



SAVING THE GA-DANGME LANGUAGE FROM EXTINCTION – A CORROBORATIVE STUDY

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Abstract:

This corroborative study is based on research findings by Obeng Gyasi's (1997) 'An analysis of the linguistic situation in Ghana,' and Akpanglo-Nartey & Akpanglo-Nartey's, 'Some Endangered Languages of Ghana' (2012). Three indigenous Ghanaian Languages (*Ewutu-Efutu*, *Ga* and *Dangme*) were studied by Akpanglo-Nartey (2012) and the conclusion was that "a lot of the indigenous languages of Ghana are in danger and could even be lost in the next few generations". Again, Obeng Gyasi (1997: 78) in his concluding remarks stated that, "in fact, there are quite a number of Ghanaian languages that one can conveniently label as threatened or embattled". To ascertain the extent of damage done to both *Ga* and *Dangme* Languages, the researchers used *UNESCO Language Vitality & Endangerment Assessment Tool (2003)* to assess the *Ga-Dangme* Language along two dominant languages used in Ghana; *Akan* and *English Language*. Observation was used as a tool to collect data and then analysed qualitatively. The results confirmed that indeed, the *Ga-Dangme* Language is 'definitely endangered' because the language is used mostly by very few speakers, of parental generation up. Finally, the paper suggests ways in which *Ga-Dangme* could be preserved from further damage or loss. Ultimately, this paper has implications for further research on language extinction.

Keywords: *Ga-Dangme*, endangered languages, language extinction, indigenous languages in Ghana, language vitality and loss

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1. Introduction

An endangered language is one on its path toward extinction. A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in a reduced number of communicative domains, or cease to pass it on from the older generation to the younger generation. It is estimated that, in most world regions, about 90% of the languages may be replaced by dominant languages by the end of the 21st century (UNESCO Document on Language Vitality & Endangerment, 2003). Research has shown that about 97% of the world's people speak about 4% of the world's languages; and conversely, about 96% of the world's languages are spoken by about 3% of the world's people (Bernard, 1996: 142).

In Ghana, the phenomenon of language endangerment is gradually gaining root among indigenous Ghanaian languages. A study conducted by Akpanglo-Nartey and Akpanglo-Nartey (2012), established that two languages, namely, Ghanaian English (GhE) and Akan, especially the Twi dialect, and to a small degree, Ewe, are slowly killing off the smaller Ghanaian languages. Verghese (2007) observes that, in the world today, the English language is dominating the space in every country by virtue of its important role. In Ghana, the English language remains the official language since there is no accepted indigenous language to play the various roles served by the English language. The lack of mutual intelligibility of most indigenous languages has given room for the English language to become fostered and robust in Ghana. Attempts were made by successive governments to popularise one indigenous Ghanaian language but these attempts were unsuccessful as they generated a huge debate as to which indigenous language was to be accepted among several others. As a result, the English language has since continued to gain so much prominence in the country that its dominance has stifled the growth and even led to the extinction of some indigenous languages in Ghana.

English is therefore a second language which is learned and used in every sector of Ghana. Certainly, the English language has been institutionalised in Ghana as the language of integration and unity. The English language has emerged as that privileged language that is mutually understood by an average Ghanaian when two or more people of different ethnic groups want to communicate. In the words of Schwarz, cited in Bamgbose (1991: 39), differences between indigenous languages keep the people apart, perpetuate ethnic hostilities, weaken national loyalties and increase the danger of separatist sentiment. Therefore, English is seen as the only language that is not viewed with suspicion by other ethnic groups and which is acceptable more or less as a lingua franca. English is the language of education, the language of the legal system, and the language of telecommunication and technology. It is the language of government, commerce and industry and the language of print and electronic media. It is also the language used in religious settings like churches, where sermons are delivered in English Language and later interpreted into the local languages. Language Policy in education has been quite unstable in Ghana. Owu-Ewie (2006) traced the history of Ghana's Language Policy used in education and reported that from 1925 to 1951, a Ghanaian language was used as a medium of instruction for the first three years. However, in 2002, English became the only medium of instruction from primary one with a Ghanaian

language studied as a compulsory subject to senior high school (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2002). Currently, a child's mother tongue (L1) is used from grade 1-3 with English being the medium of instruction from primary 4 upwards. Hence, no indigenous language has been so recognized and developed as to be able to challenge the status quo since independence. Thus, the English language is playing a very significant role in Ghana to the detriment of the growth of indigenous languages.

2. Multilingualism in Ghana

Multilingualism is the situation in which a person has command of, or a community uses, two or more languages. A multilingual society is one in which two or more different languages exist within it and these languages are assigned similar or different functions. Ghana, like most sub-Saharan countries, is highly multilingual and linguistically complex. But at the same time, the Akan language occupies two-thirds of the country and continues to have a strong influence on the rest of the indigenous languages. In terms of the number of languages that count as 'indigenous' to its territory, Ghana has approximately fifty non-mutually intelligible languages, almost all belonging to Gur and Kwa branches of the Niger-Congo. With a population of over 18 million Ghanaians (2000 Census), the Akan Language can boast of over 7 million native speakers and many more second-language speakers while Safaliba, which is spoken in the far west of the Northern Region, has five thousand or fewer speakers (Anyindoho and Dakubu, 2008). Obeng Gyasi (1997) observed that there is a high degree of linguistic heterogeneity in Ghana. This has led to the development of various forms of diglossia with languages serving different functions in different communicative contexts. Three languages English, Akan and Hausa, have emerged as the most important lingua franca. The 2000 National Census reveals that the native language of about 43% of the Ghanaian population is Akan, which is also spoken as a second language or as a lingua franca by at least 40% of the remaining Ghanaian population. The name Akan was adopted in the 1950s as a broad term to indicate a cluster of several dialects, the main ones being Akuapem, Asante, Fante, Akyem, and Bono (Brong), spoken also in Ivory Coast. Three of these indigenous varieties, that is, Akuapem, Asante, and Akyem take the broad name *Twi* and it is currently considered to be the major lingua franca of the country.

Besides the indigenous languages, two popular languages are used throughout the country, particularly in urban areas. These are Hausa and English languages. There are several schools of thought on the total number of languages spoken in Ghana. Boadi (1971) puts the number of languages at over forty, Spencer (1971) reports that there are thirty languages, however, Grimes (1984), puts it at sixty. Finally, Bamgbose (1991) notes that Ghana has fifty-seven languages. The controversy comes about because it is sometimes difficult to distinguish indigenous languages from their sister dialects. Therefore, irrespective of the actual number, one can conclude that Ghana is a multilingual country.

3. Statement of the Problem

Akan, English and Hausa and other languages such as Ewe, Wali, Dagbani and Gonja are some of the languages often used by most people to communicate in Ghana. In both north and south of the country, certain languages have historically been the languages of the expanding empires. In the south, for instance, several Akan-speaking kingdoms went through expansionist phases, but by far the most powerful in recent times was Asante (Ashanti). The Asante dialect (Twi) continues to expand as a second language used for communication in urban areas such as Accra, Kumasi and to some extent, throughout the country. For example, the 2000 National Census reveals that the native language of about 43% of the Ghanaian population is Akan, which is also spoken as a second language or as a lingua franca by at least 40% of the remaining Ghanaian population. By 2010, the percentage of Akan speakers had risen to (47.5%) which shows a percentage rise of (4.5%) within ten years. This figure is an indication that Akan will continue to dominate and eventually push away other indigenous languages. These days, there seems to be a vogue whereby most people speak Akan in public institutions (e.g., during snack, break, conversations etc.)

According to Anyindoho and Dakubu (2008), the second-largest indigenous language in Ghana is Ewe. It is also the largest to have been affected by colonial boundary drawing since half of its speakers are in Togo and Benin. The Ewe Language has spread from east to west and sometimes displaces already existing languages, and it is predominantly used among some of the smaller linguistic groupings in the Volta Region. It is also interesting to note that over the past centuries, several Akan-speaking communities have also established themselves east of the Volta where Akan (Twi) remains the dominant language spoken by the settlers.

The English language is the medium of instruction in most schools in Ghana. It is the only official language at the national level and a lot of literacy materials are published in English. English serves as the only tool for uniting people because no other indigenous language is used in every part of the country. Dakubu (1988) asserts that "*in fact almost every literate person who ever reads, writes or even listens to the radio, does so in English more than in any other language*" (p.164). English is the language of broadcasting by both private and government media houses such as GTV, GBC Radio, Joy FM, Radio Gold, Vibe FM among others. However, other newly established government radio stations broadcast in both English and Akan with only Obunu FM broadcasting in Ga-Dangme. It is evident from the above statistics that the Ga-Dangme Language is gradually under threat of fading out into oblivion. It is against this background that this study was conducted on the Ga-Dangme language to find out the factors that threaten it and the extent of damage done in order to suggest solutions.

3.1 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What are the causes of language loss in Ga-Dangme?
- 2) What is the extent of damage done to Ga-Dangme?

3) What can be done to save Ga-Dangme from extinction?

4. Literature Review

4.1 History of the Ga-Dangme/Dangbe People

The Ga people share close territory in the north by the Akuapem hills, to the south by the sea, to the west by the Awutu and by the east by the Adanme. They call themselves Gamei to distinguish themselves from other groups such as the Akan, the Ewe or the Dagomba, and speak the language called *Ga*. They have a common annual festival called Homowo, which means, *"hooting at hunger"* (Odotei, 2010). There are six Ga towns which include *Ga Mashi* (Central Accra), the capital, *Osu* (Christiansborg), *La* (Labadi), *Teshi*, *Nungua* and *Tema*. According to Odotei (2010), each of these towns is divided into Akutsei or quarters, and each Akutso is sub-divided into Wei or patrilineal houses. Ga Mashi has seven Akutsei, each with its own Mantse or Chief, whereas the Akutsei of the other Ga towns does not have separate Mantsemei. The Ga people distinguish themselves by using the names of their towns to describe one another. For instance, the Nungua people are known as Nunguamei which distinguishes them from Lamei or Teshime. There is a close relationship between Ga and their eastern neighbours who are known as the Adanme, (Dangme). The Dangme group comprises Kpone, Prampram, Ningo, Ada, Osudoku, Shai, Yilo and Manya Krobo. The languages spoken by these two groups, Ga and Adanme (Dangme), are mutually intelligible. It appears that the two languages originated from one stock. Reindorf, cited in Odotei (2010) postulated that Adangbe is *"the mother dialect of the Ga"*. Again, M.E. Kropp (-) has been able to establish that, *"modern Ga is the product of a large number of innovations in the hypothetical proto-Ga-Adangbe language."*

The origin of the Ga-Adangbe people is mythical and full of speculations. Reindorf maintains that Ga originated from Benin. Reindorf, as cited in Odotei (2010), records two traditional accounts of origin. One claims that Ga originated from the sea, and the other, that they emigrated together with the Adangbe, from Tetetutu or Sameh in the east. History has it that they came from between two large rivers and that after crossing the Volta, they dispersed over the country. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, Ga Mashi, Nungua and Tema had territories that stretched from inland to the coast. Ga Mashi shared a boundary with Awutu in the west and Nungua in the east. Nungua also shared the eastern boundary with Tema (De Marees, 1602). The seventeenth century was also the period when the last of the Ga towns, Labadi, Osu and Teshi, was founded on the coast. Of these groups, the first to leave the Adanme were the Las. Their town, which was situated on the hill, Ladoku, was an important industrial and trading centre. La was famous for the weaving of a coarse cotton cloth considered in those days to be excellent attire and worn by men of high rank.

The settlement of Ga in the Accra plains led to changes in their socio-political organization. According to tradition, before the arrival of Ga, there were people who had already established scattered settlements on the Accra plains. The kingdom of Accra, therefore, comprised an economically mixed population of farmers, fishermen, salt-

makers, traders and blacksmiths. These traders carried European manufactured goods, salt and fish to the interior and sold them in exchange for gold and slaves. In effect, the booming economic activities in Accra attracted scores of people from different geographical regions with different indigenous languages which will eventually push away the Ga-Dangme language.

4.2 Causes of Language Extinction

Language endangerment can be caused by external factors such as military, economic, religious, or cultural, or it may be a result of internal factors, such as a community's poor attitude towards its own language. Many indigenous people, associating their disadvantaged social position with their culture, have come to believe that their language is not worth retaining. They abandon their languages and cultures due to discrimination by the majority group, to secure a livelihood, and enhance social mobility.

According to Hale (1998), language extinction results in the irrecoverable loss of unique cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge. Each language is a unique expression of the human experience of the world. Thus, the knowledge of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions of the future. Thus, speakers of these languages may experience the loss of their language as loss of their original ethnic and cultural identity (Bernard, 1992).

4.3 Factors Leading to the Extinction of the Ga-Dangme Language

Linguists estimate that we are living in a time of mass language extinction, with a language going extinct every two weeks. According to the UNESCO Atlas of Languages in Danger, at least 43% of the estimated 6,000 languages spoken in the world are endangered while 3.8% are extinct since 1950. It is sad to say that, in many cases, these disappearing languages belong to indigenous people. According to Mona Rishmawi (Chief of the rule of law, equality and non-discrimination branch of UN Human Rights, 2019):

"Losing these languages means losing a great part of our human heritage, because languages are the means through which cultures, knowledge, and traditions are preserved and transmitted between generations".

Despite the immense value of indigenous languages in promoting cultural awareness and diversity, languages around the world continue to disappear at an alarming rate. According to Hoffman (1999), bilingualism, which is the first step in language shift, occurs when a linguistic community does not maintain its language but gradually adopts a new one. He argues that language maintenance succeeds only when a community makes a conscious effort to keep the language they have always used. Per this argument, one could say that quite a number of African communities are facing a situation of language shift which could lead to language loss.

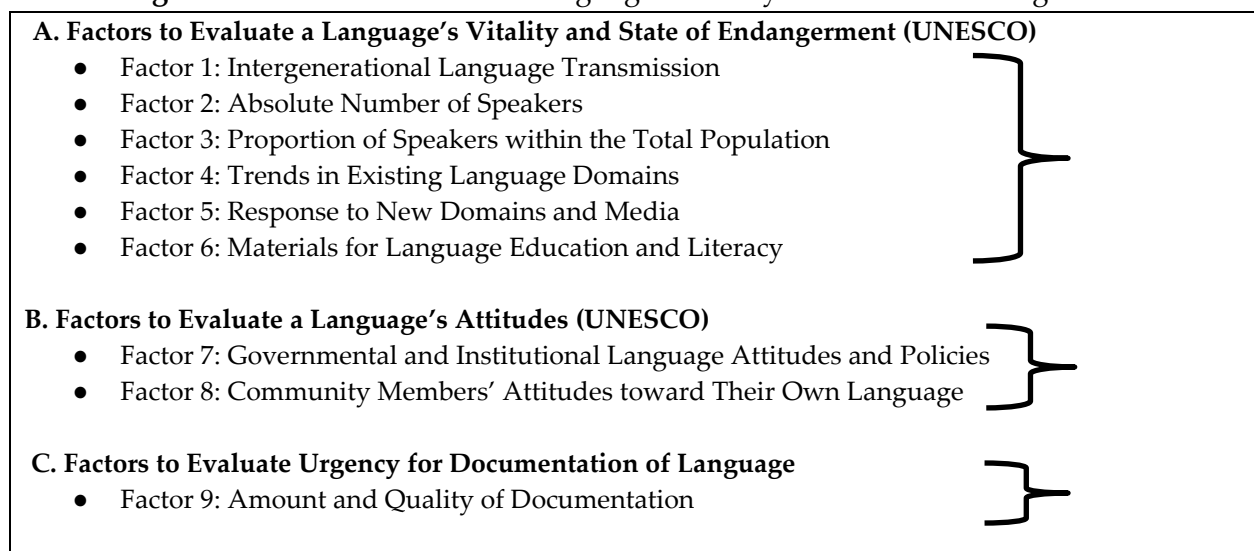
A study conducted by Akpanglo-Nartey and Akpanglo-Nartey (2012), established that two languages, namely, Ghanaian English (GhE) and Akan, especially the Twi

dialect, and to a small degree, Ewe, are slowly killing off the smaller Ghanaian languages. For instance, in 1970 almost all Winneba natives spoke Efutu (Ewutu) as their first language. By 2010, forty (40) years later, only approximately 50% of children born to the Winneba natives speak Efutu as a first language. Akpanglo-Nartey and Akpanglo-Nartey (2012) noted that about 30% of these children speak no Efutu at all. Interestingly, medium-sized languages such as Ga- Dangme and Nzema are also slowly losing grounds. Apart from English language, which is considered as an ‘elite’, Akan (Akuapem, Asante, Fante, Akyem, and Bono) is the second dominating indigenous language spoken by most people, especially in urban centres. For example, the 2010 Census reports showed a percentage increase in the number of Akan-speaking population from (43%) to (47.5%), followed by the Mole Dagbani (16.6%), the Ewe (13.9%) and Ga-Dangme (7.4%) with Mande forming the smallest ethnic group with (1.1%) (2010 Population Census of Ghana). The literature review points to the fact that languages such as English, Akan, Ewe and other indigenous languages are posing a threat to the Ga-Dangme Language which serves as the basis for this investigation.

4.4 Theoretical Framework

The researchers used UNESCO Language Vitality & Endangerment Assessment Tool (2003) to assess the extent of the threat done to the Ga-Dangme language. In the caveat issued by the Language Vitality Endangerment and Committee of UNESCO (2003), it is stated that “no single factor alone can be used to assess a language’s vitality or its need for documentation.” Language communities are complex and diverse therefore, the committee proposed six factors to evaluate a language’s vitality and state of endangerment, two factors to assess language attitudes, and one factor to evaluate the urgency for documentation. Taken together, these nine factors are especially useful for characterizing a language’s overall sociolinguistic situation. These factors are shown below:

Figure 1: Factors to Evaluate a Language’s Vitality and State of Endangerment



Note: Adapted from UNESCO Language Vitality & Endangerment Assessment Tool (2003).

5. Methodology

Out of these nine (9) factors outlined by UNESCO Language Vitality & Endangerment Assessment Tool (2003), five (5) of the factors were used by the researchers to assess the vitality and extent of endangerment of the Ga-Dangme language alongside English and Akan. The researchers' decision to assess Ga-Dangme alongside Akan and English was based on the fact that these two languages are widely used by majority of the Ghanaian population in most social and formal functions. The researchers selected three languages (English, Akan and Ga-Dangme) and ranked them on a continuum from stability to extinction with the purpose of determining the extent of endangerment. The scale used is rated as follows: [5. Safe], [4. Unsafe], [3. Definitely Endangered], [2. Severely Endangered], [1. critically Endangered], [0. Extinct].

The results were then analysed qualitatively. The assessment was done based on these five factors:

- ✓ Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission;
- ✓ Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population;
- ✓ Factor 4: Trends in Existing Language Domains;
- ✓ Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media;
- ✓ Factor 8: Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language.

The assessment was carried out by the researchers based on the above five criteria outlined by UNESCO on language vitality and endangerment. The assessment was done in tables as follows:

Table 1: [Factor 1] Intergenerational Language Transmission

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Speaker population	English	Akan	Ga-Dangme
Safe	5	The language is used by all ages, from children up.		✓	
Unsafe	4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.	✓		
Definitely Endangered	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.			✓
Severely Endangered	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.			
Critically Endangered	1	The language is used mostly by very few speakers, of the great-grandparental generation			
Extinct	0	There exists no speaker.			

According to Fishman (1991), the most commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next. Endangerment can be ranked on a continuum from stability to extinction. Results from table 1 indicate that the Akan Language is 'safe' because it was graded 5 which means, it is used by all ages from children up. The English language was graded 4 (unsafe) since

the language is used by some children in all domains. On the other hand, Ga-Dangme scored 3 indicating that it is definitely endangered since the language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.

According to UNESCO Language Vitality & Endangerment Assessment Tool (2003), a language is 'definitely endangered' if *"that language is no longer being learned as the mother tongue by children in the home. The youngest speakers are thus of the parental generation. At this stage, parents may still speak their language to their children, but their children do not typically respond in the language."* Going by this assessment, one can conclude that Ga-Dangme Language is 'definitely endangered' while the English language is 'unsafe' in Ghana because it does not have many native speakers. However, Akan is 'safe' because it was ranked high with a grade of 5. Akan is also used by all ages, from children up.

Table 2: [Factor 3] Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Proportion of Speakers Within the Total Reference Population	English	Akan	Ga-Dangme
Safe	5	All speak the language			
Unsafe	4	Nearly all speak the language.			
Definitely Endangered	3	A majority speak the language.	√	√	
Severely Endangered	2	A minority speak the language.			
Critically Endangered	1	Very few speak the language.			√
Extinct	0	None speak the language.			

The number of speakers in relation to the total population of a group is a significant indicator of language vitality, where "group" may refer to the ethnic, religious, regional, or national group with which the speaker community identifies. The following scale was used to appraise degrees of endangerment of English, Akan and Ga-Dangme as shown in Table 2. The results showed that the majority of people in Ghana speak either English or Akan. However, very few people speak Ga-Dangme even though that is the language of the ethnic group residing in the capital of Ghana, Accra. Based on the proportion of speakers within the total population, one could say that Ga-Dangme is 'critically endangered'.

Table 3: [Factor 4] Trends in Existing Language Domains

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Domains and Functions	English	Akan	Ga-Dangme
Universal Use	5	The language is used in all domains and for all functions.			
Multilingual Parity	4	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.	√	√	
Dwindling Domains	3	The language is in-home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.			

Limited or Formal Domains Endangered	2	The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions.			
Highly Limited Domains	1	The language is used only in a very restricted domain and for a very few functions.			√
Extinct	0	The language is not used in any domain and for any function.			

Table 3 was used to access the domains and functions of the three languages under study. The results showed that both English and Akan demonstrated ‘multilingual parity’ as against the Ga-Dangme language which was used in ‘highly limited domains’. The results further showed that most people in Ghana use both English and Akan in most social and public domains and for most functions. The same cannot be said of Ga-Dangme which is used in very restricted domains and for very few social functions.

UNESCO Language Vitality & Endangerment Assessment Tool (2003) explains **Multilingual Parity** as a situation where one or more dominant languages, rather than the language of the ethno-linguistic group, is/are the primary language(s) in most official domains: government, public offices, and educational institutions. The language in question, however, may well continue to be integral to a number of public domains, such as in traditional religious institutions and those places where members of the community meet and socialise. The co-existence of the dominant and non-dominant languages results in speakers’ using each language for a different function (diglossia), whereby the non-dominant language is used in informal and home contexts and the dominant language is used in official and public contexts. Speakers may consider the dominant language to be the language of social and economic opportunity. However, older members of the community may continue to use only their own minority language as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 4: [Factor 5] Response to New Domains and Media

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Domains and Functions	English	Akan	Ga-Dangme
Dynamic	5	The language is used in all new domains.			
Robust/Active	4	The language is used in most new domains.	√	√	
Receptive	3	The language is used in many domains.			
Coping	2	The language is used in some new domains.			
Minimal	1	The language is used only in a few new domains.			√
Inactive	0	The language is not used in any new domains.			

Table 4 was used to assess how the three languages under study respond to new domains and media. The results revealed that both English and Akan are used in most domains and are, therefore, 'robust and active'. Conversely, the Ga-Dangme language was used in only a few new domains in the media.

The vitality of any language is determined by how it is used in many domains. As new situations emerge in the community, new areas for language use may emerge as well. While some language communities do succeed in expanding their own language into the new domain, most do not. Factors such as schools, new work environments, new media, new technology, pandemic situations and many others usually serve only to expand the scope and power of the dominant language at the expense of endangered languages. Consequently, if the communities do not meet the challenges of modernity with their language, it becomes increasingly irrelevant and stigmatized which eventually leads to language loss.

Table 5: [Factor 8] Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Community Members' Attitudes toward Language	English	Akan	Ga-Dangme
Safe	5	All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.		√	
Unsafe	4	Most members support language maintenance.			
Definitely Endangered	3	Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.			
Severely Endangered	2	Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.			√
Critically Endangered	1	Only a few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss			
Extinct	0	No one cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.			

Table 5 was used to assess the degree of endangerment based on the attitude of the community members toward their own language. The researchers did not assess the English language with the above criterion since English is not the native language of most Ghanaians. However, the comparison was done between Akan and Ga-Dangme. The results showed that, while all members in the Akan community value their language and wish to see it promoted, the same could not be said of the Ga-Dangme community. It was observed that while some members support language maintenance, others are indifferent about their own language and rather encourage the use of English in their homes. One

interesting result is that all Ghanaians have a highly positive attitude toward the English language even though English is not a native language of Ghanaians.

6. Discussion

The researchers used qualitative content analysis for the discussion based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the causes of language loss in Ga-Dangme?

The results indicated that there are so many factors responsible for the 'suffocation' of the Ga-Dangme Language. These factors include:

a. Higher Educational Institutions located on Ga-Dangme Lands

As far as the Ga language is concerned, the pressure from non-Ga-speaking immigrant families is quite alarming. In fact, there are non-Ga-speaking tenants in almost every household in Greater Accra. Akpanglo-Nartey and Akpanglo-Nartey (2012) made a stunning revelation in their research on some endangered indigenous languages in Ghana. Data collected from the Dangme communities showed that only two generations ago, everybody in the Dangme communities acquired Dangme as a first language. However, the situation is gradually changing such that about one generation ago 88.5% of Dawhenya, 81.8% of Ningo, and 92% of Kasseh spoke Dangme as their first language (L1). Currently, there are only 78% of Dawhenya, 88.5% of Ningo and 85% of Kasseh acquired Dangme as a first language. The current trends in language acquisition are a clear indication that the Ga-Dangme language is gradually leading to a language shift which may eventually lead to extinction if nothing is done to salvage the situation. There is no doubt that Ga and Dangme are both losing grounds to Akan, Ewe, English and Hausa as a result higher educational institutions. In Dawhenya, for example, a major university called Central University has been located within farm settlers. With the establishment of the campus came an invasion of many non-Ga-Dangme speakers into the community. The majority of these newcomers are Akan-speaking followed by Ewe speakers posing a greater threat to the Ga-Dangme language.

b. Ghana's Language Policy on Education

Inconsistent Language Policy on education is a factor leading to the gradual extinction of the Ga-Dangme language. A few years ago, each child who entered school was for the first three years taught in his "native" language, with English as a subject on the school timetable. However, this situation has changed. The Government of Ghana has decided to use English as the medium of instruction, along with the child's L1, right from Primary One; while from primary four, English becomes the only medium of instruction. It is said that this new language policy of Ghana aims to alienate the Ghanaian child from its cultural heritage which is detrimental to indigenous culture and its language. The current situation in Ghana may be likened to what linguists refer to as forced assimilation. The Bureau of Ghana Languages, a government agency charged with the responsibility for the preparation of local language literature, basically for use in schools and also for the

general public, has devised orthographies for ten of these languages namely Akan, Ewe, Ga, Nzema, Dagbani, Kasem, Gurenne, Dagare, Dangbe, and Gonja. However, not many books were written in Ga-Dangme. The majority of these books were written in Akan and in Ewe languages.

c. Poor Attitude of Parents towards Indigenous Languages

The attitude of parents to the use of the mother tongue has also not been encouraging as most parents prefer that the child starts with the English language, so the schools are made to do so by writing boldly on the walls of most Ghanaian schools that 'speak English'. It is also not out of place to find children spoken to in the English language from birth by the parents at the expense of the Ga-Dangme Language. The English language, therefore, becomes the first language of most children, especially in major cities. Similarly, it is the language that every student is expected to pass at every level of the educational ladder to confirm their brilliancy. Early Ghanaian newspapers were launched and widely read during the colonial era when the English language was the language of administration and print. This has therefore been continued as the language of wider communication. Currently, there is no known newspaper or magazine that has been written in indigenous languages and this has been the trend since then. Similarly, English is the language of advertisement in print and most electronic media neglect the Ga-Dangme language.

d. Proliferation of Akan and English FM and TV Stations in Accra

On the media front, however, there seems to be a conscious effort in promoting the indigenous languages as well as the Ga-Dangme language. For instance, the National Media Commission (NMC) has registered quite a number of indigenous radio stations, where entertainment, sport and issues of national interests are discussed in the main indigenous languages of the various ethnic groups. Some of these stations include: Adom FM, Ogbonu FM, Peace FM and UTV. These radio and TV stations host programs where they educate their audience on the culture of the people of Ghana. It appears that, upon all the numerous TV and radio stations dotted across Accra and Tema, Ogbonu FM is known to be the only major radio station dedicated to promoting the Ga-Dangme Language. It hosts its programs in Ga and promotes the culture of the Ga people, whereas the rest of the stations use either Akan or English on their stations. This is another reason why the Ga-Dangme Language is facing extinction.

e. Urbanization, Socio-Economic Factors and Job Transfers

Finally, other reasons such as urbanization, job transfers and socio-economic factors also hinder the growth of the Ga-Dangme language. Batibo (2005) lists demographic superiority, socio-economic attraction, political dominance and cultural forces among the causes of language shift in Africa. There has been a mass movement of Akans to non-Akan-speaking areas like the Greater Accra Region for business and commerce, and this has led to the 'submergence' of the non-Akans. Also, language suppression in forced assimilation is common in the Akan-speaking areas where non-Akans (who move from

urban areas to the Akan communities in search of jobs, fertile lands, gold and other precious minerals) are 'forced' to speak Akan because of the reluctance of the Akans to learn the languages of the immigrants.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of damage done to Ga-Dangme?

When Ga-Dangme was assessed alongside English and Akan, the researchers discovered that the Ga-Dangme language is 'definitely endangered'. Analyses in tables 1-5 showed that both English and Akan were graded high on the Language Vitality and Endangered Tool. On the other hand, Ga-Dangme scored the least marks in all the five factors used by the researchers to assess the three languages under study. These are the results of Ga-Dangme:

- The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
- Very few speak the language.
- The language is used only in a very restricted domain and for a very few functions.
- The language is used only in a few new domains.
- Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.

Based on the above revelations, the researchers can confidently state that Ga-Dangme is 'definitely endangered' and that something needs to be done to salvage it from further loss.

Research Question 3: What can be done to save Ga-Dangme from extinction?

The value of the indigenous languages, as well as English, in our lives, is unquestionable; therefore, both mediums of communication should be given the necessary attention across the educational system and in the overall developmental agenda of the nation (Boadi, 1994; Andoh-Kumi, 1999). It is a fact that the loss of a language ultimately affects an individual's social and cultural identity as well as the linguistic heritage of the community. There is therefore the need to save the Ga-Dangme language from extinction. To achieve this goal, the researchers have suggested the following measures:

a. Robust Language Policy

To start with, the government of Ghana needs to develop a language policy that vigorously and effectively promotes Ghanaian indigenous languages, especially Ga-Dangme, in all schools, and makes the learning of Ga-Dangme compulsory in all schools located on Ga stool lands. Generally speaking, a lot of effort is being made to promote the use of indigenous languages already. This cuts across music (Adani Best), short TV series in Ga-Dangme, advertising, internet, telecommunication and others. According to the World Bank report of 31 January 1992, the use of indigenous languages at, least at the primary level, may promote learning of science and related subjects. To achieve this, there should be a review of the National Policy on Education advocacy for the compulsory teaching of indigenous languages from primary school to the junior secondary school

level. Parents should ensure that their children attain a level of maturity before enrolling the child in school.

b. Good Parental Attitude toward Ga-Dangme Language

Again, parents are advised to speak their mother tongues to their children and encourage the use of the language at home. Failure to do so gives rise to language attrition because these children will gradually forget their mother tongue. In fact, parents should be enlightened on the advantages of speaking the Ga-Dangme language to their children as their first language. Indeed, *"it is a fundamental right to speak your own language and use it to express your identity, your culture and your history". "For indigenous peoples, it lets us communicate our philosophies and our rights as they are within us, and have been for our people"* (Wyatt, 2019). It is therefore important to note that, the survival of the Ga-Dangme language depends largely on the will of the community. We must therefore develop a positive attitude towards the Ga-Dangme language and take total ownership and make every conscious effort to promote its usage in all spheres of our daily lives. Likewise, schools in Accra should be advised to stop punishing students for speaking "vernacular in school".

c. Public Education and the Use of Modern Technology in Promoting Ga-Dangme

In addition, conferences, workshops and publications should be organized by the Ga-Dangme communities to find ways of revitalizing the Ga-Dangme language. Ga elites should write and publish books in the language and encourage the youth to read these materials. Equally important is the use of modern technology in promoting the Ga-Dangme language. For instance, the Ga-Dangme language could be recorded and taught, using modern technology facilities such as the media; print and electronics, etc. Therefore, well-meaning Ga people should consider setting up more FM and TV stations in Accra and its environs to promote the Ga-Dangme language.

d. Cultural Awareness

Finally, a conscious effort must be made to use the Ga-Dangme language in the cultural and religious practices of the people. The Ga-Dangmes have a beautiful culture in terms of festivals, songs, dance, puberty rites, marriages as well as other religious practices. These cultural forms should be re-introduced to encourage the younger generation to cultivate an interest in the language. Equally important is the fact that Christians and Ga Muslims could also start preaching their sermons by using the Ga-Dangme language.

7. Conclusion

This corroborative study investigated the Ga-Dangme Language which is spoken by the natives of Accra and its environs. The paper tried to investigate the factors that are responsible for the gradual extinction of the once vibrant Ga-Dangme Language that immigrants aspired to learn so that they could boast of as 'been to Accra', the capital of Ghana. A critical assessment between Ga-Dangme and alongside Akan and English

revealed that the Ga-Dangme language is gradually succumbing to Akan and English. It was also found that the closer a language community is to the major urban centers, the more likely it is to be endangered. It is further concluded that the language policy of Ghana is contributing to the loss of Ghanaian languages, especially Ga-Dangme. Other factors responsible for the gradual extinction of the Ga-Dangme language include: the location of higher educational institutions on Ga lands, urbanization, and the proliferation of both electronic and print media, most of which use English and Akan as a medium of communication. The poor attitude of most Ga-Dangme parents to speaking their language to their children at home is also a hindrance. In effect, the death of a language is ultimately the total extermination of its people as well their cultural heritage. With Greater Accra being the seat of government, it becomes paramount that the language of the natives (Ga-Dangme) must duly be preserved for posterity.

7.1 Recommendations

One of our basic responsibilities as humans is to ensure that no languages will disappear and that all languages will be maintained and perpetuated for future generations. The study, therefore, argues for a fairly stable Language Policy on education that will foster the promotion of indigenous languages, specifically the Ga-Dangme language. Parents are also urged to speak their rich Ga-Dangme language to their children at home and promote the rich culture of the Ga-Dangme people. Again, people must engage in meaningful contemporary roles including the use of these indigenous languages in everyday life, commerce, education, writing, the arts, and the media platforms. Economic and political support by both local communities and national governments is needed to save indigenous languages from extinction.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors of this research declare no conflict of interest as far as this research is concerned.

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