ASSESSING LANGUAGE VITALITY AND ENDANGERMENT OF TERA (NYIMATLI) LANGUAGE

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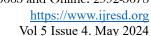
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Abstract:

This research is an attempt to investigate assessing language vitality and language endangerment of Tera (Nyimatli)*language with the aim of finding out the level of its endangerment. The researchers employed mixed approach that involves observing variables in their natural environments in order to arrive at the research objectives which at the same time uses observation and unstructured interview, group discussion and participation. The research adopts the UNESCO (2003) frame work as it model of approach. As part of its findings the study discovered that the factors that cause language endangerment are: social factors, economic factors, demographic factors, educational factors and globalization. More so, the research also confirmed that* Tera (Nyimatli) *language is under serious threat in the communities of* Tera (Nyimatli)*, like Deba,, Kwadon, Lano, Kalshingi and Zambuk Towns, and also discovered that Tera language is more vibrant in villages were most of Tera people live. Which include: lubo, Difa, kinafa, Gwani, Wade ,Shinga and many more villages of in Yamaltu/Deba Local Government Area of Gombe State. As part of it the research discovered a lot of things in line with the language endangerment which include a case of language shift in Tera language, but this happens in the cities of Tera. In this case only the native speakers were found to have in- build mastery of the language in the cities. As*

such the native speakers of Tera in the cities are very much speakers of Hausa language. But in villages, the native speakers have in-build mastery of the language, because there is a rule of using the language at home, here there is no room of communication with any language a part from Terai at home, it is a rule born system The study makes an attempt of assessing the level of endangerment on Tera language with references to UNESCO (2003) frame work.

Keywords: *Assessing, Endangerment, Vitality, Language and Language endangerment.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tera is spoken in Gombe State, North-eastern part of Nigeria, and it is located in Gombe Central in Yamaltu/deba Local Government. It is one of ten languages of the Chadic family indigenous to Gombe State, the others being Bole, Tula, Tangale, Waja, Filiya, Kamo, Awak, Dadiya, Jukun. Tera is a member of the West Branch of Chadic and is hence related to Hausa, the dominant language throughout northern Nigeria. Tera's closest linguistic relatives are Jara and Kamo, spoken to the east and south respectively. Deba emirate is located in the south-eastern part of GombeState, it shares boundaries with Waja and Kaltungo chiefdoms, Akko emirate to the southwest, Yamatu emirate to te North, and Gombe emirate to the West. Debalieswithing latitude 11.13 degree and longitude 11.24 degree of the equator. The emirate has a population of over one hundred thouds people based on 1991 pouplation census. Thus, it makes Deba among the list of densely populated emirates in Gombe State.

Not much is known about dialect variation in Tera. There are indications that at one time Tera covered a much larger area than it does now and that there was considerable dialect variation (for example, data collected in Mahdi in 2001 shows significant differences from the Tera of Deba, which is the variety documented on this site). However, the Tera speaking area is shrinking and the language has been or is being replaced by Hausa language, by migrant Hausa speakers from the North-western Nigeria, and, like all minority languages in northern Nigeria, by Hausa. The native name for Tera people is Nyimatli.

Statement of the problem

In Ja; 2015, Nyimaltli language Project has shown that, in addition to being genetic sisters/cousins, the indigenous Chadic languages of Gombe state constituted an interesting linguistic area i.e., an area which is full of linguistic research opportunities. In spite of this, there is very little published documentation of any of these languages, yet they have substantial communities of first language speakers. This has made Gombe state an ideal place for broad linguistic projects. In addition, some linguistic experts, Crystal 2000, for example, established that only 600 of the 6000 or so languages in the world are 'safe' from the threat ofextinction.

Based on the above, linguistic expert's assertion, this study come across very little

academic research that works on language domination as phenomenon. Therefore, this has made it necessary for us to make a thorough investigation on the devastating vitality of language endangerment of Dawailanguage.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to assessed of language vitality and Endangerment of Tera language and ascertain the level of endangerment and establish the reasons that lead to the endangerment.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Related literature to this will be reviews among others are: Language domination, Language borrowing, language endangered and spread of languages between ethnic groups of Gombe

State.

1. LANGUAGE ENDANGEREMENT

Bambogse, (1993) claim that, even though the concept of language endangerment is taken as a given actual fact there is no uniform definition of endangered language, the most obviously a language. With fewer speakers is more likely to be endangered if compare with lager languages.

Speakers of such languages tend to learn another language (more widely spoken) for purpose of interaction outside their immediate community. Where language loyalty is not strong; it is a short stop to language shift and eventually language death.

He further said that endangerment is a structure which comes as a result of incidence of domination by more powerful language. In this sense, many African languages will in varying degree, qualify as endangered either by widely spoken national language such as Swahili or by official language of a wider communication such as English, French or Portuguese.

Simon and Charles (2020), maintain that language endangerment is a serious concern to linguist and language planers. Language planers have turn their attention in last several decades for a variety of reason, speakers of many smaller less dominant languages stop using their heritage language and begin to use another. Parent may begin to use only the second language for their children and gradually the interactional transmission of the heritage language is reduced and even case. As a consequence, there may be may be no speaker who use the language as their first primary language may become dominant or extinct, existing only in recording or written record and transcription. Languages which have not been adequately documented disappear altogether.

2. LANGUAGE BORROWING

Dikwa (1988) discusses the general concept of linguistics borrowing while phonological adaptation of the loan word is treated in the work. The work discusses and started that the highly entrenched nature of Arabic loanword in Kanuri language is no longer a subject of debate, because it can be attribute to early Islamic contact between the Arab and the

Kanuri. This early Islamic contact between distinct linguistics communities can be trace a far back as second half of 19th and 20th centuries. The research mentions that some of Arabic loanword in Kanuri required only a slight adaptation to be assimilated in Kanuri due to the nature and lengthy duration of their use. As a results they differ only slightly from their original source.

Bulakarima (2001) discusses the French loan word in Mowar a dialect in Kanuri language. It is spoken in Nigeria and some part of Niger republic. Accordion research the Mowar dialect is spoen by Mowar, Dawo, Temaggaric, Cekkede and Ndawo. Many lexical items according to the research where borrowed from French to Mowar dialect. It is as result of greater prestige or the borrowed lexical items may fill a definite need in the recipient language. He goes further and affirm that the influences of French in almost all culture of Mowar people in Niger is apparent and the result into extensive borrowing from the French language. These loans are clearly noticeable in the domains of commerce, administrative, legal and social situation. Finally, the work presented the list of French words in Mowar dialect. Which commonly uses by them in both Nigeria and Niger republic. The research is clearly identified French language as a donor to Kanuri.

LANGUAGE DOMINATION
Trudgil (1974) discusses the language domination occurs naturally as a result of favouring factors due to the contact, it is socio linguistically understandable. But the imposition of a neighbouring indigenous language on other different linguistics group in the name of a national language and the inculcation of unity may be much more serious. The attempt to replace one language by another entails on effort (which may be well intention of course) to obliterate whole culture; it is indicative of illogical ethnic attitudes and it can impair the educational progress of a child who has to learn a new language before he can understand what the teacher is saying, let alone read and write.

Yakasai (2014) says that, there are many factors that would attribute to the learning and adoption of a particular language by a community as a language of wider communication. This factor varies from one form of contact to another. They may be military, economics immigration, political, religious and social. In any long linguistics contact in trade and commerce, the dominant language of the economically strong group would be adopted by the less economically strong community as a language of wider communication. This buttressed by the adoption and diffusion of Swahili, a language a language of the minority by more populous societies in East Africa as a trading language ND Later as National language. Therefore, this work is focus the language domination and borrowing among the ethnics group in Gombe state.

3.0 METHODOLOGY
Two different methodologies will be used in the process of data collection, such as

secondary and primary source of data. Secondary source include data obtain from text books, published and unpublished conferences, academic journals, dissertation, internet facilities on language especially Chadic, Nilo Saharan and Niger Khordopanian that are functioning in Gombe state. While, interview will be conducted among the Tera ethnic groups of Gombe State.

The research employs ethnographic approach that involves observing variables in the study area. In order to arrive at the objective of the research outcome ,which at the sometime uses observation ,unstructured interview, group discussion and participation.

 The target audiences for the research were native speaker of Tera from age of 10 to 60

years and above irrespective of their gander variations. The data obtained through survey of language used in some selected domain where interviews were conducted and recorded for further transcription, translation and final analyses. The data were analyzed based on the outlined determining factors by UNESCO (2003) frame work on endangered languages, under each factor there was adoptable grades from 0-5, where 0 represent complete domination/ shift to another language (the dominant language) , whereas present vitality of a language (which term as Safe) The remaining indices (1-4 repre c. Market d. Office e. Place of Worship f. All of the above g. None sent the percentage on which a language is endangered or dominated.

4.0 Data Presentation

 Item one in the Questionnaire

In what domain do you use your language?

    a. Home   b. School   of the above

Language	Home	School	Mark	Off	P/W	A/A	N/A		Total
Tera	94		3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	2.08	0	0	100

Item two on the questionnaire

How frequent do you use your language?

    a. Always   b. Sometimes   c. Never

Language	Always	Sometimes	Never			Total
Tera	68.71	21	12.29	0	0	96(100%)

Item Three in the Questionnaire

To what extent do you currently speak your language?

    a. Always   b. Sometimes   c. Never

Language	Always		Sometimes		Never		Total
Tera	33	92.04	6.06	0.50	3	1.13	96(100%)

Item Four in the Questionnaire

How will you rate your attitude towards your language?

a. Very good/I speak it always   b. Fair/I speak it sometimes

Language	V. Good		Fair		Poor	V. Poor	Total
Tera	57	69.38	28	29.58	1	0.40	0	0	96 (100%)

Item Five in the Questionnaire

What language(s) do you currently speak apart from your mother tongue?

Hausa,   Hausa, Fullo   and Kanuri.

Tera	5	(89.72)

Item Six in the Questionnaire

How comfortable are you when speaking your second language more than your mother tongue?

    a. Very comfortable   b. Comfortable.   c. Not comfortable

Language		V/Good		Fair	Poor	V. Poor	Total
Tera	13	16	0	0	84.	0	0	96 (100%)

Item Seven in the Questionnaire

What is your level of proficiency in your language?

a. No proficiency   b. Basic/Elementary   c. Limited   d. Bilingual   e. Intuitive

Language	N	/P	B/E	LTD	B/G		I/T		Total
Tera	9	9.38	60	62.50	10	10.42	13	15.54	4	4.16	96 (100%)

Item Eight in the Questionnaire

Have ever seen any written document in your language or not? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Language		Yes		No	Total
Tera	13	13.54	38	86.46	96 (100%)

Item Nine in the Questionnaire

Can you read or write in their language or not? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Language		Yes	N	o	Total
Tera	77	80.21	19	19.97	95(100%)

Item ten in the questionnaire

Is your language taught in school?   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Language		Yes		No		Total
Tera	5		5.21	91		94.79	96 (100%)

Item eleven in the questionnaire

Is language use in places of worship within the speech community? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Language		Yes		No		Total
Tera	48		50.00	48	50.00	98(100%)

5.0   Data Analysis
Tera

Like all languages of the world , so far analyzed on the basis of their level of endangerment/domination which is dominated by Hausa and Kanuri/Manga or not. Using percentage analysis and indices research measures, Tera language is equally place on such a standard. However, different item on questionnaire were analyzed having different percentage figure from the different settlement of the native speakers of the language (Tera language).

Item 1 on the questionnaire set to find out the domain in which Tera language is mostly used by its native speaker. Here we have two different result, depend on the area/settlement, that is, in the city or in the village. The first result is from the village where most of Tera people are living, which have the result as: 69.37% of the respondent claim that they are using the language at home, which is enable it to be placed on indices 4 of the research measure, i.e the language is stale but yet under threated. But in the cities which have the result , the respondent recorded shows that only 3.96% claim that there using the language at home, which make it to be place as indices 1of research measure. This shows that the language (Tera) is severely endangered language.

The level of frequently of usage of Tera language among its native speaker is checked on item 2 of the questionnaire serial. The respondents show that, in villages of Tera

68.71% claimed to have been using the language always, which makes it possible, to be placed on indices 4 of the research measure. But in the cities the responses recorded shows that only 34.38% claimed to have been using the language always. The result have two different answers , which make it possible to place the item that is the usage in villages in indices 4 of the research measure , while the second result revealed and placed on indices 2. Therefore, by the such statistical figure. Tera is said to have been stable in villages and unsafe in cities, but yet the language under study is under threat.

The extent to which native speakers of Tera are currently speaking the language to either their children or parents was checked on item 3 of the questionnaire. The respondent here indicate that, 92.o4% in the villages are currently speaks the language to both children and parent. But only o7.o6 in cities that found to speak the language to either children or parent always. By this proportion, the language (Tera) seemed to well pass the language to younger generation in villages and this make it to be placed on indices 4. And in the cities, the language is not well passed to the younger generation and this make it to be place in indices 1. This show that the language (Tera) in villages is safe and in the cities is under threat.

The item 4 in the questionnaire series is requiring information from the native speakers of Tera on their attitude toward their language. The statistics record here shows

that about 69.38% of the respondents in the villages claimed to have very good attitudes toward their language of which indicating that they speak the language always. However, with this proportion the Tera language in villages qualified to be in indices 4 of the research measure. But in the cities of Tera the proportion of Tera language is low, and it placed the language on indices 2 of the research measure showing that the language in villages is so vibrant, but in cities is at risk.

The Tera native speakers believed to have been speaking other languages like fulfulde , Hausa, Kanuri ,and Fulfulde by 49.38% apart from their mother tongue. This revealed to known through the item 5 on the questionnaire series. But this result is reveal from the cities of Tera. In the villages, Tera native speakers have rule born system, that is to communicate with their language at home is compulsory, A child cannot speak any language other than their language at home by 89.72% believed that their language gives them identity and they do not want to lose that. They also added that they proud of their ethnic group and their language. This also revealed to known through the item 5 on the questionnaire series. And also it is this percentage recorded that make the Tera language to be placed on indices 5 of the research measure in the villages which indicate that the language is safe, not dominated in Tera villages by Hausa and Kanuri/Manga. But in the cities of Tera the percentage recorded that make indicate that the language (Tera) has to be placed on

indices 3 which indicated that the language is unsafe.

However the issue of comfort ability of native speakers of Tera, that speaking second language more than their mother tongue is also checked on item 6 of the questionnaire series. The data obtained to this regard revealed that about 85% are not comfortable while speaking second language more than the Tera language in villages. But in the cities the data obtained to this regard revealed that only 46.84% are not comfortable while speaking second language more than the Tera language as mother tongue. So by implication, the language is not dominated by any language in villages, making it to be placed in indices 4 of the research measure, but is definitely dominated by Hausa and Manga /Kanuri in the cities, making it to be placed on indices 3 of the research measure.

Item 7 on the questionnaire series was designed to investigate the level of proficiency of Tera native speakers in their mother tongue. Based on the responses recorded from the data obtained in the cities of Tera, to this regard, only 30.16% were found to have good mastery of the language (Intuitive). By such a fraction, the research measure used places the language on indices 1 which termed the language a highly dominated in cities. But in the villages the level of the proficiency of Tera native speakers in their mother tongue in villages based on the responses recorded from data abstained to this regard about 89.67% were found to have good mastery of the language.

By such, the research measure used to places the language on indices 4 which is the language is safe. .

But in a situation where the native speakers of Tera were asked on whether they have ever seen or heard about a written document in their language or not, the following is the statistical analysis recorded to that regard: only 13.54% of the respondents have seen or heard about written document in their language. This means that the language (Tera) has little or no written documentation, as such, the research indices used places the language or indices 1. Therefore, the interpretation here means that the language (Tera) is highly endangered based on the data obtained.

Item 9 on the questionnaire was design to find out if the native speakers of Tera

language read or write in their language. The responses gathered indicated that 80.21% can read and write in the language (Tera) which places it on indices 4 of the research measure. Here, the interpretation maintained that the language seemed to be stable but yet dominated.

However, when Tera people enquired on whether the language is being taught in the schools of the speech community as set on items 10 on the questionnaire. The native speakers of the language (Tera) responded that only 05.21% of the responses believed to have the language used in teaching in
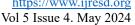
their schools. By this proportion, the research indices showed that the language is placed on indices 1, meaning that it is highly endangered.

The last items on the questionnaire set to investigate the status of Tera language in

places of worship in their speech community. To this extent, the native speakers responded that 50.00% of them believed that the language is being used in place of worship that is in mosque. By this percentage, the research indices used shows that the language is placed on indices 3, indicating that the language is highly endangered.

6.0 The Level of LanguageEndangerment Based on Percentage Analysis

As mentioned earlier, this study analyzed the data obtained from the field based on the outline determining factors by UNESCO Ad hoc Expert Group (2003) on endangered languages. Under each factor there was adoptable grades ranging from 0–5, where 0 represent complete shift to another language (termed as extinct), whereas 5 represent the vitality of the language (termed as safe). The remaining indices 1- 4 represent the percentage on which a language is endangered.Therefore, the following statistical analysis was use in determining the level on which a language under study is graded based on the scores recorded in respect of Duwai language. To this end, the language is leveled or graded

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based on their respective level of endangerment.

Tera

Tera is the language under study. Here, based on the result obtained from its native speaks, Tera language scored 69 marks in villages which placed the language as not endangered which termed as safe language. But in the cities, Tera score only 29 marks which is obviously placed it on the level of the most highly endangered language.

7.0 Conclusion

According to UNESCO (2003:4) language endangerment simply refers to a situation where its speakers cease to use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains and cease to pass it on from one generation to another that leads to the total absence of new speakers, whether adults or children. A language is said to be endangered when it is on a path towards extinction without adequate documentation even if the language has many thousand speakers if at all they cannot pass it to the younger generation, that language in question is said to be highly dominated/ endangered or in the verge of extinction. Therefore, this study has drawn its conclusion based on the designed objectives earlier mentioned. For instance, the study has clearly investigated and established the clear causes of language endangerment which include Intra and Inter Community Marriage, Lack of Economic Activities, Lack of Research on the

Languages domination/endangerment, Globalization, Lack of Institutional Support, Cultural Background and Migration.

More so, the research also confirmed that the language under study is under serious threat of endangerment. Also, the study has ascertained the level of engagement of Tera language. Moreover, as part of its findings, this research work has discovered a lot of things in line with language endangerment which however include a case of language shift in the issue of Tera language in cities, where only 4.16% of their native speakers were found to have an in–build mastery of their language which is quite insignificant. But in the villages the language in study (Tera) is quit vibrant. As such, the native speakers of the language (Tera) appeared to be very much uncomfortable while speaking other languages like Hausa and Kanuri in villages, 62.60% of such speakers was recorded. Among the finding unveiled by this study was an interruption on intergenerational transmission in the cities of Tera language, in this case, Tera language that scored a very less percentage of 34.38% of item 3 of the questionnaire which clearly shows that the ability to pass their language on to their children was quite insignificant in the cities .But in the villages the finding veiled by this study was an interruption on intergenerational transmission.

Likewise, it is among the findings of the research where it has been discovered that Tera language suffered the domination/ endangerment because of their poor or

inadequate documentation. This can be categorically seen in case of Tera language that scored only

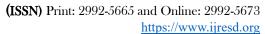13.54% of item 8 of the questionnaire which shows the extent of codification of the Teralanguage

This percentageappearedtobequitemeagertoserveastheonlypercentagepossessedonlanguage documentation. In line with the above finding discovered, it has also been realized that, there is lack of awareness on the side of the native speakers and their traditional rulers of the language on how to document and maintain their language. One the unfortunate thing here is that, some the native speakers of Tera language they don't want to be associated with their language, they prefer to associated themselves with dominant language of their area in the cities particularly when the dominant language is socially well placed or politically or economically viable. But in the villages also the native speakers of Tera don't want to be associated with any language of the area, because they prefer to speaker their language always and they don't want to lose their language. They also believe that their language is their identity and their proud of their language.

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