999) look at the broad overview of the responses of children towards education. He indicates that “the fault is usually not that of the children but that of the adults. It is what the parents and the teacher transmit to the children, that they receive”. Their attitudes are as a result of what they are given. Attitudes to language reflect attitudes to the users and the uses of language. That indigenous languages of the southern belt of Cross River State is endangered due to loss to the English language and Nigeria pidgin is due to attitudes of the indigenes. Reversing language shift is in ensuring that parents and teachers hold on to their language. Their attitudes should be that of remaining endeared to their languages, then consciously transferring these languages to their children. This will surely serve as a maintenance lubricant to these languages. Language contact remains the base in which speech communities experience several linguistic phenomena. These phenomena are interference and other sociolinguistic concepts like bilingualism, code-mixing and code-switching. Linguistic interference is relatively associated with this phenomena. It means that this interference is one of the reasons indigenous language maintenance poses as a problem. Interference therefore affects attitudes of both parents and children, (Offiong, 2005:37).

In addition to attitudes of both parents and children, toward maintenance of the indigenous language, language change is another area that was noticed while observing and interacting with the respondents. The English language influenced the indigenous languages that conscious linguistic changes were noticeable among the indigenes. These changes were at the phonetic level, the phonological and morphological levels. Bright (1960) sees the gradual change as unconscious an change. He hypothesized that, “although ‘conscious’ linguistic change originate among members of the higher social strata, ‘unconscious’ change is natural in all the strata where the literacy factor does not intervene”. His view is noticeable in Efik, Ejagam, Umon and Agwagune. Confirming this linguistics changes noticeable in Efik was easier because of the researcher’s initiative knowledge of the language. However, the changes in the other languages could only be confirmed through linguists that were native speakers of the various languages. And their observation were based on data collection over time. We had to bring in this aspect of the study because language contact brings change, endangerment, shift, loss and maintenance in the long run (i.e. if there is awareness).

Revitalizing threatened indigenous languages like these ones under this study must be a conscious effort. Positive steps must be taken to support these indigenous languages to revitalize them. Such conscious effort must be in the area of developing orthographies, writing the languages, training teachers, encouraging schools to developed curriculum, formulate a standard version of the languages, if there are dialectal varieties.

##### **5. Suggested intervention to strengthen the languages of the studied belt.**

There are several intervention measures that can be used to revitalize, strengthen and maintain minority indigenous languages. Essien (2010:4) indicates that “these languages according to him, have less than three hundred thousand speakers. Odot, Ito and Ukwa in Odukpani and Akamkpa Local Government Areas are examples. Also these languages have domain of use at just the home or close family circles. These languages have no official or standard orthographies or no orthographies at all. That is, such languages are unwritten. 75% of Nigerian languages are unwritten, (Essien, 1990). Again these languages lack basic pedagogical grammars and other primers and dictionaries, not to mention literacy traditions.

To empower these languages, we require the attention of governments, in this case, Cross River government. Languages like English, French, German did this for their development, even though this was about six centuries ago. Following histories of language development, we will use these as leads to empower these weak languages.

Essien (2010:15) suggest basic steps of development and empowerment as follows:

- a. The provision of a standard orthography acceptable to the generality of the native speakers of the language.
- b. The production of primers for primary school system.
- c. The compilation and production of a dictionary.
- d. The production of general literary material and the creation of a literacy tradition.
- e. Translation of classics such as the Holy bible into the language.
- f. Attitude of the speakers of the language themselves.
- g. Transfer of the language from parents to children.

He says these steps and actions complemented by a positive attitude of the people will go a long way to empowering weak Nigerian languages including these ones under study and thereby enhancing their status locally and even naturally.

Language development projects are not taken seriously in Nigeria. The government will set up agencies, centers and commissions like the Language Development Center of Nigeria Education and Research Development Council (NERDC) in Abuja and National Institute of Nigerian Language in Aba. These centers would formulate policies but government would either not implement or would be slow in implementation of these language policies. Until Nigerians see the needs and benefits for studying their languages, the use and study of these languages will remain largely, if not wholly academic. These languages of study remain where they are developmentally – little more than tribal languages in an age of computer and information technology. These languages should be made adaptable to the socio-economic realities of Nigeria’s national development.

Language is both a cultural index and expression of index. When one learns a language, the person is entering the cultural domain and terrain of the native speakers of the language. One gets to understand the believe systems, the taboos, the totems, traditions, the clothes, the ceremonies, the naming systems and whatever identifies the people by way of their mental and creative outputs: religion, literature and the arts in general, economic well-being, education etc. Language is indeed enormously powerful, (Essien, 2010:71). With all of these powers associated with indigenous languages, the speakers do not see it as important and powerful. They prefer the intimidating English. They are not just aware that their languages are gradually facing endangerment.

In 1635, the French academy was established for the deliberate and systematic involvement of the French government in language development. Nigeria should emulate such actions of other countries as a suggested intervention for all the minority languages. Teachers, linguists, language scholars should be given incentives to



induce their involvement in the teaching, developing orthographies and promotion of indigenous languages. These scholars should work towards formalizing these languages so that teachers should start teaching in both primary and secondary schools.

Literary works should be developed using any of the languages under survey. Chaucer wrote in English in Medieval England, at a time when the English language was very socially inferior to Norman French. Today, he is the father of English literature. Why would our literary scholars not imitate this beautiful example of indigenous and low language promotion? Let us consider what Wardhaugh (2000) has said in this connection:

For about three centuries after the Norman Conquest in 1066, English and Norman French co-existed in England in diglossic situation the H variety and English the L. However, gradually the L variety assumed more and more functions associated with the H so that by Chaucer's time it became conceivable that a major literary work could be cast in L.

Essien (2010) asserts that, it is high time our indigenous literary writers wrote in their native language instead of writing in English. In addition to the above suggested interventions, we are strongly advocating Fishman's interventions which will surely keep the minority languages alive.

## 6. Conclusion

We have attempted, in this paper, to look at how the languages spoken in Cross River Southern Senatorial District of Nigeria over time are gradually experiencing loss, shift, endangerment, and change. How there exist barriers to transmitting their languages to the younger generation. How English, Nigerian pidgin and Efik are becoming dominant in the study belt, even though Efik is experiencing the same endangerment. We have noticed that transgenerational transmission which Fishman propagated has not been properly utilized to bring about sustainable transfer of indigenous language of the zone to the children. Fishman's (1991:88-109) efforts of different stages of language endangerment is used as suggested intervention to strengthen the languages. His book, *Reversing language shift, a land mark write-up used to proffer solutions to endangerment and postulating maintenance will aid parents and teachers to consciously transmit these languages to their children.*

Essien's (2010) suggests some basic steps of development and empowerments which will surely aid these languages to remain stable and revitalized. Following his steps, languages of this zone and other minority languages will experience revitalization and maintenance. To empower these languages, we require the attention of governments, ginger the attitude of the speakers and encourage literary writers to write more in their languages.

We first carried out a sociolinguistic survey of the area before identifying the different problems of the minority indigenous languages. Cross River South Senatorial District is heterogeneous, multilingual and its languages like most minority languages worldwide, are forced to adopt other more aggressive languages for use. Apart from Efut and Kiong which are extinct other languages are not listed as dying or extinct but endangered. This study stands out as a conscious efforts to ginger the growth of the languages. Linguists, users, government and other agencies are encouraged to reduce these languages to writing, thereby promoting scholarship.

Burnaby (1996) quotes Bauman (1980) who points out that many academic writing system are not practiced for the languages under study. This is because most of the languages except, Efik, Ejagam, Agwagune and Umon have no written orthographies. The literacy level stands at about forty percent (40%). Other languages are not written, therefore require extra efforts to maintain it.

The interesting point in this paper is that the indigenes must be central to the decision in any initiation on the maintenance of the languages. Majority of the indigenes do not see this maintenance matter as important therefore making the idea of slowing down the loss and endangerment as challenging and complex. They see it as bureaucratic therefore losing interest with what happens to the languages. Again on the issue of maintenance, they do not value what happens to their language as a priority. Their consolation is that if the program of maintaining their languages fails, other important goals may still be achieved through other efforts.

Also other efforts are made to make indigenous policy work. These efforts center around language research, language resource development, teaching materials development, teacher training and other relevant language resource people. Curriculum development that really reflects the interests of the community, orthography development and implementation, community activities that support the use of the language, and other endeavors are encouraged to make the policy work, (Burnaby,1985 :31).

As Reyhner (1999) points out, which is also applicable to majority of the languages in the Cross River South language communities, the revitalization of indigenous languages will not come easily. There has been a lack of sharing of information between communities about which indigenous language activities, strategies, and policies have proven effective and those that have not proven fruitful. All the languages in this geographical belt need special love, care and protection by the speakers so that they can keep them alive. If indigenous languages are to survive, it is not enough for more children and adults to learn these languages. Environments also must

be created in indigenous communities where the indigenous languages is used exclusively. The old saying ‘use it or lose it’ goes for indigenous languages as well as a lot of other things.

Fishman’s (1991) framework of evaluation language endangerment has served as one of the strongest attempt used in maintaining minority language. It provides the underpinning which this study used in carrying out its survey. Its provided us with what we required to carry out our analysis and at the same time was the model that we used to observe the language developments in Cross River Southern Senatorial District. We matched the different stages were each language belonged thereby proffering a developmental program to aid slow down endangerment. Essien’s (2010) developmental process was also considered.

We hope that this study will make a contribution towards the development of minority languages in Cross River State, Nigeria and other minority languages world-wide. It also will revitalize, and enhance and maintain the languages that we looked at. It can help to encourage the use of the mother tongue and the English language simultaneously in all the communities without one subduing the other. Finally, we also hope that the field of sociolinguistics will benefit from this study.

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