

URHOB0 IS BESET BY SECURITY CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Urhobo¹ language is beset by security challenges in the Nigerian linguistic ecology. Studies on the language dwell largely on the teaching and documentation of the language. The aspect that concerns security challenges of the language has been largely overlooked. This paper investigates the remote and immediate causes of Urhobo insecurity in the Nigerian linguistic ecology. Subsequently, it suggests possible solutions to them. Unobtrusive observation coupled with oral interviews were conducted among people of different age brackets (young: between 10 and 20 years and old: between 21 up to 70 years) within Delta central senatorial district, the Urhobo homeland. The different age bracket offered insight into the linguistic choices of the people in different generations. Findings show that poor attitude of Urhobo speakers, especially the young ones towards the language leads to a gradual extinction of Urhobo; that the old generation are generally indifferent to intergenerational transfer of Urhobo; that both old and young generations of Urhobo prefer English and Pidgin, while educational institutions prefer English to Urhobo. Subsequently, to safe guard Urhobo from extinction, besides documentation, intergenerational transmission, revitalization and interest reawakening in Urhobo by Urhobo all and sundry are a panacea to the challenges that beset Urhobo.

Key Words: Urhobo, security challenges, English, Pidgin, intergenerational transmission and attitude.

Introduction

Security of life and property is a major issue in all aspects of human existence. As days go by, new ways of livelihood continue to evolve. In the same vein security challenges evolve, too. The term security is etymologically Latin: *securus*, meaning to care (for).

¹Urhobo is both the language and the people who speak it. The population of those who identify themselves as Urhobo is about three million and are predominantly resident in South-South geopolitical zone in Nigeria. It can be designated as one of the main languages in Delta state within the South-South. It is aboriginally spoken in nine out of the twenty-five local government areas of Delta state. It is one of the largest ethnic groups in the state. Some linguists have done a linguistic classification of Urhobo. Elugbe (1989:7) classified it along with Isoko, Eruwa, Okpe and Uvwie as members of the South Western branch of the Edoid family of languages. Therefore, as a language, it belongs to the Niger-Congo family of West African languages. As a people, Urhobo lends credence to the Great Bantu Migration. See the following authors for details: Otite 2003; Ubrurhre 2003; Darah 2005; Ojaide and Aziza 2007.

Implicitly, when something or a situation is said to be secure, it means that the thing or situation is free from danger or anxiety. Security has become a global concept, because of the increasing intra and international occurrences, such as terrorism, wars, insurgences, adverse climatic conditions, internet scams, sex and drug trafficking. Sequel to that, the united nations, an intergovernmental organization was created at the close of World War II with the primary purposes to protect the peace, to advance socioeconomic cooperation and promote respect for human rights (Encyclopaedia Americana 1988: 440-469). Security is therefore defined in relation to vulnerabilities, both internal and external, that threaten, or have the potential to bring down or significantly weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional and even regimes. Thus, security can be defined as all precautions taken to protect lives and properties at the societal, community, state, national and international levels (cf. Abolurin 2010: 26). Insecurity can then be seen as the lack of all the precautions taken to protect lives and properties at the societal, community, state, national and international levels.

Integral in every structure of the society is language in which the sociocultural ideologies are embedded and transmitted. Therefore, language is the most essential property of any socioculture. Nevertheless, Nigeria has the potential of losing most of its main and small group languages to dominant languages such as English, Pidgin otherwise known as Nigerian Pidgin (NP) and the three major Nigerian languages: Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Implicitly, although some linguists (cf. Bamgbose 1992:4) speak of tripartite division of the languages, both the main and the small group languages fall within the category of the minority languages. If anything, there is little or no clear semantic distinction between 'major' and 'main' as noun qualifiers, but the noun which they qualify, language is used to designate different sociocultural and linguistic groups that are also constitutionally different in numerical terms. Therefore, using similar noun qualifiers to describe such languages is ambiguous. Sequel to that, using 'major' and 'minor' to describe them would be more appropriate. Therefore, in Nigeria, there exist major and minor languages.

Nigeria is a multilingual country with so many languages, whose exact number is yet to be known (cf. Emenajo 2002:1). The number of languages spoken in Nigeria has been variously put at 394 (Hansford et al. 1976), 478 (Grimes 1992) and 500 (Crozier and Blench 1992). Ejele (2003:126) observes that 'main group' languages are gradually being eroded by NP and English. Some have become endangered as a result of NP becoming the first language of youths, as in the case of Urhobo. Most Urhobo people aspire to master English, Pidgin and even the major languages to the detriment of their language. Youths are seen to feel embarrassed and ashamed to speak Urhobo. The few who have the courage to speak the language are often called *ogburhobo* meaning 'village champion', that is, an unexposed and timid person. This of course is a show of inferiority complex and lack of confidence in Urhobo, because it may not serve the same purpose as English and NP. The implication of such negative attitudes is increasing neglect of the language.

Subsequently, this work is geared towards discovering the exact security challenges that beset Urhobo and thereby create awareness among the Urhobo people, government and linguists about the insecure state of Urhobo and the possible means of revalorising it. This is necessitated by the fact that approximately 6000 languages still exist worldwide, and it is estimated that in most regions of the world, about 90 percent may be replaced by dominant languages by the end of the 21st century (UNESCO 2003). If adequate care is not taken, Urhobo may not live out the subsequent 22nd century.

To What Extent is Urhobo Beset by Security Challenges?

A language that is beset by security challenges is endangered. Therefore, an endangered language is a language that is at risk of falling out of use as its speakers die out or shift to speaking another language. According to Aikawa (2001: 13-24), endangerment can be ranked on a continuum, from stability to extinction. Six degrees of endangerment can be distinguished with regard to intergenerational transmission: 1. safe (stable yet threatened), 2. unsafe, 3. definitely endangered, 4. severely endangered, 5. critically endangered, 6. extinct. For a simplified explanation, look at the degrees of endangerment table below:

Degrees of Endangerment Table

Degrees of Endangerment	Grade	Speaker population
Safe	5	The language is used by all age groups including children
Unsafe	4	The language is used by some children in all domains. It is used by all children in limited domains.
Definitely endangered	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and upwards.
Severely endangered	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and upwards.
Critically endangered	1	The language is known to very few speakers of great-grandparent generation.
Extinct	0	There is no speaker left.

NP is being acquired by most children as mother tongue in Delta Central senatorial district, where it is fast creolizing despite the fact that it is the Urhobo homeland. In addition, the rapid urbanization of the Warri axis and the strong presence of English within the senatorial district contribute to the security challenges of Urhobo. Therefore, Urhobo can be described using the above explanations to the extent of being definitely endangered; it is used mostly by the parental generation and upwards. Causes of language endangerment are basically five: 1. parental influence, 2. natural or man-made disaster – sudden shift, 3. migration outside the traditional territory – planned shift, 4. use of

second language as a medium of instruction in school, and 5. national language policy (cf. Ifesieh et al 2006: 50-56).

Issues in the Nigeria Language Situation

The Nigerian language situation is a very complicated one. This derives from its extreme multilingual nature, arising from the contact and conflict between the different language types in the country, that is, the major and the minor languages. Two major issues have dominated the Nigerian language situation. They are the role of the three major languages vis-à-vis minor languages and the dominance of the English language over all the languages in the country. A constant source of language conflict is the relationship of the major to the non-major languages. Apart from their numerical strength, the major languages were among the first to be reduced into writing in the early or mid 19th century with substantial vocabularies, primers, collected texts and translations. They also have the advantage of a sizeable literature as well as extensive linguistic study leading to the production of scientific grammars, dictionaries and learned articles, which are much more in scope than those on any of the other languages. During the revision of the 1979 constitution, with the recommendation that the three main languages Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba be adopted as National Languages and be taught in all primary and secondary schools in the country, the recommendation provoked a walk-out by some members of minority languages. This led to a watering down of the recommendation to section 19 (4) of the 1989 constitution. Thus, Government shall promote the learning of indigenous languages. Therefore, it is not only the three major languages that should be promoted, but every language within Nigeria of which Urhobo is one. However, internal acrimony within and among the Urhobo people often play a role of frustrating genuine political and social efforts towards the emancipation of Urhobo. For instance, although the Okpe and Uwie would view themselves as Urhobo people that speak the central Agbarho dialect of Urhobo, which has become a lingua franca in the Urhobo area, they rightly insist that they have their own languages (Elugbe 1986: 9). Such a discordant tune add to sociopolitical tensions within the area and consequently hinders meaningful social developments, which work for the common interest of the people. Sequel to that, once a people are in disaccord among themselves, their linguistic choices will be affected. Then, they will begin to see more and more reasons why their in-group interaction and communication are no longer urgent. This invariably promotes language change, because they would no longer be engaged in a constant adaptation of their language to counteract the effects of differential change (cf. Francis 1993: 16). Nevertheless, although in-group rivalry is a recurrent issue in Urhobo homeland, a few Urhobo elites work assiduously to ensure that their tongue does not go into oblivion. It is in this connection that Dr. (Mrs.) R. O. Aziza then was drafted from College of Education, Warri to start B.A. Linguistic/Urhobo programme in the Department of Languages and Linguistics, Delta State University, Abraka. The programme took off in 2002/2003 academic year of the university and the first set of B.A. Linguistics/Urhobo graduates was produced in

2005/2006 academic year of the university (Ifesieh 2011). Despite the spirited efforts being made to valorise Urhobo in its homeland, it is cantankerously grappling with the difficulty of intergenerational transmission coupled with low image and disuse among its owners. On the contrary, they prefer English, Pidgin and the Nigerian major languages.

Research Methodology

The data for this work were elicited from indigenes of the Urhobo language through structured oral interview. Questions were geared towards eliciting information from respondents relating to languages spoken, domains in which respondents use the languages, with the aim of finding out the extent to which the languages are used and at the same time taking a particular note of Urhobo. This enabled the researchers to discover specific security challenges that beset Urhobo. Efforts were also directed towards finding out the respondents competence and performance coupled with the intergenerational transmission level of Urhobo. Data collection was limited to Delta central senatorial district. Two groups of respondents were targeted: 1. persons between the age of ten (10) and twenty (20) years, who represent the unmarried, children and the young generation of Urhobo people; fifty persons in the category of Urhobo young generation were interviewed and observed unobtrusively within the school premises, 2. persons between the age of twenty one (21) and seventy (70), who represent the married, parents and the old generation of Urhobo people; fifty persons in the category of old generation of Urhobo people were equally interviewed and observed unobtrusively at homes. Therefore, a total of hundred (100) persons were randomly selected from within the Delta central senatorial district, interviewed and observed unobtrusively. In selecting the respondents, efforts were made to capture data from all the local governments within the area.

Data Presentation And Analysis

Table 1a and 1b

Tables 1a and 1b below show the languages spoken by the different groups of respondents within different age brackets. The respondents reacted to the question: what languages do you speak?

Table 1a

Respondents	Language Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between 21 and 70 years	I speak Urhobo	6	12
	I speak Urhobo, Pidgin and English	20	40
	I speak Pidgin and Urhobo	10	20
	I speak English and Pidgin	14	28
	I speak Pidgin	0	00
		Total = 50	100%

Table 1b

Respondents	Language Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between 10 and 20 years	I speak Urhobo	2	4
	I speak Urhobo, Pidgin and English	10	20
	I speak Pidgin and Urhobo	10	20
	I speak English and Pidgin	14	28
	I speak Pidgin	14	28
		Total = 50	100%

The tables above show that many respondents between the age of 21 and 70 years speak Urhobo more than the respondents between 10 and 20 years, who are the children and Urhobo leaders of tomorrow 12% of married respondents speak Urhobo as opposed to the 4% of the unmarried. The married respondents tend to be more multilingual than the unmarried ones as can be seen from the 40% accruing to the married respondents in terms of speaking Urhobo, Pidgin and English as against 20% of the unmarried. None of the respondents in the age bracket between 21 and 70 years was identified as speaking only Pidgin, but within the 10 years and 20 years age bracket, 28% noticed as speaking only Pidgin.

Table 2

To find out from the parents, whether children of Urhobo extraction speak Urhobo, a question like 'do your children speak Urhobo?' was put across to them:

Respondents	Responses	No of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between 21 and 70 years	My children speak Urhobo	20	40
	My children do not speak Urhobo.	30	60
		Total = 50	100%

The table above indicates that 60% of the interviewed respondents claimed that their children could not speak Urhobo whereas only 40% could do otherwise.

Table 3

In order to find out why the married respondents' children could not speak Urhobo, the respondents were asked to suggest reasons for their children's inability to speak Urhobo from within the options provided:

Respondents	Answer Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between 21 and 70 years	I cannot speak Urhobo to my children	10	20
	I communicate with them in either English or Pidgin	10	20
	I do not have children yet or they are yet to speak	4	8
	The children understand but cannot speak yet	6	12
	I do not have anything to say about that	20	40
	Total = 50		100%

From the table above and on the basis of the responses one can observe that most of the parents, are generally indifferent to their children's linguistic choices: 40% of the parents said that they did not have anything to say about the language/s spoken by their children. 20% of the respondents could not speak Urhobo to their children; 20% communicate with their children either in English or Urhobo. This group of parents understand and speak Urhobo yet, they prefer speaking either English or Urhobo to this children. Only small number of the respondents, 8% claimed that they had no children or that their children were yet to speak. 12% said that their children could not speak Urhobo though they understand.

Table 4

In order to gain an insight into the spouses' language use, they were asked to respond to the following:

I communicate with my spouse using what language?

Respondents	Language Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between 21 and 70 years	Urhobo	8	16
	English/Pidgin/Urhobo	8	16
	English	12	24
	Pidgin	18	36
	My spouse speaks a different language	4	8
	Total = 50		100%

From the table above, it is clear that Pidgin is fast creolising in Urhobo land. 36%, the highest percentage among the respondents speak only Pidgin. Next in rank is English, which has 24% speakers. Respondents, who are multilinguals speak Urhobo, English and Pidgin; this group constitutes 16% of the respondents. Only 16% of the respondents within the age brackets of between 21 and 70 years and above speak only Urhobo to their spouses.

Table 5

In order to find out how often communication takes place in Urhobo, the respondents attended to the question:

How often do you communicate in Urhobo?

Respondents	Response Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between 21 and 70 years	Very often	6	12
	Often	10	20
	Not often	18	36
	Not at all	16	32
		Total = 50	100%

The above table shows clearly that out of the 50 respondents interviewed only 6 which is 12% of the respondents speak Urhobo very often, 20% speak it often. Those that fail to speak it either 'not often' (36%) or 'not at all' (32%) constitute the highest percentages of the respondents within the age brackets.

Table 6

Next, effort was made to discover, if the married respondents communicate in Urhobo with their children. Therefore, the following question was put across to them:

In what language do you communicate with your children?

Respondents	Language Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between 21 and 70 years	Urhobo	10	20
	English/Pidgin/Urhobo	14	28
	English	12	24
	Pidgin	14	28
		Total = 50	100%

The table above shows, that the highest number of the respondents speak Pidgin to their children. There is also another category of parents, the multilinguals, who speak English, Pidgin and Urhobo to their children. This group of parents is also much in number and occupies a similar rank with the parents that speak in Pidgin to their children (28%). Next in rank are parents that speak to their children in English. This category of parents

constitute 24% of the respondents. The least used language is Urhobo which constitute 20% of the interviewed respondents.

Table 7

Efforts were also made to elicit responses from the unmarried respondents, the up coming generation, the children of the married respondents. In order to find out what language they speak, they were requested to react to the statement.

I communicate with other people using what language?

Respondents	Language Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between 10 and 20 years	Urhobo	2	4
	English/Pidgin/Urhobo	10	20
	English	8	16
	Pidgin	14	28
	English/Pidgin	16	32
		Total = 50	100%

From the table above, one can observe that the number of children or unmarried respondents between the age of 10 and 20 years who speak Urhobo is very poor, 4%. English and Pidgin rank very high in application; 32% of the respondents speak both English and Pidgin. Next in rank is Pidgin monolinguals; 28% of the respondents speak only Pidgin. This, again is a sure evidence that Pidgin is fast creolizing in Delta central senatorial district. The number of respondents that speak English/Pidgin/Urhobo ranks third in the table and has 20% of the respondent. English is spoken by 16% of the respondents.

Table 8

In order to investigate language use at home the respondents between the age of 10 and 20 were asked to react to the statement:

I communicate with my parents using what language?

Respondents	Language Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Persons between the age of 10 and English 20 years	Urhobo	2	4
	English/Pidgin/Urhobo	8	16
	English	8	16
	Pidgin	16	32
	English/Pidgin	16	32
		Total = 50	100%

One can deduce from the above table that English and Pidgin are the preferred languages of the young people for interacting with their parents in the Delta central senatorial district as evidenced in the 32% application of the language by the English/Pidgin

bilinguals. Pidgin monolinguals are also many as can be seen in the table: 32% of the monolingual respondents also use it. Multilinguals who speak English, Pidgin and Urhobo occupy similar position with the monolingual speakers of English, that is 16%. Those who interact with their parents in Urhobo only are meagre and consist only 4% of the respondents.

Table 9

In furtherance of the investigation on language use at home, respondents between the age of 10 and 20 were also asked to respond to this statement.

I communicate with my siblings in what language?

Respondents	Language Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between the age of 10 and 20 years	Urhobo	2	4
	English/Pidgin/Urhobo	6	12
	English	10	20
	Pidgin	16	32
	English/Pidgin	16	32
		Total = 50	100

The table above again shows that Urhobo is the least used language at the homes or elsewhere by the respondents with their siblings within Delta central senatorial district. It is spoken by 4% of the respondents. English/Pidgin bilinguals and Pidgin monolinguals top the list with 32% use each at the homes or elsewhere by the respondents with their siblings. English monolinguals then ranks next with 20% application at home or elsewhere among the siblings.

Table 10

On the issue of predisposition to the use of Urhobo, respondents were asked what languages they would naturally prefer to speak through the use of this comment:

I would rather speak English/Pidgin instead of Urhobo.

Respondents	Language Options	Response Options	Percentage
Urhobo persons between the age of 10 and 20 years	English/Pidgin	36	72
	Urhobo	14	28
		Total = 50	100%

It is clear from the above table that many young people from Urhobo speaking area prefer using English/Pidgin in daily affairs instead of Urhobo. 72% of the respondents prefer using English/Pidgin against the 28% that use Urhobo.

Table 11

Reasons for the poor image of Urhobo among the young people of Delta central senatorial was sought for through the statement.

I do not like to speak Urhobo because...

Respondents	Response Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Urhobo persons between the age of 10 and 20 years	...of fear of being branded	10	20
	...of shame	6	12
	, I want to identify with English and Pidgin	14	28
	, I cannot speak Urhobo	8	16
	, I am not fluent in Urhobo	12	24
		Total = 50	100%

From the table above one can easily notice that the young respondents prefer to identify with English/Pidgin as opposed to Urhobo. While 28% of the respondents preferred using English/Pidgin, all manners of excuses are given for not using Urhobo ranging from not being fluent in it (24%), fear of being branded (20%) to being a shamed of the language (12%). Invariably Urhobo has a poor image in its homeland among the young respondents.

Discussion of Findings

Discussion of findings is based on the unobtrusive observation and acme discoveries made in the process of data analysis and presentation, which are discussed under the following sub-headings: 1. intergenerational transfer, 2. language attitude, 3. multilingualism, and 4. non implementation of national language policy.

1. Intergenerational transfer: The parents' indisposition towards speaking Urhobo to their children is a major challenge that beset Urhobo. Ojaide (2007:18) lethargically views the aversion to Urhobo by the Urhobo people as an aftermath of Western education. Most Urhobo parents speak either English or Pidgin to their children. As a consequence, their children cannot speak Urhobo; it is not their family language. Spouses, the parents, who communicate and interact in either Pidgin or English also tend to do the same with their children in either English or Pidgin. That approach to family language use works against intergenerational transfer of Urhobo. It is clear from tables 3 to 7 in the data presentation and analysis sub-section, that the people of Urhobo between the age of 21 and 70 communicate mostly in Pidgin and English with their spouses, children and other people. This is a sure sign that Urhobo is experiencing intergenerational transfer gap. Although, interethnic marriages exist in Delta central senatorial district, the Urhobo homeland, investigations show that they are very few. Therefore, if Urhobo functions properly as a mainstream language within its homeland, both the off-springs of the interethnic marriages and their parents would be constrained to speak it (Urhobo), because they would be engulfed in it. Unfortunately, English and Pidgin appear to have displaced Urhobo in its homeland.

2. Language attitude: Most Urhobo people are not willing to speak the language, because of the derogatory nickname, *ogburhobo* that has been in use over the years. *Ogburhobo* is used by the Urhobo people to relegate their fellow Urhobo, who habitually speak the language. This attitude towards Urhobo speakers brings feelings of embarrassment to the affected, who in turn avoid the use of the language as much as possible. The young generation are also seen to exhibit so much feeling of resentment and shame when they are told to speak Urhobo. Thus, they often proudly deny knowledge of the language in certain social gatherings, for example, social gatherings that are somewhat heterogeneous in outlook, even when they are competent native speakers. This is a clear sign of inferiority complex: an average Urhobo youth finds it difficult to identify with the language. School authorities complicate the issue by branding the language a vernacular, which gives it a feel of unofficiality and prohibition. Sequel to that, its use within the school premises is outlawed. Deviants are made to either receive some strokes of cane, cut grasses or pay a fine. These trends have lasting negative effects on the people and their linguistic choices. Tables 10 and 11 under the data presentation and analysis indicate the high disposition of Urhobo young generation to identify with English and Pidgin. This attitude of the Urhobo towards their language tends to corroborate the claim that languages do not kill themselves; that their speakers do that by abandoning them. Even the old generation of Urhobo between the age of 21 and 70 display a level of indifference towards the use of Urhobo: 40% of the people in this age bracket, which were interviewed were indifferent to their children's linguistic choices as can be seen from table 3 under the data presentation and analysis sub-section.

3. Multilingualism: The multilingual nature of Delta central senatorial district has exposed Urhobo to some other languages, whose arguments (Phillipson 1992: 27) are stronger and more powerful than its own. English, for example is generally seen as a gateway to global socioeconomic, political and technological opportunities. Pidgin, though not as powerful as English has a highly simplified grammatical rules with little or no morphological inflections, which makes it very easy to learn and acquire. Besides, Pidgin lexicon has a great deal of resemblances with that of English, which gives it an English feel. Therefore, both English and Pidgin are ascribed better statuses than Urhobo by the Urhobo people. Subsequently, more functions are given to both English and Pidgin in contradistinction to Urhobo. Ascription of diverse functions, which are being performed by Urhobo to both English and Pidgin displaces the language and relegates it to the background, where it is unnoticed and dormant. Although multilingualism in itself is not necessarily a threat to any language, it exposes the languages in the multilingual setting to a very fierce competition in which only the fittest survives. Urhobo is the language at the front burner here. Both young and old generations of Urhobo use more of Pidgin and English than Urhobo. However, this pattern of linguistic choice is prevalent among the young generation of Urhobo in contrast to the old as can be seen from the data presentation and analysis sub-section.

4. Non implementation of national language policy: Unobtrusive observations made in the course of this research showed that the nation policy on education is not being carried out in Delta central senatorial district. The policy on language use according to the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999* stipulates that children should be taught up to the first three years in the primary schools in the language of their immediate environment. Nevertheless, Nigerian school authorities disobey the policy on language use. On the contrary, English is made a compulsory subject in both the nursery and primary schools within the senatorial district. English must also be passed at credit level for one to be admitted into a university degree programme in Nigeria. This gives more power and prestige to English. The failure of the authorities concerned to fully implement the language policy as it relates to the indigenous tongues contributes to the apathy on the indigenous language application in the Urhobo homeland by both the young and old generations.

The *Constitution* can be said to be one of the challenges that beset Urhobo, because it specifies that the major languages should be used as co-official languages in addition to English. By way of that enactment, the major languages (Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa) and English are placed above the minor languages. In other words, the bifurcation into majority and minority languages valorizes the major languages and simultaneously denigrates the minor ones. In addition to that, the use of English and the major languages (though the major languages are used in low key) in education, judiciary, Info-Tech, businesses, banking, commerce and industry has over the years, accorded them more prestigious statuses than the other languages such as Urhobo.

Recommendations

1. Intergenerational transmission is the major key to securing a language. If Urhobo is to be secured, concerted efforts should be made by older generations of the language speakers to transfer it to the younger ones.
2. There is a need for a sensitization campaign among the Urhobo people through the schools, religious bodies, parents and all those at the helm of affairs in various facets of life to promote the use of the language. Urhobo people should be aware of the uniqueness and importance of their language and the need to appreciate it.
3. Documentation is another means through which the Urhobo can be secured. There is a need to preserve Urhobo through written literature; idioms, proverbs, peculiar expressions sometimes associated with rituals and stories that teach Urhobo morals should be documented in Urhobo as a part of its sociocultural heritage.
4. Urhobo can also be secured further, if it can be effectively used in education, business, judiciary, politics and administration. Therefore, government should provide money to the relevant agencies for the development of Urhobo to cope with modern realities.
5. Government should also ensure the implementation of the National Language Policy on Education. That would help to accord the language a similar recognition given to the major languages in Nigerian.

Conclusion

Effects of language loss include the loss of sociocultural accretions which are tied to that language. Also ethnic groups that lose their language may lose political legitimacy since they may have to identify with some other group/s whose sociocultural and linguistic identity is/are still unchequered. Therefore, the Urhobo people, linguists, government and all those concerned should ensure that the language is properly documented, preserved and transmitted from one generation to another. By so doing, the security challenges that beset Urhobo would be taken care of.

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Appendix

The following are the basic guidelines used by the researchers:

For persons between the age of 21 and 70

1. Languages spoken

Urhobo

Urhobo/Pidgin/English

Urhobo/ Pidgin

English/Pidgin

2. Do your children speak Urhobo?

If no, why?

3. I communicate with my spouse using what language?

4. How often do you communicate in Urhobo?

5. I communicate with my children using what language?

6. I communicate with other people using what language?

For persons between the age of 10 and 20

Languages spoken

Urhobo

Urhobo/Pidgin/English

Urhobo/ Pidgin

English/Pidgin

Pidgin

7. I communicate with my parents using what language ?

8. I communicate with my siblings using what language?

9. Would you rather speak English/Pidgin instead of Urhobo ?

If yes, why ?

ISSN: 0794-8107



Design & Prints by
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA PRESS, LTD.
Bookshop/Bank Complex Enugu State Nigeria.
07038627778

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