Okpameri Language: A Moribund Language

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ABSTRACT

The Okpameri language, a minority language spoken in Nigeria, is gradually heading towards extinction due to sociolinguistic factors such as the dominance of languages like Yoruba and English. **Language death** is a slow process driven by the diminished use of a language across generations, often due to social, economic, and political pressures that force speakers to switch to more dominant languages. This study examines the stages of language death in Okpameri land, focusing on how language contact with English and Yoruba is contributing to the language's decline. The research utilizes a survey method, gathering data from 100 Okpameri multilinguals to analyze attitudes towards language loss and its impact on cultural identity. Findings indicate that Okpameri is in serious decline, with a significant portion of the population unable to speak the language fluently. There is widespread concern about its potential extinction, and most respondents believe that the dominance of other languages is detrimental to Okpameri's survival. The study underscores the urgency of language revitalization efforts, particularly through education and community engagement, to preserve Okpameri and its cultural significance.

Keywords: Sociolinguistic factors, Language revitalization, Cultural identity, Language extinction, Multilingualism

INTRODUCTION

The most significant element of the cultural heritage of any ethnic group is its language. People indeed maintain their culture by fostering their language(s). Language death is a gradual process characterized by the diminishing ability of a community to use a particular language. This phenomenon does not affect all speakers simultaneously or uniformly. A language is considered completely extinct when there are no remaining speakers within a population that once used it. Consequently, language death occurs when a language loses all its speakers. According to Aitchinson and Carter (1987), language death is a social issue driven by societal needs. There is no evidence to suggest that the language itself was deficient; its fundamental structure was comparable to that of any other language. It gradually disappeared because it no longer met the social needs of its speakers (Aitchinson & Carter, 1987).

Languages do not die due to their inherent structure (syntax, morphology, phonology) or complexity. Thomason (2001) notes that "language death does not just occur; rather, it is directly linked to various social phenomena" (Thomason, 2001, p. 52). Clearly, economic, social, and political factors drive communities to shift from one language to another. One significant reason for this shift is the need for employment, as new jobs often require proficiency in a different language to perform effectively.

An endangered language, often referred to as a moribund language, is one that faces the risk of extinction as its speakers either pass away or adopt another language. A language is classified as "dead" when there are no fluent speakers left. Language endangerment refers to a situation where a language is at risk of becoming obsolete, potentially leading to its extinction. As noted by Hale (1992), cited in Fakuade (1999), this occurs when a language is overshadowed by a more dominant one. Such dominance typically results in a decrease in the language's use across various contexts due to the presence of a more powerful language. For instance, Hausa poses a significant threat to minority languages in the northern region, particularly in Adamawa State (Fakuade, 1999). The majority languages in Nigeria's eastern and western regions, Igbo and Yorùbá, respectively, are also jeopardizing the continued use of minority languages in those areas.

Although dead languages can be studied through recordings or texts, the absence of active speakers means they are essentially extinct. While languages have been disappearing throughout human history, the processes of globalization, imperialism, and neocolonialism have accelerated this trend, leading to what is termed linguicide (the killing of a language).

As communities lose their languages, they often also lose cultural traditions tied to those languages, including songs, myths, poetry, local remedies, and unique ecological knowledge that may not translate easily. During this loss, often referred to as obsolescence in linguistic discussions, the language being lost tends to undergo changes as speakers increasingly adapt it to resemble the dominant language, leading to the gradual simplification of grammatical and phonological features not present in that language.

Nigeria is home to approximately five hundred and twenty-one (521) languages and dialects (Dandaura, 2017), many of which are facing significant pressure from dominant languages. By 2018, twelve languages had already gone extinct, with eleven from the northern part of the country and one from the south (Gwaram, 2017).

Stages of Language Death

Wurm (1998) recognizes five levels of language status: (i) potentially endangered, (ii) endangered, (iii) seriously endangered, (iv) moribund, and (v) extinct. According to Wurm, every language that crosses the threshold between potentially and endangered status is already in limbo. A language may still exist in recorded form, but its speakers may favor a more socially acceptable language, leading to its decline in use.

Indeed, even languages with a large number of speakers, such as Yorùbá, may be endangered, not to mention Okpameri, which is classified under category 'C' by Adekunle (1976). Adekunle (1976) classifies the languages of Nigeria into groups according to their functions as mediums of communication in the Nigerian context as examined: Class A languages are the major indigenous languages spoken by at least six million native speakers and used widely outside their state of origin by Nigerians whose mother tongues are different. These include Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá.

Class B languages are those not much used outside their state of origin but officially recognized and used at the national or federal level as one of the nine major languages. These include Kanuri, Tiv, Fula, Edo, Efik, Ijo, etc.

Class C languages are minor languages with no official recognition at the state level. Adekunle's classification of languages, particularly Class C, may be problematic. The Federal Government of Nigeria (1979) acknowledges Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá as official languages used in the National Assembly alongside English.

There are four stages of language death. The first step towards language death is potential endangerment, where a language is under significant external pressure but still has communities that transmit it to younger generations. The second stage is endangerment, characterized by a dwindling number of speakers and minimal transmission to children. The third stage is seriously endangered, where the language is unlikely to survive beyond the current generation. The fourth stage is moribund, culminating in the fifth stage: extinction.

The primary reason for language shift, which ultimately leads to language death, is when speakers opt to use a more widely spoken language that is associated with social or economic advantages. Another important factor contributing to language death is the perception within a community that their ethnic language is not worth maintaining. They may view it as inferior or believe it won't benefit their children, or they might be unaware of the gradual loss of their language. Additional social factors that lead to language loss include rural–urban migration, cultural and national identity, prestige versus mediocrity, and class distinctions (Kuter, 2016). When people move from rural to urban areas, they may lose their language if it is not spoken in the city. For instance, a young person seeking better opportunities in an urban setting may abandon their language if it is not used there and if they have no one to speak it with, especially if it is a minority language.

Conflicts between cultural and national identity can also result in language death. If the national language differs from a community's native language, and the national language is widely used and codified, the less spoken mother tongue may gradually disappear. A community's culture is reflected in their language use, but when

another language is established as the national language, it can erode the native language over time. Additionally, the status and prestige of languages influence which ones survive and which do not. The dominance of a majority language across various domains diminishes the use of ethnic languages. The prestige of a language is shaped by its speakers and the recognition it receives from authorities. If speakers of an ethnic language find that it is undervalued and does not enhance their social identity, they may switch to the more prestigious language of the majority, threatening their own language's existence and potentially leading to its extinction (Akinkurolere & Oluwapelumi, 2018).

Languages are gradually becoming extinct due to both remote and immediate reasons. Natural factors such as speaker well-being, meteorological and economic situations (e.g., famine and drought), habitat displacement, illnesses, desertification, and unanticipated human migrations can all have a negative impact. According to Romaine (2002), language-policy statements are often reactive and lack foresight, which contributes to language endangerment and mortality. A policy is a government statement outlining a course of action, typically seen in national documents like the Constitution and National Policy on Education. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (NPE) outlines language use policies for government and education. Romaine (2002) used the Native American Languages Act (NALA) of 1990 as an example of such a policy. The author contends that NALA, although one of the most unambiguous linguistic pronouncements published by the US Congress, is an example of a policy without design. According to McCarty and Watahomigie (1998), language rights do not guarantee language maintenance, which is ultimately determined by native speakers' home language. Extra-familiar institutions, especially those governed by the community, struggle to control such decisions. Native speakers' attitudes are a major contributing cause to the endangerment of the Yorùbá language. Parents encourage their children to study English for social acceptance and economic development. Abandoning the Yorùbá language might result in dislocation and loss of identity (Fabunmi & Salawu, 2005).

Another factor that has impacted the Yorùbá language is the issue of job opportunities and economic policies. Fabunmi and Salawu (2005) argue that this factor is closely tied to the attitude of the elite. Among Nigeria's elite, the primary motivation for pursuing any educational field is financial gain and the economic well-being of the individual. Many of the elite would never allow their children to study Yorùbá as a subject due to its perceived lack of financial self-sufficiency. To them, the language holds little value if it cannot align with the demands of the global economy. The elite's disregard for and minimal use of Yorùbá have adverse effects on the language as a discipline.

There are various perspectives on language extinction. One view, presented by Aniche-Ohiri (2014), attributes language extinction to neglect and misuse by speakers. He noted that some Nigerian languages are already extinct, while many others are on the brink of disappearing. In his opinion, the primary challenge is the failure of adults to pass the language down to younger generations within families. This view aligns with the findings of Johnmary (2012), Obianika (2014), and Babalobi (2020), who argue that family-driven neglect hinders the development of the language. Parents often forbid their children from speaking their native language at home, viewing it as irrelevant to their social and economic advancement. Research indicates that 25% of children under the age of eleven cannot speak any local Nigerian language. If no proactive measures are taken to address this issue, these languages, particularly Igbo, are likely to become extinct within three generations. Although some may disagree with this perspective, it is supported by another scholar, Oguejiofor (as cited in Onwudiwe, 2016), who highlights that Igbo-speaking families often discourage the use of the language, thus depriving their children of the cultural and philosophical insights it provides.

To prevent the extinction of Nigerian languages, it is essential for social institutions, the media, families, the government, UNESCO, and other international organizations to take collective action. Parents, in particular, should prioritize speaking the language at home, as this is a key way to transmit it to future generations.

Ani (2012) adds a new dimension to this issue, emphasizing that the rise of new media has changed the way the Igbo communicate, particularly among the youth. She concludes that new technologies significantly impact the Igbo language, with globalization and media convergence altering how information is shared, as also noted by YA'U (2002). Ekwueme (2016) also explores the decline of the Igbo language, identifying the extent of its erosion. He explains that before colonialism, the language was a source of great pride for its speakers, reflected in proverbs, stories, and other forms of oral communication. However, colonialism disrupted the language's

strength and development by imposing foreign cultural norms. This suggests that language acquisition or loss is a response to external influences, and language death is a "non-linguistic" phenomenon, as described by Swadesh (1948).

Statement of the Problem

Okpameri land is a multilingual community with a negative influence from the contact language to the target language, the language is gradually going into extinction. It has been a source of concern to the Okpameri speakers because Yoruba and English languages are dominating in their speech. This study is crucial because it appears that an average Okpameri multilingual cannot speak Okpameri language without speaking English language or Yoruba language. One major problem caused by this situation is that the English language almost dominates the mother tongue thereby making the people unable to speak the language fluently which is gradually leading to language death.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research aims to examine the phenomenon and identify the factors of language death in Okpameri land.

The objectives of this study are to;

1. describe the stages of language death Okpameri land

2. discuss the sociolinguistic effects of language contact on Okpameri language.

Research Questions

1. What are the stages of language death Okpameri land?

2. What are the sociolinguistic effects of language contact on Okpameri language?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A language is considered endangered when its speakers stop using it, leading to a decline in its use across various communication contexts. If the older generation fails to pass the language down to the younger generation, resulting in no new speakers, the language can be deemed endangered or even extinct. An endangered language is one at risk of disappearing as its speakers die off or switch to other languages. According to Crystal (2002), the number of speakers alone does not determine a language's endangerment; rather, it depends on the speakers' attitudes toward their culture, of which their language is a vital part. Labov (1969) argues that language endangerment often occurs when different groups come into contact, not only through cultural exchanges but also through shifts in cultural prestige linked to varying levels of technological advancement (Balogun, 2013). When one group feels inferior due to technological disparities, it may abandon its culture, including its language, for that of a more developed group. Kuter (2016) similarly notes that the loss of one language often coincides with the adoption of another by its speakers. Mufwene (2002) describes languages as parasitic entities that thrive based on the communicative behaviors of their speakers, who adapt to changes in their socio-economic environments. Derhemi (2002) focuses on the challenges faced by endangered languages, particularly those spoken by minority groups, analyzing the sociolinguistic factors leading to their endangerment and survival. She defines an endangered language as one likely to vanish soon, ceasing to function as a means of communication and possibly disappearing from history altogether. Omo-Ojugo (2004) argues that a language can only resist extinction if it transitions from being spoken to being written down. Godesborg (2003) states that any language with over 50,000 speakers is not at risk, while those with fewer than 400 speakers are definitely threatened. To synthesize these perspectives, this study aligns with Woodbury (2012), who defines an endangered language as one likely to become extinct soon. He emphasizes that any language falling out of use or not being passed to the next generation is endangered and may face extinction.

The attitudes of speakers toward their languages are crucial determinants of their survival. According to Romaine (2002), many indigenous languages in Nigeria face neglect because speakers prefer to use more socially

prestigious languages, particularly English, which is associated with social mobility, modernity, and economic success. The dominance of English and other major Nigerian languages, such as Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, results in a decline in the use of smaller indigenous languages. Studies by Olanitan (2017) further confirm that Nigerian children, particularly in urban areas, show a preference for English and pidgin over their indigenous languages, accelerating language shift and, ultimately, language death. Adegbija (1994) emphasizes that "language attitudes are evaluative judgments made about a language or its variety" (6). These attitudes play a significant role in the development or decline of a language, as well as in its preservation or destruction. They are essential for maintaining the vitality of a language. The status of a language is influenced by the attitudes people hold toward it. The Akoko-Edo dialects, including Okpameri, are currently facing serious threats to their vitality, largely due to the negative attitudes of the younger generation in the community. Language attitudes can be positive, negative, or neutral, each influencing the vitality of a language in different ways. Negative attitudes, in particular, arise when there is a lack of positive regard for the language, leading speakers to distance themselves from using it.

The economic environment also plays a key role in the extinction of languages. Fabunmi and Salawu (2005) highlight that economic policies favoring English and other widely spoken languages of commerce, such as Hausa and Yoruba, exacerbate the marginalization of smaller languages. The role of language in securing job opportunities in Nigeria is critical. As Romaine (2002) argues, many parents discourage their children from learning their native languages because they perceive these languages as economically non-viable. The drive for upward mobility pushes parents to favor languages that are perceived to have greater economic value, such as English. More recently, Obi (2019) notes that youth in urban areas are increasingly abandoning their indigenous languages in favor of English, which is associated with global economic integration and job prospects.

Governmental neglect and inadequate language policies are central to the decline of Nigerian languages. Romaine (2002) and Osundare (2018) argue that governmental policies often fail to protect or promote indigenous languages. While the Nigerian government has acknowledged the importance of language preservation through documents such as the National Policy on Education (NPE), these policies often lack the commitment, resources, or enforcement mechanisms to prevent language death. Adebayo (2021) stresses that governmental support for minority languages is largely ineffective, with many local languages still not included in mainstream education or media.

The rise of globalization has further contributed to the dominance of global languages at the expense of local ones. The widespread use of English in global communication, media, and the internet, alongside the dominance of Nigerian Pidgin in urban centers, has marginalized indigenous languages. Adedeji (2020) highlights that exposure to Western media and entertainment has diminished the appeal of indigenous languages, especially among younger generations. The integration of global languages into everyday life, from social media to commerce, has increased the pressure on local languages, making them less relevant in contemporary society.

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Egele's study on language death in Akoko-Edo shows that more than 85% of students hold negative attitudes toward their native dialects. The study indicates that these students (youths) are indifferent to the fate of their dialects and do not wish to be associated with them. Aziza (2003) concurs, stating that "the continued existence of any language depends largely on the attitude of its native speakers, particularly the youth" (6). This is because the youth are responsible for passing the language on within their communities and beyond. If a language is perceived as irrelevant by its younger speakers, it will gradually be replaced by other languages. Similarly, Omoregbe (2003) observes that "Edo is shifting grounds for English and Pidgin, as they are now used as common languages in the state to break communication barriers" (10). This likely explains why the younger generation of Edo speakers has developed negative attitudes toward their language.

In this context, the native dialects of Akoko-Edo are particularly vulnerable, as younger generations prefer using English over their native dialects.

METHODOLOGY

The method for data collection is the use of a self-structured questionnaire with yes or no questions. The questionnaire has ten (10) items. These questionnaires were randomly distributed to 100 Okpameri multilinguals, old and young, male and female, who reside in Lampese one of the villages in Okpameri land. Their educational backgroung is between SSCE and PhD whose occupation are public/civil servant, and paramilitary The questionnaires were collected upon completion by the multilinguals and were later analyzed using Crystal's notion of language death. The results were counted and converted to percentage.

Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The researcher used the purposive sampling strategy in the study. Purposive sampling, sometimes referred to as judgmental sampling, is a non-probability method used in research to choose units (people, cases, or events) according to particular attributes that support the goals of the study. Finding cases, people, or communities that can offer insightful information about the study issue is the primary goal of purposive sampling.

It is also a technique that concentrate on gathering extensive and detailed data from "fit-for-purpose" participants. In this study, the author uses tables to clearly describe the stages of language death Okpameri land and discuss the sociolinguistic effects of language contact on Okpameri language. The sampling is done using a focus group size of 100 people.

RESULTS/DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Demographic distribution of the respondents.

Category	Details	Total
Age	30-39 = 40%, 40-49 = 40%, 50 and above = 20%	100
Gender	Male = 60%, Female = 40%	100
Other Languages	English = 55%, English & Yoruba = 30%, Other languages (Ebira, Uneme, Hausa, etc.) = 15%	100

Educational Background	SSCE = 30%, BSc/MSc = 65%, PhD = 5%	100
Occupation	Public Servant = 30%, Civil Servant = 30%, Military/Paramilitary = 20%	100

The table provides a demographic breakdown of 100 respondents across five categories: Age, Gender, Other Languages, Educational Background, and Occupation.

Age Distribution: A significant 80% of respondents are aged between 30-49, indicating that the sample is predominantly middle-aged, which is often associated with peak career stages and family responsibilities. Only 20% are aged 50 and above, suggesting that the survey may have focused on individuals still active in their careers rather than retirees or older adults.

Gender Distribution: The sample shows a gender imbalance with 60% male respondents and 40% female respondents. Although the sample leans male, the inclusion of 40% females provides a balanced representation compared to many surveys. The gender distribution could reflect broader trends or the specific population targeted by the survey.

Languages Spoken: A majority, 55%, speak onlys English, which could indicate that English is the dominant language in the respondents' daily lives. Additionally, 30% are bilingual, speaking both English and Yoruba, suggesting a connection to the Yoruba-speaking region or cultural group. The remaining 15% speak other indigenous languages like Ebira, Uneme, or Hausa, representing a smaller segment of the population.

Educational Background: 65% of respondents hold at least a bachelor's or master's degree, which suggests a highly educated sample, likely composed of professionals in mid-career roles. However, 30% have only an SSCE, indicating a diverse range of educational backgrounds. Only 5% hold a PhD, which is typical for any general population survey.

Occupation: 30% of respondents are employed as Public Servants, 30% as Civil Servants, and 20% in Military/Paramilitary roles. This suggests a significant portion of respondents work in government or public sectors, which could influence their perspectives on policies and governance.

In conclusion, the demographic distribution shows a relatively well-educated, middle-aged group with a balanced gender representation, predominantly English-speaking, and mostly employed in public or government roles. However, the specific age and occupation trends should be kept in mind when analyzing any conclusions drawn from this sample. This demographic snapshot can provide insight into the population's career stages, educational backgrounds, and possibly their perspectives on public service or related topics.

Table 2: Distribution of the responses from the respondents

S/N	ITEM	YES	NO
1	Are you familiar with Okpameri language?	100%	0%
2	Is Okpameri your native language?	100%	0%
3	Do you understand or speak Okpameri language?	70%	30%
4	Do you believe the Okpameri language is declining	85%	15%
5	Are you concerned about the potential loss of Okpameri?	92%	8%
6	How do you believe the decline of Okpameri affects the identity of its speakers?	95%	5%

7	How do you believe the contact of other languages has effects on Okpameri language?	98%	2%
8	How do you believe not teaching the Okpameri language in schools has negative effects on the language?	87%	3%
9	Have you participated in any activities aimed at preserving or promoting Okpameri?	60%	40%
10	Do you think the Okpameri language will die in future?	90 %	10%

Data Analysis

The Crystal's notion of language death was used to analyze the data from the respondents. Tables and percentages were also employed to summarize the questionnaire. and the answers are presented in frequencies and percentages starting with demographic summary.

Here's a descriptive analysis of the provided data, which involves responses related to the Okpameri language:

The table presented reflects responses from a group of individuals regarding their perceptions of the Okpameri language, including its current state, potential decline, and cultural significance. Analyzing these responses provides insight into the attitudes and concerns of the respondents about the future of Okpameri, a language that appears to be facing challenges. Let's break down the key findings and relate them to similar scholarly work.

The questionnaires were shared in Lampese where Okpameri language is spoken. 100% of respondents are familiar with the Okpameri language, and 100% indicate it is their native language. This suggests strong cultural attachment and identity tied to the language. However, 70% report that they can speak or understand the language, with 30% unable to do so. This indicates a possible generational gap in active use of the language.

Similar findings can be found in studies like Fishman (1991) on language shift where communities may still recognize their language as part of their identity but may not actively speak or use it in daily life, especially among younger generations.

85% of respondents believe the Okpameri language is in decline, and 90% predict it will die in the future. This reflects a significant level of concern about the language's future viability. The high percentage is consistent with findings from David Crystal (2000), who highlighted the rapid decline of indigenous languages due to factors like globalization, cultural assimilation, and lack of institutional support.

95% believe the decline of Okpameri affects the identity of its speakers. This aligns with Harrison (2007), who argued that language is intricately linked to cultural identity. The erosion of a language can lead to a loss of cultural heritage and a weakening of social cohesion.

98% of respondents believe the contact of other languages negatively affects Okpameri. This is a key finding, reinforcing the idea of language contact and language erosion as explored in Sankoff (2001). Language contact, particularly with dominant languages, can lead to the weakening of minority languages like Okpameri, particularly if these languages are not protected and promoted in education and media.

87% of respondents believe that not teaching Okpameri in schools has negative effects. This is a concern widely noted by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), who emphasized that the absence of language education in schools is a major factor in language endangerment. Furthermore, 60% have participated in preservation efforts, which suggests a community-driven effort, though not universal.:

92% express concern about the potential loss of Okpameri. This echoes the sentiments found in Nettle and Romaine (2000), who found that communities with high levels of concern about language loss often have a sense of urgency, which could lead to more grassroots efforts in language revitalization.

Scholars like Crystal (2000) and Harrison (2007) argue that the decline of indigenous languages is often linked to shifts in social and economic power, with dominant languages overshadowing minority languages in daily life, media, and education. The overwhelming belief (98%) in the negative effects of external language contact on Okpameri is consistent with these findings.

According to Fishman (1991) and Harrison (2007), language decline is not just a linguistic issue but a cultural one. The 95% of respondents who believe the decline affects the identity of speakers highlights how Okpameri is tied to their sense of belonging, culture, and social fabric. The concern about the lack of language education (87%) mirrors the arguments of Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), who stresses that the absence of institutional support for minority languages in schools accelerates language endangerment. The low participation in language preservation activities (60%) may reflect a need for stronger institutional support.

The findings from the table provide a clear picture of the concerns surrounding the Okpameri language, especially regarding its decline, the impact of external languages, and the erosion of cultural identity. These findings are consistent with a body of scholarly work on language endangerment, particularly in terms of the need for educational interventions, cultural preservation, and community action to protect and revitalize endangered languages. Scholars like Crystal, Fishman, and Skutnabb-Kangas provide a theoretical framework for understanding these trends, highlighting the interplay between language, identity, and social structures.

Efforts to address language loss must involve not only community initiatives but also governmental and institutional support to reverse the trend, ensuring that Okpameri is preserved for future generations.

Almost everybody in the community is indigene of Lampese except few people from Kogi, Ondo etc who work or do business around the community. All respondents (100%) claim that Okpameri is their native language, suggesting that the entire surveyed population identifies Okpameri as their first language. Seventy percent of respondents understand or speak Okpameri, while 30% do not. This shows that the majority have some level of proficiency in the language, but a significant portion (30%) lacks full understanding or fluency. Eighty-five percent of respondents believe that Okpameri is in decline, and 15% do not. This indicates widespread concern about the diminishing use of the language.

A very high percentage (92%) of respondents' express concern about the potential loss of Okpameri, while only 8% are not concerned. This reveals a strong emotional investment in the preservation of the language. Ninety-five percent of respondents believe that the decline of Okpameri would negatively affect the identity of its speakers, with only 5% disagreeing. This highlights a strong connection between the language and the cultural identity of its speakers. A large majority (98%) of respondents believe that contact with other languages has a negative effect on Okpameri, with only 2% disagreeing. This suggests that external linguistic influences are seen as detrimental to the preservation of Okpameri.

Eighty-seven percent of respondents think that not teaching Okpameri in schools has a negative effect on the language, while 3% do not think it does. This suggests broad consensus on the importance of formal education in preserving the language. Sixty percent of respondents have participated in activities aimed at preserving or promoting Okpameri, while 40% have not. While more than half are engaged in language preservation efforts, a substantial portion of the community (40%) is not actively involved. Ninety percent of respondents believe that Okpameri could die in the future, while 10% do not. This indicates that most participants foresee a grim future for the language unless interventions are made.

Summary

The language is widely known and regarded as native by nearly all participants. There is a prevalent belief that Okpameri is in decline, with many expressing concerns about its potential loss and the cultural consequences. A significant number of people view the decline as a threat to their identity and support efforts to preserve the language, such as its inclusion in school curricula and reducing the influence of other languages. While many individuals are actively involved in efforts to protect the language, a large portion of the community remains uninvolved. Overall, there is a general sense of pessimism about the language's future, with many believing that

Okpameri could disappear if current trends continue. This analysis underscores the collective concern for the language's survival, its cultural importance, and the ongoing need for revitalization efforts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Okpameri language is facing a critical threat of extinction, primarily due to the dominance of more widely spoken languages like Yoruba and English. This decline is exacerbated by a range of sociolinguistic factors, including the perceived lack of value in the language and its diminished use across generations. Despite high levels of awareness and concern among the community about the language's survival, there is a significant disconnect, as many individuals are not actively involved in efforts to preserve it. The overwhelming belief that Okpameri could disappear in the near future reflects the urgency of revitalizing the language. The results of this study underline the importance of community engagement, education, and cultural preservation to ensure the survival of Okpameri and, by extension, the cultural identity tied to it. Without concerted efforts, the language is at risk of becoming yet another victim of the global trend of language death.

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