

ELITES AND THE DECLINE OF SPOKEN AND WRITTEN IGBO, INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

By

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Abstract

This work examines Elites and the Decline of Spoken and Written Igbo, Indigenous Language and Culture. It 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 focus is on both married and unmarried men and women with that qualification and within the age ranges of 40 to 60 years. The descriptive research design is employed in the study. The theoretical framework of Ethnolinguistic vitality forms the basis of the analysis of data collected in the study. The paper adopts spoken and written talks of elites from Nsukka Central as data for the analysis. The talks were derived from family discussions, information from schools, and talks from social gatherings that involve elites. The study therefore, finds out that Igbo elites are part of the causes of decline in spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture. Results show that Igbo elites do not speak Igbo language to Igbo children, where they try to speak Igbo at all. They code-switch Igbo and English languages. The study also reveals that key words found in elites' construction are pronounced with English language. The study in addition discovers that elites never use Igbo, indigenous language in the leaflet description of their products for easy understanding. Again, the paper find out that Igbo elites mock Igbo children that want to study Igbo in higher institutions. Even those children at lower levels, elites forbid them from speaking Igbo in the class and also fine them. Also, kolanut cultural practice is found neglected by the elites.

1.0 Introduction

Language is important to man. Its existence is the reason for communication in a community. Communication is perhaps the single critical distinction between man and animals. It is effective through the medium of language. Its significance lies in its use as a tool for communication. Its beauty of usage is derived from the choice of words. Thus Ndimele (1992) conceives language as the vehicle by which human beings effect communication. For language to adequately serve its primary function of communication, it must be spoken by its owners. This will prevent its death or extinction. That is why each group of people tries to uphold its language.

Igbo is a language used by Igbo people. The name, Igbo, also refers to their land. Igbo people are found in five states of present Eastern Nigeria like Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi,

Enugu and Imo. The result of the census exercise conducted in 1991 shows that the population of Igbo people are 10,774,977 while that of 2006 gave the total number of 16,395,555 (Onuoha, 2015). These results show that there is increase in the population of the Igbo people. The popularity of any given language depends on the usage demography. So, the more the number of people that use a language, the more popular such a language would be. Conversely, the less or fewer the number of users and spread of the users of a language, the less popular such a language will be. However, from the number, it is expected that the speakers and users of Igbo language will be high.

The issue of the vitality of the Igbo language has been a subject of interest and concern for scholars for several years. The reason is that as Anasiudu (2007) observes, language is a living thing and can die, if not spoken. Also Agbedo&Kwambeh (2013) aver that an estimate of 4,000 languages globally have already been lost, with 6,000 remaining; with the majority facing one level of risk or the other. Similarly, United National Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2012) reported that the Igbo language might become extinct in the next 50 years. Ejiofor (2009) is of the opinion that the Igbo language is the most neglected of the three major Nigerian languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. More so, Umeodinka&Okoye (2018) researched on “Mmekpaahundinnenannana-enyeasusu Igbo n’ogeugbu a”.

It is against this backdrop that the researcher wants to find out why there is decline in spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture among Igbo people that are elites, resident in Nsukka Central Local Government Area of Enugu State. Specifically, the objectives of the work are: (i) to find out elites’ contribution towards Igbo language use; (ii) to examine elites’ effort towards Igbo cultural practice; and (iii) to investigate elites’ motive towards the decline of spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture. So, there is a gap which this present work tries to fill. If not appropriately checked, it will cause problems to the future generations of the Igbo.

The paper is divided into four chapters. Chapter one introduces the work. On chapter two, related literatures are reviewed. Chapter three presents and analyse the data collected for the study. On chapter four, the summary of findings and conclusion are made. The justification for carrying out the research is that the work will motivate the interest of Igbo elites on their level of Igbo language usage and cultural practice.

2.0 Literature Review

This section reviews literature in relation to the study. It is reviewed in the following order: conceptual framework, theoretical studies, empirical studies, and theoretical framework.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

This subheading reviews language, culture and Igbo language in order to understand the study better.

2.1.1 Language

The language of any people is that which has meaning to them. Nwaozuzu (2008) asserts that language is one of the most fundamental aspects of human behaviour and the development of language into a refined instrument of expression and

communication is one of man's greatest achievements. Language used in communication is not without origin, location or structure. According to Nwadike (2009) language is any structure that may be written or spoken in which a group of people use to communicate. People use language to say their views.

The choice of words in language according to Obodo (2011) must follow the standard form of a language for easy understanding. David (2004) sees language as a badge of sorts, a means of identifying whether a person is within a social group or not. Language is a social characteristic transmitted to the agency of the human brain through sociological interaction. He also notes that language is a sound that has meaning as the users agreed. He further explains that it is when the owners accepted it as a unit of sound that has meaning in a given language that people start using it. It is because of the meaning derived in a language that made people to be able to express themselves which helps to create good relationship among the speakers. Igbo is one of the languages people interact with. Eme&Nkamigbo (2009) aver that the reason people are called Igbo people is because of their language known as Igbo.

Nwadike (2002) asserts that indigenous languages aid people to know the literature, history, geography and civics of their community through stories, songs, dances, myths, legends and youths also are guided and advised towards achieving their ultimate expectations in life as well as that of the society. Indigenous language is the bedrock on which other languages including the lingua franca build on. Aziza (1998) posits that most Nigerians see indigenous language as language that has no contribution towards national development. Based on that, Obi (2013) advocates that Nigerians should avoid habits of indifference they exhibit towards these indigenous languages, these attitudinal problems are affecting the languages a lot. Therefore, adequate recognition should be given to indigenous language and culture by promoting its utilization.

2.1.2 Culture

Culture is the lifestyle of the people within a language and denotes their values, beliefs, artifacts, behaviour and communication. It is passed from one generation to another. A culture exists when a distinct way of life shapes what a group of people believes, values and does. The way a group understands and attaches meaning to an issue might be different from another group. For example, the youth and the elderly in a society, their interpretation of some issues might be different.

Culture can be diversified into the material and non-material. The material culture includes the food, clothing etc while the non-material culture includes philosophical and creative aspects. The present work studies culture through language. Igwe&Adeyemi (2011:18) defines culture as "truly the totality of a people's way of life at a given point in time. Culture involves the way people eat, worship, interact, and perform socio-economic, political, educational and diverse activities within such a country or society". Therefore, culture plays a role for societal transformation and development, for the stability of a society is ensured through the transmission of cultural values.

Culture influences what people communicate to whom they communicate and how they communicate? From the moment we are born our culture imposes its rules of

behaviour on us; we learn and understand the meaning of our non-verbal cues, we learn about respect to elders – what tune of voice to use, the positive, eye contact and how to interact socially (Novinger, 2008). People from different cultures with same language might have same word meaning different things which might affect the understanding of what is communicated since culture provides people with ways of thinking, seeing, hearing and interpreting the world. Ootobo (2008) states that when languages are different and translation has to be use to communicate, the potential for misunderstanding is increased. The same words can mean different things to people from different cultures, even when they speak the same language.

It is passed from generation to generation; the norms, values, beliefs and distinctiveness of a culture are transmitted from one generation to another. People in a particular society will know what is expected of them because their behaviour would be guided by their culture. Culture is learned through observation, imitation and interaction with the surroundings. It is not biologically inherited; humans consciously or unconsciously learn their culture. It could be done in a formal or informal setting. The more we interact and associate with others or people in our culture, the more the norms, beliefs, and values of that culture will be understood. The learning process involves communication. This could be in form of folktales, proverbs, legends, arts, music, mass media and the internet. People in a community learn culture as part of the natural process of growing up; and those beliefs, ideas and values are applied in the community.

Emenanjo (1975) notes that every culture expresses people's way of life, attire they put, the type of food they eat, their thinking and ways to with stand other people's relationship. On the other hand, Eme (2006:2) points that it is from language that people's ways of life depends. She complains that there has been a lot of bad changes as relate to Igbo people's attire, their philosophical thinking and their language since the arrival of white men in Igbo land. Eme (2006) further opines that those basic things that Nigerian mapped out to support Nigerian languages which Igbo is part of them, later changed and was used to improve the standard of English language to some extent. Eme and Nkamigbo (2009) say that the condition motivated Igboanus (2003:105) and Chukwukere (2006:65) to cry bitterly for this bad condition Igbo language found itself.

2.1.3 Igbo language

Eme&Nkamigbo (2009) note that why people are called Igbo people is because of their language. For more emphasis Nwadike (2002:9) shows three things Igbo signifies. He says Igbo refers to "people that are born", that is Igbo people. The second thing Igbo refers to is "Igbo boundary", that is Igbo land. The third meaning of Igbo according to him is "their language" which is Igbo language. However, Igbo language is a language spoken by people that come from Igbo land.

Dada (2006:68) observes that there is language war when languages are in contact. He explains that war reduces the level of language and at the same time people's way of life. He continues to lament that other languages that come in contact with Igbo language did not add any benefit. Odumuh (1987) and Igboanus (2002) pointed out bad things that manifested to Igbo language when it comes in contact with English language. They said that the contact motivated churches and travelers in Igbo land to

preach and say prayers in English. Also, people use English accent to speak Igbo. Many people used this fake style of speaking to show that they do not know how to speak Igbo because their characters are beyond Igbo ethics.

Ejiofor (2009) points out that children are mandated to speak English language in their classes during school hours. For more emphasis, Eme&Nkamigbo (2009) point that parents do not allow their children to school where Igbo language is been used as a means of teaching. They also point out that children that spoke Igbo are being fine. Nwaozuzu (2015) observes that when a country abandoned her language, it leads to endangerment. This shows that her children who supposed to replace her and continue to speak the language are those that are abandoned from learning it. There is need to review theories that are deemed necessary to the study.

2.2 Theoretical studies

The theory of ethnolinguistic vitality came up as a tool of social analysis in sociolinguistics and psychology of language. Relations between groups do not occur in a vacuum but are influenced by a range of socio structural and situational factors that can affect the nature and quality of inter group contact between speakers of contrasting ethnolinguistic groups. Ethnolinguistic vitality was first introduced by Giles, Bourhis& Taylor (1977) and provided a conceptual tool to analyse the socio structural variables affecting the strength of ethnolinguistic communities within intergroup settings. Ethnolinguistic vitality according to Harwood, Giles & Bourhis (1994) is that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive, active and collective entity within the intergroup setting. Giles & Johnson (1981) explain that ethnolinguistic vitality of a language is either objective (measured) or subjective. Objective ethnolinguistic vitality refers to identity status, demography and institutional support as factors that affect the visible vitality of an ethnolinguistic group. Ofuokwu (1995) opines that the status factor concerns the economic wealth of the members of the collectivity, and the socio-historical and political power of the speakers. It is expected that the greater the economic wealth, political strength etc of a group, the more the vitality attributable to the collectivity.

Demography deals with the number of the speakers of the language. It considers the extent to which speakers marry or migrate to other areas not designated as in-group. Institutional support deals with the recognition accorded the group. It could be in support given to the language in official, social and political circles. It also includes the use of the language in print and in the electronic media. The positive social identity given to a group will enhance its vitality.

Chambers (1995) states that ethnolinguistic vitality is related to language functions since the more (and more strongly clustered) language functions a multilingual community controls, the stronger its ethnolinguistic vitality, and the greater its chances of survival. Bourhis&Sachder (1984) cites Giles, Bourhis& Taylor (1977) who propose that group strengths and weaknesses on dimensions of institutional support and control, as well as its social and demographic strength, may be assessed objectively. This he says is to provide a rough overall classification of ethnolinguistic groups as having low, medium or high vitality. The more vitality an ethnolinguistic group has, the more likely it would be to survive as a distinctive linguistic collectivity

in intergroup settings. Conversely, group that have little or no group vitality will assimilate linguistically or cease to exist as distinctive groups. Ethnolinguistic vitality, as Ehala (2009) observes, is the group's will to act collectively, deriving from its member emotional attachment. The stronger the affective commitment is, the more vitality the group possesses. No linguistic group manifests all the distinctive and social and/linguist characteristics indicative of vitality, across its population.

Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977) identify three variables that influence the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups as demographic, status and institutional support. Demographic variables are those related to the number of members composing the ethnolinguistic group and their distribution throughout a particular urban, regional or national territory (Harwood, Giles & Bourhis (1994). Demographic variables constitute a tool for granting language communities the needed institutional support, for development. They include birth and death rate, mixed marriage, and immigration and emigration pattern in and out of a territory. In line with this, many scholars have tested their observations that are shown in the empirical review.

2.3 Empirical studies

Anasiudu (2007) wrote on Igbo standardization and the problem of synthesis. Tracing the history behind the choice of a standard variety for the Igbo language, he bemoans, "language is a living thing. It can die (Anasiudu 2007:140). It dies when it ceases to be spoken." He cites Emenanjo (1975) who cries out about the Igbo language, "unless... the written Igbo is close enough to the spoken Igbo, we will never have great literature in Igbo... Igbo will never grow unless the status quo is changed". The works of Anasiudu (2007) and Emenanjo (1975) relate to the present study. This is because the rate of using Igbo language will determine its position in the community.

In addition, Anyanwu (1998) carries out a study on Igbo easy receptivity to change. He mentioned that colonialism brought varied changes to Igbo history. The Igbo were made to accept new fashion or culture. He cites Ayandele (1966) who reveals the success of Christian missions in Igbo land after 1900 in terms of the collapse of traditional religion in the face of military and political defeat. This analysis is necessary bearing in mind that elites are prone to speak different languages and culture which they emulate from white people that leads to language change.

Olumba (2014) carries her research on indigenous language: A way forward for job creation. She found out that graduates of indigenous languages can go into comedy, book writing, translation, interpreting and consultative services to better their lives. The work of Olumba (2014) and the present work are related. Both of them study Igbo, an indigenous language. The difference is that while Olumba's work concentrated on how indigenous language creates job opportunities, the present work discusses causes of decline of spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture by the Igbo elites born and residence at Nsukka.

In addition, Onuoha (2015) carried her research on the effect of demography on the vitality of the Igbo language within the period 1953 to 2006. The study investigates how increase in population has contributed to the level of vitality of the Igbo language. It adopted ethnolinguistic vitality theory as a framework. The instrument used for data

collection was the census results over the years stipulated that is from 1953-2006. The census results reveal an increase in population every new census period. She found out that Igbo language maintains strong ethnolinguistic vitality. The present work and Onuoha's work discuss Igbo language growth. But while the present work studies Igbo language on the level of declination, Onuoha's work studied Igbo language progression.

Further more, Nwaozuzu (2015) researched on "Agbambondị Igbo nankwaliteasusu ha". She enumerates five signs that are used to show languages that are at the point of endangerment. She uses Igbo language to test those signs. She checked the rate people use Igbo language to do these: act drama, teach in the schools, communicate, write and view people's mind about Igbo language. After the analysis, Nwaozuzu (2015) observes that Igbo language failed in the examination. She also condemns the way Igbo elites regard their language and culture. She continues by saying that they do not write letter in Igbo. Again, they do not read Igbo welcome address in Igbo. Nwaozuzu (2015)'s work relates to the present study. Both studied people's attitude toward Igbo language use. On the other hand, there is difference between them. The present work discusses why there is decline in spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture among the Igbo elites. Nwaozuzu (2015) studies signs that are used to show languages that are at the point of endangerment which Igbo language is used for experiment.

Furthermore, Umeodinka&Okoye (2018) carry a research on "Mmekpaahundinnenannana-enyeasusu Igbo n'ogeugbu a". They employed descriptive and survey design in the study. They used ethnolinguistic vitality as a framework for the analysis. They find out that Igbo parents struggled very hard to see that their children learn other languages than Igbo language, their mother tongue. The present study and the work of Umeodinka&Okoye (2018) are related because both investigate why there are problems in Igbo language use among Igbo people. The difference lies in the area of concentration. While the work of Umeodinka&Okoye (2018) focus on "Mmekpaahundinnenannana-enyeasusu Igbo" the present work studies how elites contribute to decline of spoken and written Igbo language and culture. The researcher chose ethnolinguistic vitality as a framework for the study.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The framework for this study is ethnolinguistic vitality. Ethnolinguistic vitality is a theory of sociolinguistics propounded by Giles, Bourhis& Taylor in (1977). This theory made a landmark in the provision of a tool for the analysis of the socio structural variables affecting the strength of ethnolinguistic communities within intergroup settings. The theory proposes three variables – demography, institutional support and status as objective criteria for assessing the vitality of a language. Ehala (2009) views the theory of ethnolinguistic vitality as the group's will to act collectively, deriving from its members emotional attachment to this particular group membership. The theory suggests that the stronger the commitment is, the more vitality the group possesses. Chambers (1995) notes that there is a relationship between language functions and ethnolinguistic vitality, in the sense that if a language controls more language functions in a multilingual community, it translates to stronger ethnolinguistic vitality for that language.

In subsequent development, Bourhis, Giles & Rosenthal (1981) presented the notion of subjective vitality perception and objective vitality perception. The subjective vitality theory deals with the issue of whether group members perceive 'subjectivity' the socio structural position in much the same way as the 'objective' account. The subjective vitality theory was proposed as a measuring instrument for group members assessments of in/out group vitality on each of the items constituting the demographic, institutional support and status dimensions of the objective vitality framework.

Objective ethnolinguistic vitality implies that it is easy to have access to the measures through demographic characteristics, social status of the measures and the extent of the institutional support for the group that speaks the language. This understanding led to the construction of a Subjective Vitality Questionnaire (SEVO). They constructed SEVO in order to show people's mind in relation to their language group. This change testifies that people's mind is among those things to analyze when investigating whether people's language has strength or not.

On the strength of ethnolinguistic vitality, Abrams, Barker & Giles (2009) observe that it has changed very little over 30 years. The three main factors have remained the same. Ethnolinguistic vitality has the strength of providing a valuable direction for furthering researchers comprehension of the variables involved in the maintenance, shift or attrition of a minority language in a language contact setting. Also, the ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions of one generation will to a large extent affect the language behaviour of up-coming generations. This may lead either to maintenance or shift.

Ethnolinguistic vitality helps to identify these: people's behaviour towards their language use, best strategies to be used in promoting people's language, ways of encouraging people to have interest in learning their language, finding out why people abandon their language and things that will motivate them to have interest on their language; and using ethnolinguistic vitality as a tool for finding people's behaviour towards their language use. These numerous benefits formed the basis for the choice of the Ethnolinguistic vitality as a framework for the study.

3.0 Data presentation and analysis

This section presents the data collected in the course of the research. This will be presented based on talks heard and recorded from elites in some selected families, schools and social gatherings like traditional events.

3.1 Data Analysis

The data are analysed under three subheadings with the help of benefits derived from the ethnolinguistic vitality. They include talks spoken and or written that are being discussed in the selected families, schools and social gatherings. We shall present the raw data as discussed and captured by the researcher from the elites in the above setting to achieve the specific objectives as seen below.

Data 1: Family discussion

ai. Elite: Ngozi, gaawetara m "spoon" na "cup". 'Ngozi, go and get a spoon and

a cup for me’.

ii. Elite: Ngozi, go and return the cup, “hapu” spoon. ‘Ngozi, go and drop the cup and leave spoon’.

iii. Elite: Nobody should go out in this family because of COVID-19.

b. Elite: ... foods, utensils, drugs are never described with Igbo language and culture in their leaflets. Had it been there is a way to use the language; it would be better for easy understanding....

The first objective is to investigate elites’ contribution towards Igbo language use. Data I show that elites do not use Igbo language effectively. They code-switch words in Igbo and English. They denied their children from knowing names of lexical items. Children hardly know that the Igbo name for spoon is “ngaji” and that of cup is “iko”. Elites use their qualifications to promote English language in their families. They do not speak Igbo to their children. In an environment where they try to speak Igbo at all, they use English to replace the key words in the construction. Data 1b indicates that elites do not use Igbo language to create awareness in their products. After producing and manufacturing products, elites use English language to write instructions on the products’ leaflets. Using Igbo language to describe the products would allow Igbo language to grow.

Data 2: Talks and Data Presentation from Schools

2ai. Elite: Keduife i choroigunamahadam? ‘What course do you want to study in the University?’ bi Child: Igbo.

ii. Elite: Chai! A na-agu Igbo namahadam? Ha! ha! ha...! ‘Chai! Is Igbo one of the courses tread in the University? Ha! ha! ha...!’

iii. Elite: Bja, kwuogwogi! ‘Come, pay for your debt!’

ci. Child: Aga magwanna m ka o nye m ya tomorrow. ‘I will tell my father to give it to me tomorrow.’

cii. Child: Papa, give me two hundred naira to pay for Igbo speaking club. ‘Father, give me two hundred naira to pay for Igbo speaking club.’

iv. Elite: Two hundred naira, o bu “school fees”...? ‘Two hundred naira, is it school fees ...?’

Objective two discusses elites’ effort towards Igbo cultural practice. As we mentioned earlier, culture is people’s way of life. In school, it has been a practice that Igbo children are bound to speak Igbo in schools. Data two shows information from schools. The data reveals that Igbo elites abandoned Igbo children from reading or studying Igbo in higher institutions. They mock Igbo children that want to study Igbo in higher institutions as data (ii) indicates. Elites do not remember that Igbo teachers, translators, news casters, journalists, to mention but a few are the products of students that read Igbo linguistics. Data (2iii) testifies that Igbo elites forced students to be using English language as a means of communication in schools. They even go a long way to write a notice that “Igbo speaking are highly prohibited in the class; and mount fine for the defaulters”. In line with Ejiofor (2009), students are fine whenever they speak Igbo language in their class.

Data 3: Talks from social gatherings

Elite: ... ojianaghianuasusuzobereso Igbo. ‘... Kolanut does not hear any other

language except Igbo’.

Elite: Onyewetaraoji, wetarandu. ‘He that brought kolanut, brought life’.

Elite: ‘Umunne m’, let us bless this kolanut so that we eat and receive life in Jesus name. Maywe share the grace together ‘Brethern, let us bless this kolanut so that we eat and receive life in Jesus name. May we share the grace together’

Objective three describes elites’ motives’ towards declination of spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and cultural practice. Data three reveals that Igbo elites do not practice their culture effectively as it relates to kolanuts. Igbo people use Igbo language to say prayers over Igbo kolanuts anywhere they find themselves. The data shows that Igbo elites use English language to do incantations and prayers when Igbo kolanuts are presented to them. There is an adage which says that ‘practice makes perfect’. Children around them do not know that when Igbo kolanut is been presented, Igbo person must call everybody to order by announcing that Igbo does not hear any language except Igbo language. Also Igbo people break kolanuts into pieces before incantations and prayers are being made. Observation shows that Igbo elites do not put all these into practice. So there is no way children can learn and practice these without telling them. Elites even share the kolanuts line by line. But kolanut rule in Igbo land indicates that it has to be taken or shared from the elder to the youngest.

4.0 Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Our task here is to break down our findings, so that they can be seen one by one.

4.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigates elites and decline of spoken and written Igbo indigenous language and culture. To do this, data were collected through family discussions, information from schools and social gatherings. Benefits from ethnolinguistic vitality theory helped much in the analysis of data. The first objective is to find out elites’ contribution towards Igbo language use. The paper reveals that Igbo elites contribute negatively towards development of Igbo language. They use English as a means of communication to Igbo children. Even when they try to use Igbo language the key words in the construction are still in English as data 1 showed. Also the study reveals that Igbo elites code-switch from Igbo to English. It also indicates that none of the Igbo products is being described in their leaflet with Igbo language.

Objective two tries to discover elites’ efforts towards Igbo cultural practice. The paper found out that Igbo elites abandoned Igbo children to speak and read Igbo in higher institution as data 2 testified. In doing this, they went extra mile to fine Igbo children for speaking Igbo language in the class.

Coming to elites’ motives towards declination of spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture, Igbo elites do not recognize that there is cultural practice binding Igbo kolanuts. Elites used English to pray over Igbo kolanuts and shared it line by line among the people that are present. Because of this, there is no way Igbo children will know and learn the Igbo kolanuts cultural practice. However, language and culture are inseparable.

The causes of all these anomalies are the Igbo elites. These are people that supposed to teach and inculcate culture to Igbo children. They do speak and write with English to authenticate their level of award. Because of prestige, they create negative ways in which Igbo language undergo declination through spoken and written words. If Igbo elites continue not to speak Igbo fluently, feel less concern in writing with Igbo language where it deem necessary, abandon Igbo kolanut cultural practice, the report of UNESCO (2012) which says that Igbo language might go into extinction in next 50 years might happens to Igbo language. This is because Igbo language is an identity and a badge for Igbo people. Also, language and culture are interwoven. If Igbo elites continue to abandon their language, Igbo children might lost their identity and cultural heritage. In addition, Igbo elites serve as parents, teachers and counsellors to Igbo people. Due to civilization, Igbo children cannot grow without them. When elites abandon Igbo children from making use of their language, they have forbid them from learning their culture. Hence, language cannot exist without cultural influence.

4.2 Conclusion

The research studied elites and decline of spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture. The objective of the study is to find out the causes and areas of declination of spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture among the Igbo elites. The data were collected through talks and information from families, schools and social gatherings. Benefits of establishing ethnolinguistic vitality theory helped a lot in the analysis.

The paper found out that elites are the causes of declination of spoken and written Igbo indigenous language and culture. Results showed that Igbo elites do not speak Igbo language to Igbo children, where they try to speak Igbo at all, they code-switch Igbo and English languages. The study revealed that the key words in their construction are pronounced with English language. The study also discovers that elites never use Igbo, indigenous language in the leaflet description of their products for easy understanding. Again, the paper found out that Igbo elites mocked Igbo children that want to study Igbo in the higher institution. Even those children at lower levels, elites forbid them from speaking Igbo in the class and also fine them. Also, the paper showed that Igbo kolanut cultural practice is neglected by Igbo elites.

Conclusively, Igbo elites caused declination of spoken and written Igbo, indigenous language and culture. This happened as a result of their level of educational oualification. Due to prestige, they abandoned their language and culture; and adopt English language as a means of communication. Anything that happened to people's language has affected their culture. If Igbo elites try to abide by their language and culture, there will be a way forward to promote Igbo, indigenous language and culture. This is because they are closer to children that might live after them.

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