

## Igbo Language as an Endangered Language: Causes and Possible Solutions

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### Abstract

This paper tries to examine the reason why Igbo language has been classified as one of the languages that will be endangered within the next five decades. An endangered language is a language that is at the risk of going into extinction as its speakers die out or choose to speak other languages instead of their own. Language preservation on the other hand is the taking care of endangered language. Therefore, the major objectives of the study are to x-ray the causes of Igbo language endangerment, the steps government and some individuals have taken to avoid the endangerment and the possible measures to be adopted to avoid the language being endangered. The paper adopts Ethno-linguistic Vitality Theory of Bourhis, Giles and Taylor (1977). The work is a descriptive survey one and the data for the work are sourced from relevant literature. Findings of the paper show that influence of foreign culture, negative attitude of the owners of the language, migration among others contribute to the endangerment. Hence the study suggests that government should improve upon the existing efforts through the provision of incentives and award of free scholarships to candidates that intend to study Igbo language at higher levels and also create job opportunities for them. In addition, more days should be added to the one day already earmarked per week for the promotion of the Igbo language and culture in Igbo land and finally authors and writers in different aspects of the language should be celebrated as an encouragement. Finally, it is believed that language teacher, language students, parents, schools, government, and the entire Igbo language owners will benefit immensely from the paper while the use of Igbo language will improve generally.

**Keywords:** Language, Igbo, Endangerment, and Preservation.

### Introduction

Language is a means of communication by man. It is the quickest litmus used to identify a people anywhere they are and at any given time. In Nigeria, there are three major languages namely: Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba. Igbo is spoken by the Igbo people, Hausa language is spoken by Hausa people, while Yoruba language is spoken by Yoruba people. The three languages are adopted as the main languages of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. More than 500 other languages are spoken by communities spread all over the thickly populated country. Apart from all these Indigenous languages, English language has been adopted as the *Lingua Franca* of the country which was brought by the colonial masters and the missionaries. It is worthy of note that this *Lingua Franca* of the country has become a predator language to the indigenous languages and has enslaved the people economically, culturally and otherwise. Amongst the three major languages spoken in Nigeria, Igbo seems to be more endangered due to majorly the attitude of the language owners. The English language adopted as the *Lingua Franca* and official language has now kept the Igbo race in a state of uncertainty based on the pronouncement made by the UNESCO on classification of the Igbo language as one of the endangered languages that will likely go into extinction in the near future.

This is very heart-breaking that the language which is the mother tongue, L1 of an Igbo child and one's identity as an Igbo race is deteriorating in recent times. When you speak Igbo to an Igbo indigene, he or she responds in English. Even the ones that try to speak the Igbo language cannot make a complete sentence in the language without code mixing the language with English like in this conversation between two friends:

- i. 'Nneka, *asiri m ka m takee gi unawares*'. - Nneka, I decided to take you unawares
- ii. 'Ama m na i ma problem *anyi na* this meeting' - I hope you know our problem in this meeting
- iii. '*I biawa, wetere m my money maka na m ga e need ya iji finish e utu m today*'. - While coming, get me my money because I will need it to clear my debt today.

- iv. '*Biko biakwa n'oge* with the *akwukwo* before *onye isi e getja* annoyed with us'. - Please be punctual with the book or else the president will be annoyed with us.

Mere looking at the above sentences, one will rightly notice that no single sentence is completely made in Igbo language. It is partly Igbo and partly English, hence, the nickname 'Engli-Igbo' meaning mixture of English and Igbo words in a sentence. The question is: 'what will happen to this language if such a thing should continue?' The answer is that the language will gradually disappear. Once a language disappears, the history, culture and the heritage of the people who owns it are completely lost thereby resulting to language death. The popularity of any given language depends on the usage and demography. That is to say that the more the number of people that speak the language, the more popular the language would be and the fewer the number of speakers of the language, the less popular such a language will be. The issue has been a disturbing one to the writer and well-meaning indigenes of the Igbo land, hence the research. One thing for sure is that it is language and culture that identify one's ethnic group from another. Culture as we know is all about people's total way of life; the way they live, eat, worship, and so on. Without language and culture, one's identity is completely lost. Therefore, this write-up is prompted by the following objectives: to explain what language endangerment means, outline the causes of Igbo language endangerment, the steps government and some individuals and group of individuals have taken to avoid the endangerment. The research adopted a descriptive method. The work is guided by Ethno-linguistic Vitality theory.

In trying to achieve the objectives of the study mentioned above, the work is divided into four different sections namely the introductory section, which introduces the work, the second section is the literature review where some concepts and written works of some researchers in related field are reviewed including the theoretical framework of the study. The third section is the presentation of data and the fourth section is where the conclusion of the study is made. At the end of this research, it will be beneficial to scholars, Igbo language owners, parents and government.

### **Literature review**

In this section, the present work will look at the study under the following headings: conceptual studies, empirical studies, and theoretical framework.

### **Conceptual studies**

The concepts to be reviewed here are: Language, Igbo language, endangerment and preservation.

#### **Language**

Language is a very important means of communication between humans. According to Trask (1995), language is what makes us human. In the words of Ekere (2010) language is the vehicle for the transmission of culture. He further states that for culture of a society to grow, language must grow correspondingly, otherwise the culture cannot be transmitted.

Nwadike (2009) in his words says that language in any structure that may be written or spoken in which a group of people use to communicate. Furthermore, Ihejirika (2006) argues that the nature of man would have been miserable if language had not existed. Language is therefore the property of human beings and has to be learnt by every child. It is an important part of any society because it enables people to communicate and express themselves and tells who we are.

#### **Igbo language**

Igbo is one of the indigenous languages people from the east speak as their language and interact with in Nigeria. The concept Igbo appears to have different connotations and descriptions. It could be seen as a language spoken by the Igbo people and on the other hand can be referred to as the land in which Igbo people live. Igbo could also be referred to as a person that is Igbo man /woman or people.

In describing 'Igbo' as an ethnic group, Green (1964:6) says "they are population of people inhabiting a particular geographical territory, sharing common culture, belief, and migration history". Eme & Nkamigbo (2009) state that why people are called Igbo people is because of their language. In clarifying this, Nwadike (2002:9) states three things Igbo signifies. According to him, Igbo refers to 'people that are born', that is Igbo people. Secondly, Igbo equally refers to 'Igbo boundary' that is Igbo land. The third meaning according to him is 'their language' which is Igbo language.

The origin of the Igbo people has not been ascertained because a lot of speculations abound in relation to their origin but one of the commonest history of the origin of the Igbo has it that Igbo people are the descendants of 'Eri' the god-like founder of Nri ancestral land and the patriarchal king figure.

### **Endangerment**

To endanger means to put someone or something at risk or in danger of being harmed or destroyed. It also means to put someone or something into a situation that can cause harm or damage completely.

According to Longman dictionary of contemporary English, to endanger means to put someone or something in danger of being hurt, damaged or destroyed. Endangerment on the other hand is the action of putting someone or something at risk or in danger. It also means to create a dangerous situation. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines it as the act of putting somebody or something in a situation in which they could be harmed or damaged. In the words of Hornsby (2014), a language is termed endangered when the children in a community are being spoken to in a different language other than that of their parents.

Then what does it mean to say that language is endangered? It simply means language that is at the verge of disappearing as its speakers die out or decide to speak other languages. This will result to language loss or death when there are no more native speakers.

### **Preservation**

Preservation is the process of keeping something valued free from being damaged. According to Cambridge dictionary 1, preservation is the act of keeping something as it is, especially in order to prevent it from decaying or to protect it from being damaged. Language preservation is the preservation of an endangered language.

### **Empirical studies**

Odo (2019) wrote on 'Elites and the decline of spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture'. The objective of the study is to find out the causes and areas of which investigates the elites level of Igbo language use in order to show causes and areas of decline of spoken and written Igbo and culture among Igbo people with doctorate degree, resident in Nsukka Central Local Government Area of Enugu State. The study employed descriptive research design and adopts ethno-linguistic vitality theory as a framework. Her study reveals that Igbo elites are part of the causes of decline in spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture.

Nwaozuzu (2015) carried research on "Agbam mbọ ndị Igbo na nkwalite asụsụ ha" meaning the efforts of the Igbo people in promoting their language. She listed five signs that are used to show languages that are at the point of endangerment. In her research, Igbo language was used to test the rate people use Igbo language to act drama, teach in the schools, communicate, write and view people's mind about Igbo language. Her findings show that Igbo language failed in the examination. She also condemns the way Igbo elites regard their language and culture because she observes that they do not write letter or write and read welcome address in Igbo. Nwaozuzu's work relates to the present work of study because they are based on improving Igbo language and culture but are different because Nwaozuzu studied Igbo people's attitude towards their language use while the present work is on the causes of Igbo language endangerment and the possible solution.

Umeodinka & Okoye (2018) in their research on "Mmekpa ahụ ndị nne na nna na-enye asụsụ Igbo n'oge ugbuga". Meaning Poor attitudes of parents towards Igbo language in the present time. Their study reveals that Igbo parents struggled so much to see that their children learn other languages than Igbo language which is their mother tongue. The research used descriptive and survey method. Ethno-linguistic vitality theory was adopted as the framework for the analysis. The study of Umeodinka & Okoye and the present study have sameness in the sense that both of them are on how to safeguard Igbo language and culture from being endangered but are different in the area of concentration.

Nwobu (2020) carried out a study titled 'Igbo language and the younger generation: The need for motivation'. The study investigates how our parents, the older generation especially the elites have been

able to make the Igbo language attractive to the younger ones. The research is a descriptive one and adopts intrinsic motivation theory. One of the findings of the work show that the older generation portray to their younger generation that Igbo is an inferior language and that English is the elitist language. The work relates to the present work because it shows how the older generation contributed to the endangerment of the Igbo language. The difference between them is that the present work is on why Igbo language has been classified as an endangered language and measures to take in preserving it. Nwobu's (2020) shows how the older generation failed in passing down the language to the younger generations.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts ethno-linguistic vitality theory (EVT). It is a theory propounded by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor in 1977. The theory is a tool of social analysis in the sociolinguistics and social psychology of language. It can also be defined as the social psychological method used in determining the relationship between language and identity. According to Fisherman (1974), the theory came up as a result of a reawakening of research interest in phenomena related to ethnicity and inter-group relations in the 1970's. It is a model developed by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) for examining the role of social-structural variable in inter-group relations, cross-cultural communication, second language learning, mother tongue maintenance and language shift and loss. The objective of the theory is to find out if people have because of speaking another language, neglect their own indigenous language.

According to Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 308) an ethno-linguistic group's vitality is that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in inter group situations. What this means is that the more vitality a group has, the more chances it has to survive and thrive as a group. Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) assert that the vitality of ethno-linguistic groups does not come on its own. According to them, three variables shape the vitality of ethno-linguistic group namely: status, demography and institutional support. In ascertaining the strengths and weakness of ethno-linguistic group, along the lines of being low, median and high vitality, each of these three factors has to be considered. For them, it is possible for low vitality groups to go through linguistic assimilation, loss or dead and they cannot be taken as a distinct collective group because of their low degree of vitality. On the contrary, high vitality groups can preserve or maintain their language and distinctive cultural traits in multilingual environments because they have high degree of vitality.

Now, coming to the first factors that make up the vitality of ethno-linguistic group which is status variables, it refers to community's social prestige, economic, social, social-historical and language and culture status of a group within or outside the community. The demographic variables refer to the number and distributional patterns of ethno-linguistic group members throughout a particular region or national territory. The institutional support variables relate to the degree to which a language group enjoys formal or informal representation in the various institutions in specific mass media, education, government services, industry, religion, culture and politics.

### **Application of the theory**

Bourhis, Giles and Taylor (1977) emphasize strongly that ethno-linguistic vitality helps a lot in ascertaining the theory that will assist in helping the ethnic group. It arouses the ethnic group interest to start appreciating the language and makes them have interest in learning their language in school, and in family discussion. It shapes ethnic group's strategies. The integrative and segregative attitudes of ethnic groups are determined by the relative ethno-linguistic vitalities of minority and majority language groups. Also ethno-linguistic vitality theory influences language behavior of succeeding generations which might give rise to either maintenance or shift.

### **Strengths of the theory**

The theory has received much attention and adopted as a conceptual tool for research issues that have to do with language attitude. It has received very wide attention in its inter-group relations and also has been adopted in language maintenance and shift. Ethno-linguistic vitality theory has interdisciplinary

nature in the sense that topics such as methods of social mobilization, ethnic group maintenance and collective identity that are discussed within the framework of ethno-linguistic vitality are equally being studied in some other areas like social psychology, political science, cross-cultural psychology and other fields of social sciences and humanities.

### **Weaknesses of the theory**

This theory has been seen to be weak in so many respect. This is so because some believe that the relationship between language and identity is multi-dimensional and very complex due to the fact that it involves a large number of socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural factor which are not added in the theory. The theory also has been seen to be weak on the difficulty to use objective measures. It is also weak in the area of its specification and application. Husband & Khan (1982) argue that the socio-structural variables identified as determining vitality are conceptually ambiguous. According to them, relying on sociological and demographic information, the variables may produce a simplified analysis of ethno-linguistic group. They argue that it is risky to classify groups as ‘low’ and ‘high’ vitality as the variables cannot work separately for they are inter-related.

### **Data presentation**

#### **Factors responsible for Igbo language endangerment**

Language endangerment is something that can happen to any language at any time. So many factors are responsible for Igbo language endangerment that if care is not taken can lead the language into extinction. The factors responsible for the endangerment are as follows:

#### **Poor attitude of the language owners toward the language**

Like Ejiofor (1984) rightly said that Igbo people are among the highest learned people in Nigeria. But in spite of all their high level of education, a good number of them cannot read and write in Igbo language but when they are met in their work places, homes, markets or any meeting place, it is only English language that they will be speaking fluently. In functions, vote of thanks, welcome address and speeches in any meeting whether in the kinsmen, village, towns, church meetings and so on, are written and read in English. Also majority of the Igbo language owners see the language as inferior and language of the illiterates thereby leaving it to be used by the uneducated ones. Some that cannot even speak fluent English language prefer to use Pidgin English to Igbo language or code-mix with English to boast and brag about their knowledge of English language. Schools are not left out. Some schools in Igbo land especially the private schools are contributing to the challenges Igbo Language is facing today. They prohibit pupils and students from speaking Igbo in the school premises. Pupils are being punished in one way or the other for speaking Igbo while in school. Some of the private schools that teach Igbo language do not employ the services of the qualified Igbo language teachers who know the orthography well.

#### **Attitude of some parents**

In terms of passing down the language to the younger generation, our elders and parents in particular are not helping matters. Some parents especially the elites and the semi-elites prefer to speak English language to their children. They code-switch and code-mix sentences and words in Igbo and English. Imagine a conversation between a mother and her daughter:

Mother: Ada get me my bag at the table

Ada: Mum here is the bag

Mother: Alright, thanks, good girl

Ada: Mum what is bag called in Igbo

Mother: *Nwa a i biakwa* (You again, this child) why do you want to know the name in Igbo?

Ada: My friend once told me the name, but I've forgotten

Mother: Leave it, it is of no use for you to know the name in Igbo.

Ada: No mum, I want you tell me the name now.

Mother: *Ngwa gawa*, I will tell you later. ( Alright go, I wil tell you later)

What a calamity that an Igbo child in primary school does not know what a bag is called in Igbo language. The mother is not even bothered rather she contributes in denying the child from knowing

the lexical name of an object in her language. There are also cases where parents even discourage their children from choosing Igbo language as a subject in their Senior Secondary School. They will ask their child such questions like:

“Why would you like to choose Igbo language as a subject?

Where will it take you to?

Please if it is not compulsory, better change it to another subject”.

These are enough evidences to show that parents contribute seriously in making their child not to speak their mother tongue and forcefully make them speak English thereby depriving them of their right in using their native language. If this trend continues, then the next generation will not speak Igbo language to their offspring thereby killing the language. All these put together can endanger the Igbo language like United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) rightly said that a language is endangered when its speakers cease to use it, use it in fewer and fewer domains, use fewer of its registers and speaking styles and/or stop passing it on to the next generation. This could lead to the eventual death of such a language.

### **Language shift**

This is caused when parents in multilingual communities stop using their native language regularly and shift to the dominant language. The children become native speakers of that dominant language and non-fluent speakers of their parents’ native language. This makes their native language to gradually die off. When there is no more transmission in that language, the language is endangered in a few generations till it gradually disappears. When the language is completely lost, it has moved from being endangered to extinction.

### **Diminishing number of the native speakers due to migration**

Another factor that can endanger language is migration. Igbo people are classified as one of the ethnic groups that highly migrate. If the native speakers of the Igbo language migrate into another geographical area where their language is not being spoken, their mother tongue will be abandoned and the language of the environment will be taken. This happens a lot because children learn languages easily. Parents may also feel that the children could get better opportunity in speaking and becoming mastery in the language of the environment, this will make them to drop entirely their native language which is Igbo in place of the native language of the new environment. More so, some Igbo parents that migrated outside Igbo land do not come home with the children thereby making the children not to know their home place and native language.

### **The dominant power of the colonial masters’ language**

English which is our second language and official language has adversely affected the growth of Igbo language. It has majorly occupied the dominant position in the government, educational, economic, political and religious activities in Igbo land. It was made the second language and language of communication due to multilingual nature of the country. But it has in turn pushed the native language to the door of endangerment. In the contemporary time, Igbo people no longer like to speak their native language because they feel the language is inferior and feel shy in speaking it. What the Igbo people have failed to understand is that the English language was not meant for them alone but for the whole country. The other two major ethnic groups which are Hausa and Yoruba made their own languages international languages. Igbo people are planning to send theirs to untimely grave. Kudos to Hausa and Yoruba people who have shown serious commitment to their languages by speaking and writing it and by taking their languages to international level.

### **Love for western culture**

Culture as we know refers to people’s way of life. Majority of our younger generation prefer western culture to their Igbo native culture. As we know, the most important aspect of cultural heritage of any ethnic group is their language. So moving from one culture to another automatically means moving out from one’s language to another. The relationship between language and culture cannot be compromised because they are strongly inter-connected. A particular language often refers to a specific group of people. So when one moves to another culture, obviously the person is interacting with the language

that is spoken by that culture due to the fact that, there is no way culture can exist without language. Hence when one moves from her culture to another culture, her dominant language is being dropped for a predatory language thereby endangering the language.

### **Government policy on education and other matters**

The government policy on education as it concerns the indigenous language is one of the causes of Igbo language endangerment. National Policy on Education, 2013 has it that indigenous languages are meant to be used as medium of instruction only in junior primary school level after which English language will be used for teaching in senior primary school level. This law is not being carried out by most schools and nobody cares. Likewise, in the secondary schools, indigenous languages are made optional subjects in SSCE. This is not supposed to be so. If the indigenous language is favoured, Igbo language will be favoured as one of the indigenous languages. Consequently, government of the five states of the Igbo land are not helping out matters. The one day mapped out in a week as traditional day has not been seriously observed and nobody cares to enforce it.

### **Lack of enough literary works and other published works in Igbo.**

There are not enough literary works in Igbo language as compared to the ones written in English. People prefer writing in foreign languages like English to writing in their native languages. Even the works that are written in Igbo language are not being patronized as such like the ones written in English. Reason being that majority of the Igbo people cannot read works written in Igbo. Secondly, they feel ashamed to read materials written in Igbo because of the notion that it is an inferior language. This also contributes to the endangerment of the language in question.

In addition, majority of Igbo people do not like watching stage dramas and poetry performed in Igbo language due to the same reason of being a local language. The few writers in Igbo language are not encouraged so as to motivate others to write in Igbo. This also extends to higher institutions where Igbo language is offered as a course. It is still controversial on whether to write thesis and dissertation works in Igbo language. Some authorities in the school discourage those that prefer to write in Igbo language. Some even see such works written in Igbo as inferior research works.

### **The steps government and some individuals have taken to avert the endangerment of the language**

In as much as the Igbo language owners have lost confidence in speaking their language due to the fact that they feel it is an inferior language, the government and some individuals have taken it upon themselves that the language will not go into extinction. The Government of the five states of the Igbo land has mapped out one day out of the five working days of the week such that Igbo people should be observing their culture. It is a special day mapped for wearing of their native attire to the offices and places of work, while the students also wear their school native attire to schools. The students are allowed to speak Igbo language in the schools on such days and the schools conduct their morning assembly in Igbo language.

The government has also through the help of Nigeria University Commission (NUC) and some other organizations included Igbo language as a general studies course in the University academic curriculum for all the students irrespective of your course and department. The government has also made policy that pupils in lower primary school classes should be taught with the mother tongue in schools.

On the part of individuals, in the 1980's vernacular news paper 'UDOKA' was introduced by some individuals just for the promotion of the Igbo language. Just recently, the Vice Chancellor of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka Professor Charles Esimone and some group of individuals created a Center for Igbo and African civilization in order to document Igbo heritage, medicine, engineering, and technology for scholars to think and take different aspects for improved living standards of Igbo, Nigerians and Africa. This gesture will equally promote the Igbo language.

People like Peter Ejiofor, the former Vice Chancellor of Unizik formed an Association called 'Otu Subakwa Igbo' which is aimed at reviving the teaching and learning of Igbo language because he believes that many Igbo people can no longer speak or write Igbo language well.

Another socio-cultural Association that has contributed to the promotion of the Igbo language and culture is the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture which was founded in 1949 by F.C Ogbalu. The society created a standard dialect for Igbo language. This helped the Igbo people a lot in that many dialects of Igbo are controlled by using the standard Igbo.

There is another association called Igbo Studies Association (ISA) based in USA aimed at promoting Igbo language and culture. Also, in line with ISA is Umụ Igbo Unite (UIU) based in Atlanta Georgia, formed Igbo Community Association of Nigeria (ICAN) which was formed for the promotion and maintenance of Igbo heritage and enhancing a smooth cultural infusion in recognition of other cultures. Any organization or association that is formed for promoting culture of a place is equally promoting the language of that place. Igbo has now been included in the British Broadcasting Corporation. (BBC). Thanks to United Kingdom Government through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Individuals like Chief F.C Ogbalu, Pita Nwanna, Tagbo Nzeako, Betran Osuagwu, A. Chukwuezi and our great writer Chinua Achebe of 'Things fall Apart' who wrote Igbo in English and the rest of them have contributed immensely to the promotion of Igbo language and culture.

The former Anambra State Commissioner for Education Prof Kate Omenugha also contributed her own quota by the commitment shown in the promotion of Igbo language and Culture. She acknowledged that language and culture greatly forms the identity of a people. The Commissioner during her tenure enjoined parents to always speak Igbo language to their children. As she rightly said that knowledge of one's mother tongue should be the spring-board for the understanding of other languages and subjects which if neglected will make one to be untraceable. She also appointed a Desk Officer to co-ordinate activities for the promotion of Igbo language and culture.

There is another Igbo social-cultural organization called *Ohaneze Ndi Igbo* that was formed for the promotion of Igbo language and culture. It was instituted for sustaining the rich cultural heritage of *Ndi Igbo* with all its chapters in all the states of the Igbo land and beyond.

### **Possible strategies for preservation of endangered language**

Igbo language owners should appreciate and love their language. No language is better than the other. Modern language studies have shown that all languages are created equal as (Blake,2008) states. Even though English language has its own advantage as the official language of Nigeria that unifies us as a multilingual country, it should not be allowed to swallow entirely our native language because no serious people can replace its native language which is her mother tongue with another language. So the onus to save Igbo language from being endangered lies in the hands of the native language owners. Meetings, vote of thanks, welcome and farewell addresses should be written in Igbo and read in Igbo language in any gathering of Igbo people. Government at all levels should make policies that will favour the indigenous languages. They should start by making them a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary schools systems. In fact, the subjects one must pass before entry into Secondary schools or Universities, whether Art or Science should include Igbo language.

Government should also create job opportunities for the Igbo language graduates. They should also encourage Igbo language scholars, who volunteered to study Igbo language in the universities by awarding at least seventy percent free scholarships to the intending scholars. The one day in a week earmarked for the promotion of Igbo language and culture is not enough and should be increased to three times a week. Also Igbo language should be made the first official language of the five states of the Igbo land, and the preferred language for use in schools, offices, markets and the rest of them.

Coming to the part of literary works, books written in indigenous language should be promoted. Also the writers in indigenous languages should be motivated and encouraged as well by giving them awards. Project works from researchers of the Igbo language scholars should be written in Igbo language. It should not be optional as it is in the post graduate programs of the Igbo language department in so many institutions. Also, Igbo language researches ought to be treated with utmost seriousness by attaching grants and sponsorships.



Schools especially private schools should be monitored to see that they also contribute to the promotion of Igbo language and culture. Their Igbo language teachers should be graduate of Igbo language with well-equipped knowledge of Igbo orthography and the entire areas of the study so as to help the pupils and students not only in spoken Igbo but also in writing Igbo language correctly. Awareness program should be carried out for parents so as to let them know the importance of communicating and teaching their children with their mother tongue and equally to appreciate the Igbo cultural values. Parents should see the importance of transmission of the language from their children to the generations to come. Migration also plays a negative role in endangering the Igbo language though inevitable, the migrants should not relent in speaking Igbo language to their children. They should make their mother tongue a family language so that it is not forgotten entirely.

### Conclusion

This paper has tried to explain what language endangerment is. The causes of endangerment to the Igbo language have been x-rayed and efforts of the government and well-meaning Igbo people towards preserving the language enumerated. Finally, the possible solutions to the preservation of the language have been elucidated. From all indications, one can observe that language endangerment is a very serious matter that needs to be handled with seriousness because any ethnic group that loses its language loses its identity. Therefore, let us collectively and individually preserve Igbo language for our own good and the betterment of our future generation.

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