



Language Shift or Maintenance: A Case of Igede Indigenes from Benue State Domicile in Ido Osun in Osun State. Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines language shift and maintenance among the Igede indigenes from Benue State domiciled in the Ido-Osun community of Osun State, to determine if they are still proficient in the Igede language, language use in different domains, and language attitudes. The data sources for the study were responses from the questionnaires distributed and interviews conducted, alongside personal observations. Utilising Noam Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar and Joshua Fishman's domain as theoretical frameworks, the data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results reveal that they are proficient in their use of the Igede language despite not living in their community of origin, they use both Yoruba and Igede in the different domains available to them and lastly, they have a good attitude towards their indigenous language. The study shows the attitudes of Igede people to the maintaining of their indigenous language in a host community.

Keywords: language shift and maintenance, language in contact, Igede, Benue State, Ido-Osun, universal grammar, domain theory.



1. Introduction

Language in contact is often the foundation or cause of language shift and/or maintenance and language in contact happens when speakers of two or more languages or varieties interact with and influence one another by emigration or migration. In Nigeria, for example, the solidification of its language contact emanated from the invasion of the British who colonised Nigeria and brought over, not only their Language but religion and culture. The history of the English language in Nigeria can be traced to three notable events in history: First is the trade relationship between British traders and Nigerians in the 17th and 18th centuries, at this time, a language developed which can be referred to as 'contact English', the second event was the Christian missionary expedition of the 19th century and the third is the colonisation of Nigeria in the 20th century which solidified/consolidated the implantation of English in the country. There are two types of contact language, namely: international contact language and intranational contact language. The type of contact that occurred in Nigeria is the international contact.

In situations where there is contact, immigrants need to want to preserve their language(s), which is their linguistic identity. When people move from their community of birth to another locality because of so many things, it might be for greener pastures, it might be to experience civilisation that is not in their home state. Now, here is the dilemma as regards language, which the immigrants face because there is a need to integrate into their host community, and imbibing the language of their host community is part of integrating, so while doing this, they may or may not maintain their language by continuing to use it or the language may be shifted as a result of neglect. This is why Garcia and Nguyen (2021) proposed that immigrants should maintain connections to their heritage language and culture while also learning and integrating the language of their host community. By balancing these aspects of their linguistic identity, immigrants can create a sense of belonging and inclusion in both their native and adopted communities.

Language shift can be defined as the process whereby a speech community abandons its ethnic language, either partially or wholly in favor of another language. (Winford, 2003). Language shift can also be referred to as language transfer, language assimilation, or language replacement. More often than not, languages that are perceived as being of higher status or powerful or dominant, spread and overtake the existing language(s) in a community and the mother tongue of such a community becomes endangered and risks

language attrition. Language shift is widespread and can be found with both majority and minority language populations and this phenomenon is often associated with immigrant groups who take up the majority language of their new domicile, abandoning the language of their homeland. (Grenoble, 2021)

Language shift is another way we can view language loss, it should also be delineated from language attrition, which is the loss of language by an individual, as a result of aging, or as a result of language replacement. Language maintenance refers to the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful language. Language maintenance involves the intergenerational transmission of a language from parents to their children and a successive utilisation of a certain language in society. (Fishman, 2013) Language maintenance involves efforts to maintain an existing language(s). Language maintenance efforts may involve some language planning where and when needed. In most cases, language maintenance is usually a response or reaction to language shift. (Bradley, 2022)

Language shift and maintenance are both interconnected, as one leads to the other and one is the opposite of the other. A language is shifted when it is in contact with a more powerful language and the users of the language's attitude change towards theirs, by using the powerful language instead of their native language, and in specific domains, thereby neglecting theirs. This doesn't happen overnight, it happens over some time, usually extended. When this happens, efforts are made by relevant stakeholders to maintain the language by putting in place policies and plans to maintain the language to prevent it from being endangered and ultimately dying. Language maintenance can be thought of as the survival of a language in a situation where it might be expected to be endangered', as a result of it being shifted while incorporating the more powerful language(s). When there is empirical evidence that there is a language shift, there are efforts for it to be maintained. (Ostler, 2012). The paper aims to explore whether there is a language shift or maintenance among the Iggede people living in the Ido–Osun part of Osun state.

1.2 Socio-Historical Background of Iggede Indigenes

The Iggede people who are the third largest ethnic group in Benue state, Nigeria, have a rich socio-historical background that reflects their cultural heritage and traditions. They are primarily located in Oju and Obi local government areas of Benue state, with a population of over 500, 000 people. The socio-historical background of the Iggede



people is characterised by a strong emphasis on communal living, traditional governance systems, and vibrant cultural practices. Many scholars, in recent years, have delved deeper into understanding the socio-historical context of the Igede people. For example, (Oyira, 2019) highlighted the significance of oral traditions in preserving the history and cultural practices of the Igede people. Also, (Ato, 2020) explored the impact of colonialism on the socio-economic structures of the Igede society. It is believed that the reason for the large number of Igede people found in Ido Osun is as a result of the search for greener pastures and also the Yoruba people in Ido Osun that they happen to meet are both hospitable and accommodating. The exact date that the influx of Igede people to Ido Osun became enormous cannot be fingered, but it is believed that they came for work. The few people that were interviewed to know why they are much in Ido Osun said it was a case of the hospitability of the Yoruba people that they met in their new community, hence they kept sending for their other family members until they became a community of diasporic Igede people. It should also be noted at this point that the Igede people can also be found in other parts of Osun state, but their number is the most in Ido Osun. The reason for this high population, according to an interviewee is that Ido Osun is their first point of call and that the standard of living in Ido Osun is low as compared to other parts of Osun.

Their exact number is not known, because there is no separate count for Igede people living in Osun during the census, but their population is much in Ido Osun, as they have areas where they live. One thing that is particularly striking about Igede people living in Ido Osun is that most of them are farmers and petty traders. They don't see the need for education and they are very hardworking.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is the domain theory by Fishman and Universal Grammar by Noam Chomsky (1957). The domain theory by Joshua Fishman 1965, is used to describe language use within bilingual/multilingual society. In other words, which language is used in a particular domain? "Domain is a sociocultural construct abstracted from topics of communication, relationship between communicators and locales of communication, in accord with the institution, of a society and the area of activity of speech community in such a way that individual behavior and social patterns can be distinguished from each other, yet related to each other" (Fishman,1972:20, Holmes, 2013:22) Fishman proposes 5 essential domains namely: the family domain, friendship, religion, education



and work. Although, it has been argued that other domains can be created to suit a speaker's purpose or need. These domains are associated with a particular language or a variety of languages. It is examined in terms of subject, place, and role relations of the interlocutors or participants.

Universal grammar, according to Lamidi (2008), is a study of the conditions that must be satisfied by the grammar of all languages. In other words, it characterises human language as a whole. Noam Chomsky proposed the theory and his submission is that all human beings have what is called a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that allows them to learn the language of their environment, even if that language is not their native language.

3. Literature Review

Noam Chomsky's theory of universal grammar has had a significant influence on the field of linguistics since its inception in the 1950s. Universal grammar posits that all human languages share a common underlying structure and set of rules, which are hard-wired into the human brain. According to Chomsky, this innate language faculty is what allows humans to acquire and use language in such a rapid and efficient manner. A key implication of universal grammar is that language is a core aspect of human cognitive abilities, and that all humans are born with the capacity to acquire and use language. This stands in contrast to the behaviorist theories of language acquisition, which posit that language is learned through imitation and reinforcement.

Chomsky's theory of universal grammar has also been applied to the study of language shift and maintenance, which refers to the processes by which languages change or disappear over time. Language shift often occurs as a result of social, political, and economic factors, such as colonisation, globalisation, and urbanisation. As communities come into contact with speakers of other languages, they may adopt new linguistic practices or even switch to a different language altogether.

On the other hand, language maintenance refers to the efforts made by individuals or communities to preserve their native language in the face of external pressures. This can involve language revitalisation programs, the creation of language nests or immersion schools, or the use of language in public and cultural domains.



3.1 Factors Influencing Language Shift and Maintenance

Language shift refers to the process of a community abandoning its traditional language in favor of another, often dominant, language. On the other hand, language maintenance refers to the efforts made by a community to preserve and pass on its traditional language to future generations.

An important factor influencing language shift is societal attitudes towards the languages in question. Schmid (2002) argues that negative attitudes towards a minority language can lead to its decline and eventual disappearance. This is supported by research that shows that speakers of minority languages often face discrimination or stigmatisation, which can contribute to language shifts (Fishman, 2001). Another factor that can influence language shift is the impact of globalisation and modernisation. As societies become more interconnected and people move more freely between regions, languages with smaller speaker populations can come under threat (Ricento, 2013). As in the case of the Igede community, they are a minority group, and if they are not intentional about the preservation of their language, they may eventually lose their linguistic identity. Globalisation can also lead to the spread of dominant languages, such as English, which can marginalize and displace minority languages (Crawford, 2000).

Furthermore, economic factors can play a role in language shift and maintenance. Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) argues that economic opportunities often drive language shift, as speakers may choose to learn a dominant language to access better job prospects or education opportunities. On the other hand, economic support and resources can help communities maintain their traditional language through language revitalization programs (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). In addition, language policies at the national or regional level can have a significant impact on language shift and maintenance. Hornberger (2008) highlights the importance of language planning in promoting language maintenance, as policies that support bilingual education or minority language rights can help preserve endangered languages. Conversely, policies that promote assimilation or restrict the use of minority languages can accelerate language shift (Hinton & Hale, 2001). Language shift and maintenance are complex processes that are influenced by a multitude of factors. Societal attitudes, globalisation, economic considerations, and language policies all play a role in determining the fate of minority languages. Researchers, policymakers, and communities need to understand these factors to support the preservation of linguistic diversity.



3.1.2 Examples and Case Studies of Language Shift and Maintenance in Minority Groups

One prominent example of language maintenance can be seen in the case of the Maori language in New Zealand. Despite centuries of colonisation and attempts to subdue their language, the Maori people have made remarkable efforts to revitalise and promote the use of their indigenous language. Through initiatives such as Maori language immersion schools and Maori language radio stations, the Maori language has experienced a resurgence in recent years (Warner, 2009).

Conversely, the case of the Cornish language in the United Kingdom serves as an example of language shift. The Cornish language was once widely spoken in Cornwall, but it gradually declined due to social and economic pressures, as well as policies that favored English. However, in recent years, there has been a revival of interest in the Cornish language, with efforts being made to reintroduce it into schools and promote its use in the community (Williams, 2006).

Another example of language shift can be seen in the case of the Quechua language in Peru. Despite being spoken by a significant portion of the population, Quechua has faced challenges due to the dominance of Spanish in the country. Efforts to promote Quechua and maintain its use have been hindered by socio-economic factors and limited support from the government. As a result, Quechua speakers are increasingly switching to Spanish for economic and social reasons (Villegas, 2017). These examples highlight the diverse factors that influence language shift and maintenance in minority groups. While some communities successfully maintain their language through proactive measures and support, others face challenges that lead to language decline and eventual extinction.

3.2 Language Policy and Planning

Language policy and planning play a crucial role in shaping the fate of minority languages around the world. The Igede language, spoken by the Igede people in Benue State, Nigeria, is facing challenges in maintaining its vitality and ensuring its continued use in various domains. There is existing research on language policy and planning vis-à-vis the Igede language. In the context of Nigeria, where English is the official language and dominant lingua franca, Indigenous languages such as Igede face the threat of marginalisation and extinction. Emenanjor (2014) highlights the importance of language



policy in Nigeria in promoting the use and preservation of indigenous languages, including Igede. However, the lack of effective language planning and support for minority languages like Igede has contributed to their decline in use and status (Enemu, 2018). An important aspect of language policy and planning for the Igede language involves education. The Nigerian government has implemented policies aimed at promoting the use of indigenous languages in schools, including the Igede language. However, implementation of these policies has been uneven, with limited resources and training for teachers in minority languages like Igede (Abah, 2016). This has led to a situation where many Igede children are educated primarily in English, with limited opportunities to use their native language in an academic setting. Also, the language of the migrated Igede indigenes to other parts of the country for greener pastures has further added to their repertoire of language as part of the integration process, they imbibe the language of their new environment, which may harm the use of their native language.

Furthermore, language planning efforts for the Igede language also need to consider the impact of urbanisation and migration on language use. Adinya (2017) notes that as Igede-speaking communities become more urbanised and interconnected with other linguistic groups, there is a risk of a language shift towards English or other dominant languages. Policies that promote the use of Igede in urban centers and provide resources for language maintenance activities can help address this challenge.

In conclusion, language policy and planning are crucial for the vitality and sustainability of the Igede language. Efforts to promote the use of Igede in education, media, and government institutions, as well as support for community-based language revitalisation initiatives, are essential for maintaining the linguistic diversity and cultural heritage of the Igede people.

3.3 Language Revitalisation Efforts by the Igede People

The Igede people, an ethnic group in Benue State, Nigeria, are making significant efforts to revitalise and promote the use of their native language, Igede. Language revitalisation initiatives are crucial for preserving linguistic diversity and maintaining cultural heritage in the face of challenges such as urbanisation, globalisation, and language shift. There is existing research on the revitalisation efforts by Igede indigenes, especially those not domiciled in their place of origin.



An important component of the language revitalisation efforts of the Igede indigenes involves education. Several studies have highlighted the importance of incorporating the Igede language into the school curriculum as a way to contribute to its use among younger generations (Abah, 2019). Community-based language programs and language immersion schools have been established to provide opportunities for Igede children to learn and use their native language in an educational setting (Emenanjor, 2016). In addition to education, media, and communication play a crucial role in language revitalisation efforts. The Igede indigenes have entrenched radio stations, newspapers, and online platforms in the Igede language to promote its use and visibility (Adinya, 2018). These media outlets serve as important tools for language maintenance and transmission, reaching both local and diaspora communities.

Furthermore, community engagement and grassroots initiatives are vital components of the language revitalization efforts of the Igede indigenes. Community language committees, cultural festivals, and language revitalisation workshops have been organised to promote the use of Igede and create a sense of pride and identity among speakers (Enemuo, 2020). These initiatives foster the intergenerational transmission of the language and increase awareness about the importance of preserving Igede's linguistic heritage.

In conclusion, the language revitalization efforts of the Igede indigenes demonstrate a multifaceted approach that encompasses education, media, and community involvement. By actively promoting and preserving their native language, the Igede people are taking proactive steps to ensure the continued vitality and sustainability of the Igede language in the face of external pressures.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This research, makes use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis to explore the language shift and maintenance of Igede people of Benue state living in Ido Osun, Osun State, Nigeria. Quantitative research is the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, trends, and relationships within a given population, (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2017), while qualitative design is Qualitative research design is a type of research methodology that focuses on exploring and understanding phenomena in their natural settings. This approach is used to gain insights into individuals' experiences, beliefs, behaviors, and

interactions, aiming to capture the depth and complexity of human experiences. Qualitative research design is characterized by its emphasis on subjective interpretation, context, and the researcher's role in the research process (Silverman, 2016).

4.2 Participants

The target population for the study was all Igede indigenes living in Osun state while the participant sample consisted of fifty (50) Igede indigenes from Benue state, Nigeria domicile in Ido Osun town in Osun state, Nigeria. The participant samples were selected using the purposive sampling technique because this technique allows a researcher to select participants who meet specific criteria and have characteristics that are relevant to the research goal, and in this case, an Igede origin and living in Ido Osun. They comprised both males and females, ranging from age 20-60 years. Very few out of this population are educated, while most of them are not. Their mainstay is petty trading, artisans, and farming. The participants were enlightened about the purpose and nature of the study and their consents were volitional.

4.3 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The data examined were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and personal observations. The data were collected with the assistance of an acquaintance of the researcher who works as a community health official in Ido Osun. With her assistance, the researcher was able to meet with the respondents whose data were used in this research. The researcher used different types of communication aids/tools like mobile phones and face-to-face interviews. The questionnaires distributed were used to ask different questions from the correspondents, which they were to pick yes/no/a little. The researcher met with some of the correspondents during their visits to the primary healthcare facility located at Ido Osun. There, the questionnaires were distributed, and oral interview was conducted for some of them. The Igede people living in the Ido Osun community have an area where they live within the community, so the researcher went there to observe personally.

The questionnaire consisted of 4 sections. The first section explored the respondents' age group. The second section examined the respondents' language proficiency in Igede and Yoruba, the third section examined language use in different domains. While the fourth section covered respondent's attitudes towards Igede, Yoruba, and English.

5. Results and Discussion

The study examined the concept of language shift and maintenance among Igede indigenes living in the Ido-Osun community in Osun State, Nigeria, furnishing us with comprehensive information about this phenomenon.

5.1 Distribution of the Sample Population

Fifty (50) Igede indigenes that are domicile in Ido Osun in Osun state, Nigeria are used for this study.

Table 1 Distribution of The Sample Population By Age

Age	No of Respondents
20-30	20
31-40	10
41-50	15
51- 60	5
Total no of respondents	50

Table 2: Distribution of The Sample Population By Occupation

Farmers	18
Traders	25
Craftsmen/women	5
Mechanics	2
Total	50

Table 3: Distribution Of Sample Population by Educational Qualifications

Illiterates	20
Primary school leaving certificate holders	22
O level	8
OND	0
HND	0
Total	50

5.2 Language proficiency

Table 4 represents the ability questions that assess the informants' proficiency in Igede and Yoruba. The table highlights data on informants' ability to listen, speak, read, and write in the two languages. The informants were asked about their language ability on

a three-point scale. The possible questions' responses were 'yes' 'no' 'a little'.

TABLE 5

Numbers	Language skills	Yes%	No%	A little%
	Can you understand a conversation in Igede?	90%	4%	6%
	Can you have a conversation in Igede?	90%	0%	10%
	Can you read in Igede?	10%	80%	10%
	Can you write in Igede?	40%	80%	10%
	Can you understand a conversation in Yoruba?	100%	0%	0%
	Can you read in Yoruba?	42%	20%	38%
	Can you write in Yoruba	44%	20%	36%
	Can you have a conversation in English?	%	%	%100
	Can you read in English?	%	%	%100
	Can you write in English?	%	%	%100

The findings in Table 5 reveal that the respondents can understand a conversation in Igede and also have a conversation in the same, as 90% of the respondents chose yes respectively. 10% and 40% said they could not read and write in Igede respectively. The reason for this is not far-fetched as the Igede people are not heavy on education, and even if they were, the probability that their indigenous language will be taught in schools is zero. According to Garcia (2003), when schools don't pay attention to teaching reading and writing in the ethnic home language, resultant exposure to that language is minimal, and productive skills in the language will be reduced extremely.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, all the respondents can understand a conversation in Yoruba and also have a conversation in it. This is because many of them were born in Osun state, so they naturally acquired the language of their environment. Just like Noam Chomsky has a submission that every human has what is called Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which is innate and allows every living human being to acquire the language of his or her environment, even if this language is not his native language. (Chomsky, 1957)

Surprisingly too, close to half of the respondents said they can read and write in Yoruba. The reason for this may also not be far-fetched, as some of them had their primary education in Osun state, and according to the language planning and policy in Nigeria, one indigenous language must be taught from primary 4, so this explains their reading and writing ability in Yoruba.



The implication of all the foregoing is that the Igede people of Benue state, though living in an environment that doesn't speak their ethnic language, are maintaining the language. This result refutes Tawalbeh et al (2013) study on a Sociolinguistic Investigation into the Use of Hausa among Saudi Hausa in the City of Mecca as he discovered that their Hausa language is shifting.

5.3 Language use

	Only Yoruba %	Mostly Yoruba %	Yoruba and Igede %	Mostly Igede %	Only Igede %	English and Yoruba and Igede %
What language do you use when you speak to your neighbors?	0%	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%
What language do you use when you speak to your children?	0%	2%	88%	10%	0%	0%
What language do you use when you speak to your parents and the elderly?	0%	0%	6%	94%	0%	0%
What language do you use when you speak to your parents and the elderly?	0%	0%	12%	88%	0%	0%
What language do you use during Igede social occasions?	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%

What language do you use when you meet friends in the neighborhood ?	0%	8%	92%	0%	0%	0%
What language do you use most times when you are upset?	6%	2%	92%	0%	0%	0%
What language do you use when praying?	0%	0%	52%	48%	0%	0%
What language do you dream in?	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
What language do you think in?	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%

TABLE 6 Language use in different domains

From table 6, it can be seen that 90% speak to their neighbors in Yoruba, as majority of their neighbors are Yoruba. While 10% speak Yoruba and Iggede. Also, 88% speak both Yoruba and Iggede to their kids. This is so because the parents want them to learn the language of their environment and also their ethnic language. 10% speak only Iggede hoping that the kids will acquire the language of his or her environment naturally, as s/he has the LAD. (Chomsky, 1957). While just 2% of the entire sample picked mostly Yoruba. 94% said they speak mostly Iggede to their parents and elderly, this is so because some of these conversations are done on the phone and some of these elderly said and parents do not understand Yoruba language. All the respondents said they speak Iggede to their brothers and sisters when they meet. This is very important, as this is a very important measure that is being taken to maintain their language. Clyne and Kipp (1999) believe that the family plays a crucial role in language maintenance. If a language is not used in the home domain, then it cannot be maintained elsewhere. So this implies, that the Iggede people are maintaining their language through the family domain.

All the respondents unanimously said that the only language that is permitted during their social functions is their native language. It is also



worthy of note at this juncture to state that they have a monthly meeting where only their native language is allowed. This is a good practice that is aimed at maintaining their ethnic language. 92% of the respondents said that they speak both Igede and Yoruba when they meet friends in the neighborhood. This is understandable, as they have integrated into their new community where they have both Igede and Yoruba friends, while 8% chose mostly Yoruba. So in the domain of friendship, both languages are used.

92% of the respondents said they use both Yoruba and Igede when they are upset, depending on who they are upset with, while 6% said Yoruba and 2% said mostly Yoruba. This result shows their fluency in both languages at their disposal. Also, in the religion domain, when praying 52% of the respondents said they use Yoruba and Igede to pray while 48% said they use only Igede to pray, this implies that the two languages are at par and that despite not being in their place of origin, they are maintaining their ethnic language in the religion domain.

The respondents unanimously said they dream and think in the two languages. What this means is that, the two languages at their disposal subconsciously creep into their memory and their dream. This also implies that their Igede language, as a result of constant usage is being maintained. This result is in sync with Smith and Johnson (2015) where they investigated how the Welsh language has been preserved and revitalized in Wales, despite the hegemony of English and the Welsh language is being maintained.

From the foregoing analysis, it is established that the Igede people living in Ido Osun in Osun state, Nigeria is maintaining their language in the face of a more powerful and dominant language.

Language attitudes

Table 6 shows the illustration of respondents' attitudes towards Yoruba and Igede. The term 'attitude' refers to the importance or value that the speakers have towards the Igede language which is their native language and a part of their unique identity, as well as actions taken by the speech community(if any) to maintain their ethnic language. In retrospect, the more value placed on their ethnic language, which has become a minority language, as a result of their location, the more likely, the language is going to be maintained.

TABLE 7

No	Questions	Yoruba	Igede	both	no ne
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	What language is more beautiful?	0	8%	92%	0
	What language is more useful to you	100%	0%		0%
	What language would you prefer to use when you speak to others?	2%	2%	96%	0%

From table 7, it can be seen that 92% of the respondents said that both languages are beautiful, while 8% said Igede. This implies that they have a positive attitude towards the two languages, which is confirmed in the previous tables. All the respondents agree that Yoruba is more useful to them. The reason for this is not far-fetched, for them to be economically viable, they need to use the language of their environment more, and also, the strength of their population cannot be compared to their host community. Here, it is not a case of having a positive or negative attitude toward their language, but a case of survival. 96% of the respondents said they preferred to use both languages, and 2% each chose Yoruba and Igede. The implication of this is that they rate both languages almost equally.

Table 8

		Yes %	No%
	Is it important for you to speak Yoruba?	94%	6%
	Is it important for you to speak Igede?	56%	44%
	Is Igede dying in your home?	0%	100%
	Is Igede dying in your community?	0%	100%

From the results of the questions asked and the answers given in Table 8, it is evident that it is more important for them to speak Yoruba as 94% of the respondents chose yes, while 6% said no. This implies that the Yoruba language is more useful to them. Furthermore, 56% of the respondents said it is important for them to speak Igede, while 44% said it is not important for them to speak Igede. The implication of this is that those who chose 'importance' are looking at it from the survival angle, while those who chose 'no' to the question view it from not

losing their linguistic identity angle. All the respondents unanimously agree that the Igede language is not dying in their homes and neither is it dying in their community. These revelations imply that the Igede language has not shifted among the Igede community of Benue state living in Osun state, Nigeria.

Conclusion

In this paper, we examined the concept of language maintenance and shift among the Igede people of Benue state in Ido Osun town of Osun state, Nigeria. Amazingly, this research has shown that the Igede language is not shifting in this community, rather it is being maintained. Based on the informants' answers to the questionnaires, the oral interview conducted, and the personal observations of the researcher. We can attribute the maintenance observed to the following reasons

First, the positive attitude that the Igede people have toward their ethnic language enables them to maintain this language in the face of a more powerful and dominant language.

Second, most of the Igede people are petty traders, farmers, and artisans and their goods and services are sold and delivered to the Ido Osun community, respectively. They have integrated fully into their host community and one might not be able to spot the difference if one is not observant.

Third, the imbibing of their ethnic language in the family domain has contributed immensely to the language maintenance that this community is experiencing. From the results, it is evident that parents speak their native language to their children, who are the new generation. (Fishman, 1991) notes that to maintain a mother tongue, it must be enforced and spoken at home and in the community, which is exactly what this community of Igede speakers are implementing.

In conclusion, the Ido Osun community in Osun state is a Yoruba-English populated area, with the majority speaking the Yoruba language. The Igede people have adopted the language of their host community, and despite that, they have found ways to maintain their ethnic language, to prevent it from going into extinction, this, they have been successful at, judging from the result of the study.



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