A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MULTILINGUALISM AND LANGUAGE USE IN TWO BORDER TOWNS IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This comparative study explores multilingualism and language use in (Ekiti-East) Omuo and Saki communities, Southwest Nigeria, utilizing a questionnaire-based approach within the Domain of Language Behaviour framework. The research reveals that while both border towns exhibit societal multilingualism, their language situations have distinct differences. Omuo's (Ekiti-East) indigenous are severely endangered, whereas Saki's heritage language remains relatively resilient despite external influences from neighboring countries. The study highlights the complex dynamics of language use in multilingual settings, where languages may expand or contract depending on various factors. In Saki, Yoruba has expanded its use across various domains, while in Omuo (Ekiti-East), the local dialects/languages are struggling to survive. The findings underscore the importance of understanding language shift and endangerment in multilingual communities. The research has significant implications for language preservation and revitalization. Given the threat of language extinction, it is essential to develop strategies to promote linguistic diversity. The study recommends language revitalization efforts, such as documentation, education, and community engagement, to preserve the linguistic heritage of endangered languages. This study contributes to our understanding of multilingualism and language use in Nigerian border towns. The findings can inform language policy and planning initiatives aimed at promoting linguistic diversity and preserving cultural heritage.

Keywords: bilingualism, multilingualism, language situation, language shift and maintenance, domain

1. Introduction

Language situation varies from one community to another. The term "language situation" includes the number of languages in use in a community, the preferred language by the members of a community in different domains and the roles or functions of a language in a community. There are communities where only one language is recognised. Such communities

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are referred to as monolingual communities. However, in some communities where more than one language is recognised; they are called bilingual or multilingual communities. In practical terms, many scholars have argued that total monolingualism does not exist in any country because bilingualism and multilingualism are common phenomena in many countries of the world. A monolingual country exists in principle, but not in practice, because it is difficult to find a country where all the dwellers speak only one language, considering the immigrants who live in such countries. Although there are countries where only one language is recognised, in such countries, there are people who speak more than one language. The focus of this study, however, is to juxtapose multilingualism and the pattern of language use in Ekiti-East (an inter-state border town) with multilingualism and the pattern of language use in Saki (an international border town). These two border towns are located in the Southwest of Nigeria.

Multilingualism arises out of a language contact situation. It is the use of more than two languages by an individual or a society. Multilingualism is the ability of an individual to speak more than two languages, and it exists in a society where different languages are in use because of language contact situations. In a multilingual nation, people speak their first language, another local or regional language, the national language or an ex-colonial language such as English or French. The pattern of multilingualism is a complex one; as such, it is studied from different perspectives in different disciplines such as linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and education.

According to Adegbija (2004, p.62), "*Language potency and prestige, particularly in a multilingual context, are directly related to language functions*". He further posits that in a multilingual situation such as Nigeria, where we have over four hundred languages, variety in functional manifestation at several hierarchical levels of administration is the key to the appreciation of language existence by members of a particular society. This is what is referred to as language use. One of the keys to the study of societal multilingualism is language use. The study of language use in a multilingual society should reveal the role assigned to each of the languages whenever languages come into contact. It refers to a situation where members of a speech community try to keep a language the way it has always been used despite linguistic challenges emerging from a multilingual convergence (Adams, Matu, Ongarora, 2012, p.99).

This study sets out to conduct a comparative study of multilingualism and language use in two selected border towns in Southwest Nigeria, with the view to showing the areas of divergence and convergence in the pattern of language use of the two communities. This research will shed light on the number of languages in use in Omuo (Ekiti-East) and Saki in order to establish that border towns are largely multilingual communities and compare the implications of the pattern of language use on native languages in these border areas despite their contact with new languages. It will show the ethno-linguistic vitality or otherwise of the indigenous languages despite the influx of several languages, especially foreign ones, into the border towns under study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Multilingualism

There are many definitions of multilingualism. For example, Li (2008, p.4) defines a multilingual individual as anyone who can communicate in more than one language, be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading). The European Commission (2007, p.6), defines multilingualism as "*the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives*". Bloomfield (1933, p.56) defines a "*multilingual individual as an individual who possesses native-like control of two or more languages*". Agbedo (2007, p.12), citing Fasold (1984, p.9) identifies four kinds of historical patterns that can lead to societal multilingualism, namely:

1) **Migration:** This simply refers to the movement of people from one community to another. Whatever the cause, the movement of people also means the movement of language. This is because language and the society that uses it are inseparable. Immigrant languages are common in many countries of the world, and the percentage of immigrants according to Graddol (2006, p.8) reaches approximately 3% of the world population. When people migrate to a new speech community, their languages come into contact with those of the existing population.

2) **Border Area:** This is another reason for multilingualism. Every nation or state is expected to have a definite geographical boundary. Wherever these borders exist, there are people from different countries or ethnic backgrounds who reside in the border town for various purposes. Many scholars have argued that multilingualism is commonly observed in border areas, and such areas are found worldwide.

3) **Imperialism:** Another origin of multilingualism is imperialism. This happens when the control of a particular state or nation is taken over by some people, often referred to as imperialists or colonialists. When a country colonises another country, it forces its language on the people. Their language gradually becomes the language of the government, education, media and other official domains. This is the case with Nigeria, where up till the time of this research, the language of the imperialist is still in use as the official language, not only that, it is also in use at the home domain.

4) **Federation:** Multilingualism may develop through federation. This is a situation where people from different ethnic groups come together under the umbrella or political control of one state. When this happens, bilingualism or multilingualism may result. This is the case with multilingual countries such as Switzerland (German, French, Italian, and Romansh), Belgium (French and Flemish), Cameroon (French, German, English, and indigenous languages), and Nigeria (English, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Kanuri, Fulfulde, etc.).

2.2 Language Shift, Endangerment and Maintenance

Language shift and maintenance are predominantly by-products of a language contact situation. They both can occur in a bilingual/multilingual environment. According to Fishman (1991), "*Language shift is a situation where a population gives up their heritage language for another language*

which becomes their vernacular language." It is a situation in which a new language replaces an old one in a society.

Language shift is an inevitable linguistic phenomenon. When a community moves to another community, there is a tendency for them to shift to the language of the new community they have migrated into, sometimes because of various reasons. Fishman (1991, p.23) defines it as a "*process whereby intergenerational continuity of the heritage language is proceeding negatively, with fewer 'speakers, readers, writers, and even understanders' in every generation*". Language shift is motivated by factors which may be cultural, psychological, historical, or social. Language shift gradually proceeds from domain to domain. Once the domain of the home has been affected, a language becomes endangered. When two or more languages operate simultaneously in one society for a longer period, one language group may be compelled to abandon their language and use another's. If one language is eventually replaced by a new one, then there is language death.

According to UNESCO (2003), "*a language is endangered when it is on the path towards extinction*". It is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next (Wamalwa and Oluoch, 2013). Ibrahim and Samalia (2021) rightly opine that "*a language is endangered when it is on the path to extinction or when it is under threats of different kinds such that its chances of survival are put at stake*". UNESCO (2003) listed nine factors for determining language vitality or language endangerment. Six of the factors 1-6 evaluate a language's vitality and state of endangerment, while 7-8 assess language attitude. The scales are presented below:

1) Intergenerational language transmission: When a language is transmitted by parents to their children, that language is safe but if on the other hand, parents refuse to transmit their language to their children in a speech community and as a result the language is used by some children in limited domains the language is unsafe. But if a language is used mostly by parents, that language is endangered. If a language is used by very few speakers of a great parental generation, that language is severely endangered.

2) Absolute number of speakers: This refers to the total number of speakers

3) Proportion of speakers existing within the total (global) population: It refers to the total number of speakers in the community in comparison to other languages in use in that community.

4) Language use within existing contexts and domains: It refers to language use in different domains

5) Response to language use in new domains and media

6) Availability of materials for language education and literacy: This refers to the use of language in education.

7) Government and institutional language policies

8) Community attitudes toward their language: This refers to people's attitudes toward the language in question. If members of a community view the language as a means of identity, they will promote it.

9) Amount and quality of documentation: a language with well-documented, transcribed, translated and analysed material is safer than one that lacks them.

According to UNESCO (2003), "*a stable but yet endangered language is spoken in most contexts by all generations with unbroken intergenerational transmission, yet multilingualism in the native language and one or more dominant language(s) has usurped certain important communication contexts*". Various yardsticks have been proposed for determining an endangerment situation, among which are: population, domination by a more powerful language and/or lack of adequate description of such a language (Bamgbose, 1976; Fakuade, 1999). Again, Fabunmi and Salawu (2005, p.305) identify five-level models of language status, namely: potentially endangered, endangered, seriously endangered, moribund, and extinct. They believe that any language that goes beyond the boundary of a potentially endangered or endangered language is already an endangered language. According to them, "*the largeness of the percentage of the speakers of a language (Yoruba) cannot stop its supplantive moves*". However, Oyetade (2007) still agree that, "*Yoruba is the language of the immediate environment in Southwest Nigeria and it is constantly in use, although unofficially, even within the school system*" (Oyetade, 2007).

Moreover, "*Language like people may or may not succumb to onslaught from one another*" (Dada, Owoeye and Ojo 2015, p.38). A language may maintain its level of usage despite its contact with another language. The result of a language contact situation is not always predictable. Instead of a language shift, language maintenance may arise. Language maintenance refers to a situation in which a group of people tries to keep and continue to use a language they have always used, even in the face of the influx of new languages. According to Adams, Matu and Ongorora (2012, p.99), "*language maintenance refers to language-contact situations where a minority group continues to use its language even under conditions that might support a language shift*".

3. The Study Area

This study focuses on two border towns, Omuo (Ekiti-East) and Saki. The two towns are located in Nigeria. Saki is a cosmopolitan area located in Oyo State. Geographically, it is a border town, leading to another state in Nigeria and other countries such as the Republic of Benin, Ghana, and Togo. Saki shares a boundary with Ilesha-Baruba, which is located in Kwara State. It is about 40 miles (60 km) away from the Benin border. (Wikipedia 2019, p.1). As a matter of fact, Saki people and other Nigerians who cross the border mostly speak their languages everywhere across their border in everyday life. Thus, these languages: Yoruba, French, English, Bariba and other indigenous languages of Nigeria are considered living languages because they are widely spoken by the two communities. The languages in contact in Saki (Oyo State) are English, French, Yoruba, Bariba, Somba, Kotokoli and Tangita. The multiplicity of languages in the area is a result of migration and the fact that Saki shares a physical border with the Republic of Benin.

Research also shows that English and French are in use in Saki. The reason for this cannot be far-fetched as France colonised the Republic of Benin and imposed French on the people, just as Britain colonised Nigeria and imposed English on the people. The focus of this research work is on Saki in Oyo State. It is noteworthy to say that many languages are in contact in Saki. The researcher is, therefore, interested in discovering how the people have been able to preserve their local languages in the face of the influx of other languages into their community.

The other study area for this research work is Omuo (Ekiti-East). Geographically, Ekiti-East is located in the Eastern part of Ekiti State in the Western part of Nigeria. It shares a boundary with Ondo State and Kogi State. Ekiti-East is divided into two major groups. One part of the town is referred to as Omuooke, while the other part is called Omuoisale. Omuooke shares a border directly with Iyagba, a town located in Kogi state. As such, its language is more like the language spoken in Iyagba (Okun) because they share a physical border. Like other Southwest communities, Yoruba is the main language used in Omuo-Ekiti (Ekiti-East).

4. Statement of the Problem

Multilingualism has posed a great deal of problems within and outside the country. Thus, the study of multilingualism has attracted the attention of sociolinguists. Babatunde (2014, p.518) works on "Multilingualism across borders: Nigeria/Republic of Benin as case study", where he examines the incidence of multilingualism as a factor of language contact in the West Africa sub-region with a particular reference to the interdependence between Nigeria and the Benin Republic. He discovered that "*multilingualism across the frontiers of Nigeria and Benin had made some important positive changes on the culture and life of the inhabitants of these regions*". According to him, there are manifestations of linguistic borrowing and code-mixing in both countries. The study also reveals that the socio-cultural and economic contacts between the people living in the two countries have resulted in the overall development of these communities.

Despite the fact that some scholars have studied multilingualism in some border towns, locally and globally, yet, as rightly pointed out by Komondourous and McEntee-Atalianis (2007, p.98), "*it is difficult to generalise about the exact constellation of the causes of language shift, every language contact situation is unique and must be evaluated on the basis of its own characteristics and dynamics.*"

Meanwhile, the linguistic situation in a multilingual community cannot be predicted until an investigation is carried out. This study, therefore, sets out to conduct a comparative study of the linguistic situation in Ekiti-East and Saki with the aim of discovering the implications of the pattern of language use so as to find out the state of some languages, despite their overwhelming contact with other languages.

5. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:
1) Compare the number of languages in use or the language situation in the two communities in order to show that border towns are largely multilingual societies;
2) Compare the language use pattern in different domains of the two selected border towns and bring out its implications for language maintenance, shift or endangerment; and
3) Compare the pattern of language use at school (a formal domain) in the two selected border towns in order to suggest ideas that will help in formulating an appropriate and practicable National Language Policy.

6. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Domain of Language Behaviour. It emanated from Sociolinguistics. The theory was propounded by Fishman (1965, p.2), who stipulates that it is possible to have different language behaviour, depending on the topic, interlocutors and the settings. Although many works refer to Fishman as the source of the use of domain in sociolinguistic contexts, Fishman (1972, p.67) refers to Schmidt-Rohr, who in 1932 worked with expatriate Germans in multilingual environments, as the one who first spoke about domains. Schmidt-Rohr says there are nine domains of language, namely: the family, the street, the school (subdivided into language of instruction, subject of instruction, and language of recess and entertainment), the church, literature, the press, the military, the courts, and the governmental bureaucracy.

Fishman (1965, p.2) stresses that different divisions of the domain are needed for language and for different purposes. He defines domains as institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences. Domains are names for "*major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular multilingual settings*" (Fishman 1979, p.19). In 1972, Fishman mentions that this model seeks to elucidate who speaks what, to whom and when. The explanations show that the domain of language behaviour is relevant to the analysis of the topic under discussion since the topic seeks to compare the pattern of language use in different domains of the selected border towns, among other objectives. The researcher attempts to compare the language use pattern of Ekiti-East and Saki dwellers in the home, school, workplace, church and market. Questions were also asked based on respondents' topic of discussion at different occasions or settings. For example, an interlocutor may prefer to use his indigenous language in his workplace while discussing unofficial matters with his subordinate who is from his ethnic group. However, this same person may decide to use English while discussing an unofficial matter with someone who is not from his ethnic group. This affirms the words of Oyetade (1990b, p.89) who says an interlocutor uses whichever language is appropriate to the domain, topic and the expected pattern of behaviour.

7. Significance of the Study

The study will be a contribution to the data required for the study of sociolinguistic phenomena like language shift or maintenance, language death, language attitude, code-switching, diglossia, and so on. It will compare the occurrence of language maintenance, endangerment and shift in Ekiti-East and Saki despite the overwhelming influence of other languages in the two border towns. The study promises to reveal the state of the indigenous languages/dialects of Ekiti-East and Saki. This work will show how people have managed to maintain their language in the face of the influx of other languages into the communities. This study will help in sensitizing people about the importance of their language as a means of identity, which they must maintain. The result of this study will help in evaluating the impact of multilingualism and language contact on the development of indigenous languages in use in Ekiti-East and Saki in particular and in the nation at large.

8. Research Design and Methodology

The survey method was employed to get a descriptive analysis of the dynamics of multilingualism in the border towns under study. When multilingualism occurs, two or more languages are bound to influence one another; as a result, a number of changes can happen in the use/functions or structure of such languages. This study investigates a certain sociolinguistic phenomenon; the comparative study of the impact of multilingualism on language use and choice of the people of Ekiti-East and Saki. The reason for this is to understand the implications of multilingualism and the consequences of immigrant languages and indigenous ones existing together in the selected border towns.

As a survey-based study, a quantitative method is adopted for data analysis. For data collection, close-ended and open-ended questionnaires, which comprised two parts, were designed. A total number of 320 questionnaires were administered, but 300 copies were retrieved in Ekiti-East. Clearly, various ethnic groups constitute the population of Ekiti-East. As earlier mentioned, presently, Ekiti-East has seven different towns. All these towns were captured in this research because the researcher administered the questionnaires by dividing the towns according to the major demarcations, which are Omuooke and Omuoisale. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents so that every ethnic group and the language used at different settings would be well represented.

In addition, a total number of 1200 questionnaires were administered in Saki, but 1179 copies were retrieved. Presently, there are 3 local government areas in Saki; therefore, 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed in each of the local government areas.

9. Data Analysis

This section focuses on the presentation, analysis and discussion of data collected from Ekiti-East and Saki. The data were processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 version. The findings were presented in tables and analysed based on the responses of the respondents.

9.1 A Comparative Analysis of Multilingualism and Language Use in Two Border Towns: A Study of Ekiti-East and Saki

The sample in Ekiti-East is made up of 300 respondents. The table above presents the socio-demographic features of the respondents in both study areas. The table shows that 171 (57%) of the total number of respondents were males and 129 (43%) were females in Ekiti-East. Similarly, the result from Saki shows that out of the 1179 questionnaires, 635 (53.9%) were males while 544 (46.1%) were females. This result shows that we have a higher number of males in both areas. The ratio of males to females is almost the same. It further shows that both males and females enjoy equal opportunities since they are both seen in offices and schools.

Table 1: The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in Ekiti-East and Saki

Demographic variables	Ekiti-East		Saki	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Male	171	57.0	635	53.9
Female	129	43.0	544	46.1
Age				
Below 15	32	10.7	192	16.3
15-20	64	21.3	300	25.4
21-35	72	24.0	353	29.9
36-50	54	18.0	318	27.0
Above 50	78	26.0	16	1.4
Marital Status				
Married	180	60.0	815	69.1
Unmarried	112	37.3	357	30.3
Divorced	2	0.7	7	0.6
Widow	6	2.0		
Level of Education				
No education	18	6.0	309	26.2
Primary school	13	4.3	120	10.2
Secondary school	49	16.3	225	19.1
NCE	71	23.7	191	16.2
Polytechnic/university	149	49.7	334	28.3
Occupation				
Civil servant	56	18.7	320	27.1
Farmer	8	2.7	315	26.7
Business	38	12.7	112	9.5
Teacher	76	25.3	156	13.2
Student	102	34.0	276	23.4
Artisan	9	3.0		
Any other	11	3.7		

Again, distribution on the basis of age in the table above indicated that in Ekiti-East, 32 (10.7%) were below 15 years, 64 (21.3%) were between 15 and 20 years, 72 (24%) were between age 21-35, 54 (18%) were aged 36-50 years while 78 (26%) were above 50 years. Also, the distribution according to age in Saki showed that 192 (16.3%) respondents were below 15 years, 300 (25.4%) were between 15 -20 years, less than one-third of the study participants (n=353, 29.9%); representing the majority were aged 21-35 years, 318 (27%) and 16 (1.4%) were between 36-50 years and above 50 years respectively. This revealed that various age groups in the societies are well represented in our sample.

Furthermore, the marital status of the respondents from Saki showed that 160 (60%) were married, 112 (37.3%) considered themselves unmarried, while 2 (0.7%) and 6 (2%) were divorced and widowed, respectively. Correspondingly, in Saki, more than half of the respondents (n=815, 69.1%) were married, while 357(30.3%) and 7(0.6%) were unmarried and divorced, respectively. This revealed that our respondents consist of more married people who are in the best position to help us achieve the objectives of the study.

In addition, concerning the educational level of the respondents in Ekiti-East, table 1 reveals that about half (n=149, 49.7%) of the respondents had polytechnic/university education, 71 (23.5%) had NCE certificate, 49 (16.3%) and 13 (4.3%) were holders of secondary and primary school certificates while 18 (6%) had no formal education. Equally, more than one quarter of the respondents (n=334, 28.3%); representing the majority had polytechnic/university certificates, 309 (26.2%) had no formal education, 225 (19.1%) had school certificate while 191(16.2%) and 120 (10.2%) were NCE and primary school certificate holders respectively. This shows that the majority of our respondents are literate. However, it is important to note that a higher percentage of illiterate people were recorded in Saki (26.2%), whereas in Ekiti-East, we recorded only 6% for the number of illiterate people. The reason for this cannot be far-fetched, since the majority of the immigrants in Saki are either farmers or self-employed.

Table 2: The language background of the study participants

Items	Ekiti-East			Saki		
		N	%		N	%
How many language/languages do you speak altogether?	1-2	45	15.0	1-2	123	10.4
	3-4	242	80.7	3-4	697	59.1
	5+	13	4.3	5+	353	30.0
Which language do your children speak well apart from English?	Yoruba	161	53.7	French	23	2.8
	Omuo	91	30.3	Yoruba	533	64.8
	Omuooke	12	4.0	Bariba	101	12.3
	Ahan	35	11.7	Somba	5	0.6
	Other	2	0.7	Kotokoli	78	9.5
				Tangita	80	9.7
				Others	2	0.2
Which language/dialect dominates your neighbourhood?	Yoruba	77	25.7	Yoruba	790	67.0
	Omuo	142	47.3	Bariba	104	8.8
	Omuooke	30	10.0	Kotokoli	56	4.7
	Ahan	50	16.7	Tangita	50	4.2
	Other	1	0.3	English	179	15.2
Can you speak this language?	Yes	168	56.0	Yes	983	83.4
	No	132	44.0	No	196	16.6

The table above shows the number of languages spoken by the Ekiti-East study participants. More than three-quarters (n=242; 80.7%) indicated 3-4 languages, 45 (15%) reported 1-2 languages, while 13 (4.3%) spoke 5 languages or more. Similarly, concerning the number of languages spoken by the study participants from Saki, more than half (n=697; 59.1%) indicated 3-4 languages, 123 (10.4%) reported 1-2 languages, while 353 (30%) spoke more than 5 languages. This result affirmed that both border towns are multilingual communities.

Again, the majority of the respondents from Omuo (n=161, 53.7%) reported that their children could speak Yoruba well. More than one-third of the respondents (n=142; 47.3%) reported that Omuo was the predominant language/dialect in the neighbourhood. Again, more than half of the study participants (n=168; 56%) spoke Yoruba fluently. Equivalently, more than half of the respondents consistently reported Yoruba language as the language that is well-spoken by the children apart from English (n=533, 64.8%) and predominant language in use in

the neighbourhood (n=790, 67%). Considering the language background of the respondents from Omuo and Saki, Yoruba took the lead.

Table 3: The level of proficiency of children below 13 years
in speaking any of these languages in Omuo and Saki

		Poor	Fair	Good	Very good
Omuo	English	2 (1.1)	60 (32.8)	77 (42.1)	44 (24.0)
	Yoruba	5 (2.7)	25 (13.7)	52 (28.4)	101 (55.2)
	Omuo	20 (10.9)	32 (17.5)	49 (26.8)	82 (44.8)
	Omuooke	(55.5)	(24.2)	(10.4)	(9.9)
	Ahan	(60.2)	(14.8)	(14.2)	(10.8)
	Any other	(44.8)	(34.5)	(20.7)	
Saki	English	411 (34.9)	178 (15.1)	152 (12.9)	438 (37.2)
	French	461 (39.1)	234 (19.8)	218 (18.5)	266 (22.6)
	Yoruba	75 (6.3)	234 (19.8)	302 (25.6)	568 (48.2)
	Bariba	705 (59.8)	110 (9.3)	116 (9.8)	248 (21.0)
	Kotokoli	892 (75.7)	108 (9.2)	100 (8.5)	79 (6.7)
	Tangita	900 (76.3)	134 (11.4)	94 (8.0)	51 (4.3)
	Any other	610 (51.7)	214 (18.2)	111 (9.4)	244 (20.7)

Table 3 presents the level of proficiency of children below 13 years in speaking the selected languages in Omuo and Saki. The result showed that an appreciable proportion of the children below 15 years demonstrated high (n=77; 42.1%) and very high (n=44; 24%) levels of proficiency in speaking English in Omuo. Again, 101 (55.2%) of the participants demonstrated very good level of proficiency in speaking Yoruba, while 52 (28.4%) indicated a good level of proficiency in speaking the language. However, less than half of the total number of respondents, 82 (44.8) indicated very high proficiency in Ekiti-East. Also, there was a sharp decline in the level of proficiency of the respondents in speaking Omuooke (poor: 55.5%; fair: 24.2%), Ahan (poor: 60.2%; fair: 14.8%) and other languages (poor: 44.8%; fair: 24.5%). This result depicts that more than half of the respondents were not proficient in their in-group languages, most especially Omuooke/Yagba and Ahan languages/dialects. However, it is important to note that these dialects/languages are also included in the languages in use in Omuo, although they are gradually losing speakers among the younger generations. More than half of the respondents were poor speakers of Ahan and Omuooke.

Correspondingly, in the Saki community, more than one-third of the children below 15 years demonstrated very good (n=438, 37.2%) and good (n=152, 12.9%) levels of proficiency in speaking English. The results depict that English is the language of instruction in school for both communities. Just like the report from Omuo, 568 (48.2%) respondents demonstrated very good

level of proficiency in speaking Yoruba and 302 (25.6%) of the participants demonstrated a good level of proficiency in speaking the language. This shows that more than half of the total number of respondents are proficient speakers of Yoruba. It shows that the children are proficient speakers of the Yoruba language.

However, less than one-quarter, 234 (19.8%) and more than one-third, 461 (39.1%), indicated a fair and poor levels of proficiency in French, respectively. The majority of the study participants (n=705; 59.8%), 892 (75.7%), and 900 (76.3%) had a poor level of proficiency in speaking Bariba, Tangita and Kotokoli languages, respectively. The result revealed that English takes the lead in the level of proficiency among children below 15 years in Saki, while Yoruba follows. Similar to the result from Ekiti-East, children below 15 years are poor speakers of the immigrants' languages, such as Bariba, Tangita and Kotokoli.

Table 4: Mean Scores of the Domain of Language Use at Home in Ekiti-East and Saki

Ekiti-East					Saki				
Languages	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Languages**	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
English	300	579	1.9300	1.206	English	1179	3346	2.8380	0.088
Yoruba	300	1310	4.3667	1.323	French	1179	1485	1.2595	0.071
Omuo	300	1296	4.3200	3.849	Yoruba	1179	6100	5.1739	0.082
Omuooke	300	233	0.7767	1.559	Bariba	1179	1395	1.1832	0.076
Ahan	300	449	1.4967	1.106	Tangita	1179	771	0.6539	0.074
Others	300	34	0.1133	1.154	Kotokoli	1179	976	0.8278	0.078
					Somba	1179	46	0.0390	0.065
					Junkun	1179	66	0.0560	0.081

The table above presents a summary of the domain of language use at home in Omuo and Saki. The data on the pattern of language use at home by respondents from both study areas revealed that the home domain enjoys effective use of Yoruba with 4.3667 and 5.1739, respectively. However, while English took the second position at home in Saki, Omuo, which is the in-group dialect of Ekiti-East, people took the second position in Ekiti-East. Clearly, Yoruba and Omuo dominated the language use pattern at home in Ekiti-East, while Yoruba and English overshadowed all other languages at home in Saki. In addition, Yoruba, which is the indigenous language of the Saki people, took the lead in Saki. The overall dominance of the Yoruba language in both communities studied further confirmed it as the major language of the people.

Table 5: Mean Scores of Language Use in School Domain in Ekiti-East and Saki

Ekiti-East					Saki				
Languages	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Languages**	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
English	300	1495	4.9833	0.681	English	1179	4028	3.4165	0.035
Yoruba	300	1159	3.8633	0.987	French	1179	453	0.3842	0.039
Omuo	300	194	0.6467	0.641	Yoruba	1179	4016	2.1458	0.041
Omuooke	300	49	0.1633	1.011	Bariba	1179	317	0.2689	0.054
Ahan	300	97	0.3233	1.163	Tangita	1179	319	0.2706	0.045
Others	300	6	0.0200	0.748	Kotokoli	1179	271	0.2299	0.000

Somba	1179	0	0.0000	0.000
Junkun	1179	38	0.0322	0.016

In the table above, the mean score of language use for English in the school domain in Omuo and Saki is similar. In Ekiti-East, English overwhelmingly dominated the language use pattern with a 4.9833 mean score, closely followed by Yoruba with 3.8633. Similarly, in Saki, English overshadowed the language use pattern in the school domain with a 3.4165 score, also followed by Yoruba with a 2.1458 mean score. Next to English and Yoruba in the two areas of study are other languages in use in the communities. Unlike the similarities clearly displayed by the dominance of Yoruba and English in the two study areas, the differences lie in the reality that Yoruba is the out-group language of Ekiti-East dwellers. Other languages/dialects that were relegated to the background in the school domain were their in-group languages/dialects. Whereas, the natives of Saki have no in-group language (dialect), they speak only one language, which is Yoruba. This revealed a divergent result in the face of language maintenance, shift and endangerment. While the in-group languages of Ekiti-East were endangered because of the shift from their in-group language to English and Yoruba, the in-group language of Saki-Yoruba is maintained at school.

Table 6: Mean Scores of Language Use in the Religion Domain in Ekiti-East and Saki (Christianity)

Ekiti-East					Saki				
Languages	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Languages**	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
English	300	504	1.8195	0.677	English	484	357	0.7376	0.064
Yoruba	300	536	1.9350	0.565	Yoruba	484	800	1.6529	0.048
Omuo	300	33	0.1191	0.684	French	484	150	0.3099	0.064
Omuooke	300	3	0.0108	0.434	Tangita	484	64	0.1322	0.028
Ahan	300	4	0.0144	0.492	Bariba	484	44	0.0909	0.064
Others	300	0	0.0000	0.371	Kotokoli	484	72	0.1488	0.000
					Yoruba and Bariba	484	5	0.0103	0.004
					French and English	484	70	0.1446	0.121
					English and Yoruba	484	208	0.4298	0.004
					English and Hausa	484	4	0.0083	0.016
					Yoruba and Tangita	484	86	0.1777	0.064
					Yoruba and Kotokoli	484	4	0.0083	0.012
					English and Bariba	484	32	0.0661	0.107
					Junkun	484	7	0.0145	0.091

Table 6 above presents the summary of language use in the religious domain of Ekiti-East and Saki. In the church, Yoruba dominated the pattern of language use in both communities. This is closely followed by English language with 1.8195 and 0.7376 for Ekiti-East and Saki, respectively. The other languages were not so much in use. Hence, Yoruba dominated the language use pattern in the church.

Table 7: Mean Scores of Language Use in the Religion Domain in Ekiti-East and Saki (Islam)

Ekiti-East					Saki				
Languages	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Languages**	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
English	300	10	0.0333	0.870	English	690	348	0.5043	0.151
Yoruba	300	37	0.1233	0.684	Yoruba	690	1177	1.7058	0.156
Omuo	300	4	0.0133	0.434	French	690	134	0.1942	0.051
Omuooke	300	1	0.0033	0.122	Bariba	690	62	0.0899	0.000
Ahan	300	5	0.0167	0.114	Kotokoli	690	102	0.1478	0.003
Others	300	0	0.0000	0.262	Tangita	690	71	0.1029	0.000
					Arabic	690	120	0.1739	0.000
					Arabic and Yoruba	690	44	0.0638	0.011
					Junkun	690	12	0.0174	0.121

Table 7 presents the summary of the pattern of language use in mosques by Ekiti-East and Saki dwellers. In this domain, the use of Yoruba dominated the language use in various mosques in Ekiti-East and Saki with 0.1233 and 1.0000 mean scores, respectively. This shows that Yoruba is the dominant language use pattern in the mosque. Other languages were not so much in use in the mosque.

Table 8: Mean Scores of Language Ability and
Language Use in the Office Domain in Ekiti-East and Saki

Ekiti-East					Saki				
Languages	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Languages**	**N**	**Sum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
English	300	1918	9.7267	0.733	English	1179	9926	8.419	2.074
Yoruba	300	1521	5.0700	0.830	Yoruba	1179	5020	6.2578	0.022
Omuo	300	201	0.6700	0.752	French	1179	459	0.3893	0.014
Omuooke	300	34	0.1133	0.793	Bariba	1179	2599	2.2044	1.074
Ahan	300	123	0.4100	0.788	Somba	1179	68	0.0577	0.092
Others	300	3	0.0100	0.735	Tangita	1179	421	0.3571	0.063
					Kotokoli	1179	433	0.3673	0.066
					Junkun	1179	37	0.0314	0.060

Table 8 presents a summary of language use in the office domain of the two study areas. The summary of the office domain shows that English overshadowed all other languages in Ekiti-East and Saki with 9.7267 and 8.419, respectively. Similarly, Yoruba comes next in both areas with 5.0700 and 6.2578 mean scores, respectively. Other languages such as Omuo, Ahan and Iyagba (Omuooke), Tangita, Somba, Kotokoli, Junkun were relegated to the background in Ekiti-East and Saki. This result shows that the respondents recognised English and perhaps Yoruba as the language to be used for official matters.

Table 9: Mean Scores of Language Use in Market Domain in Ekiti-East and Saki

Ekiti-East					Saki				
Languages	N	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Languages	N	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
English	300	131	0.4367	0.902	English	1179	616	0.5225	0.212
Yoruba	300	290	0.9667	0.579	French	1179	128	0.1086	0.031
Omuo	300	128	0.4267	0.117	Yoruba	1179	1028	1.8719	0.059
Omuooke	300	0	0.0000	0.351	Bariba	1179	304	0.2578	0.022
Ahan	300	39	0.1300	0.012	Somba	1179	12	0.0102	0.002
Others	300	12	0.0400	0.214	Kotokoli	1179	124	0.1052	0.060
					Tangita	1179	135	0.1145	0.068
					Junkun	1179	11	0.0093	0.034

The table above clearly shows that the choice of Yoruba is predominantly glaring in every context, especially when discussing with people from other ethnic backgrounds. The result shows that Yoruba dominated the two study areas with 0.9667 and 1.8719 mean scores, respectively, in the market. Remarkably, Yoruba was closely followed by English in both study areas, even in Ekiti-East, where Omuo, the in-group language/dialect of the people, should lead. The result confirmed that Yoruba is firmly rooted in Omuo-Ekiti and Saki.

10. Discussion of Findings

The language situation in Ekiti-East and Saki has few similarities but is distinctive in so many ways. As earlier mentioned, the study compares multilingualism and language use in the two border towns. The first objective, which seeks to compare the number of languages in use in the two borders, was achieved as societal multilingualism was established in the two border towns. The findings showed that Ekiti-East is a multilingual environment, as more than half of the respondents confirmed that they spoke 3-4 languages. Similarly, our result on the investigation of the number of languages in use in Saki revealed that fewer than four languages were in use in Saki. This result affirmed that, in border areas (international or local), movement of people as well as their languages was a necessary factor for the emergence of societal multilingualism in the areas. As earlier mentioned, Agbedo (2007, p.12), citing Fasold (1984, p.9), identifies four kinds of historical patterns that can lead to societal multilingualism, namely: migration, imperialism, federalism and border area. The causative factors of multilingualism in the two border towns are migration and the border area. In Ekiti-East, for example, some of the dwellers migrated from Ile-Ife, some from Kogi State, while some migrated from Akoko in Ondo State. Similarly, the migrants in diaspora in Saki came from the Republic of Benin, Togo and Cameroon since Saki, as a border town, is closer to these countries than many other towns in Nigeria.

However, while all the migrants in Ekiti-East are from the same ethnic group and race, most of the immigrants in Saki are from diverse backgrounds. Traditionally, it is expected that people who are natives of a particular community should speak the same language, but in Ekiti-East, a different situation emerged as natives of Ekiti-East spoke different languages. Their in-group language showed that they were migrants who may have lost their ethnic identity but not their language. This revealed that language has an indelible imprint on a people and race. A

different situation occurred in Saki as the majority of the immigrants came from different nation(s), languages and cultural backgrounds. The immigrants in diaspora in Saki spoke a language totally different from Yoruba. They are also not natives of Saki. But in Ekiti-East, almost all the dialects/languages in use have been linked to Yoruba, except Ahan, since some scholars still believe that it is not a dialect of Yoruba. While the migrants in Ekiti-East are seen as Ekiti-East people since they have lost their identity, the immigrants in Saki have only learnt their host language, yet they have maintained their identity. We may conveniently imply that a process of acculturation is in place in Omuo (Ekiti-East) but not in Saki.

The second objective of the study seeks to compare the pattern of language use in different domains of the two selected border towns and bring out its implications for language maintenance, shift or endangerment. A careful consideration of the pattern of language use in the two border towns under study reflected both similar and divergent outcomes. For instance, in Ekiti-East, Yoruba, an out-group language of the people dominated their in-group languages/dialects in the home domain. This showed that the influx of other languages affected their in-group languages/dialects at the phonological level. Those who spoke the Omuo dialect acceded that their dialect is not mutually intelligible to other Ekiti dialects. Also, they had failed to hand down their in-group languages/dialects to their children. This result is a sign that language shift and endangerment, as it concurs with Fishman (1991), who argues that "*the commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next*" is perceived here. At the International Expert Meeting of the UNESCO programme on Safeguarding Endangered Languages (UNESCO 2003, p.28), situations indicative of an endangered language were highlighted. One of such pointing to a situation of definitely endangered language is where "*a language is spoken by only grandparents and older generations, while the parent generation may still understand the language, but do not speak it to their children and among themselves*".

This situation typically describes the Omuo, Ahan and Omuooke speakers and the speech community. This shows that the community may soon experience language loss because already her heritage, that is, languages/dialects, had reached the second stage of the degree of endangered languages given by UNESCO (2003). That is, the languages are severely endangered, since they are largely spoken by parents and grandparents. This also implies a loss of culture and identity. Nonetheless, the heritage language of the Saki community is not so much endangered. Despite the threat from the inflow of the Benenoise, Togolese and Bariba into the town, the people maintained their language in almost all the domains of language use. In fact, Yoruba dominated almost all the domains of language use, except the educational domain, and in the office during formal discussions. This result, however, has implications for the immigrants' language.

The domination of the host language in every domain indicates that the immigrants have assimilated their host language. This result corroborates UNESCO (2003), where "*a small population is said to be much more vulnerable to decimation (e.g. by disease, warfare or natural disaster) than a larger one*". A small group may also merge with a neighbouring group, thereby losing its own language and culture. Then, we may ask- what is the fate of the immigrants' heritage language in the face of Yoruba? Our findings revealed that these languages were not so much in

use in Saki as they had a limited number of speakers because there was no intergenerational transfer of the languages. The contrast in the result of the pattern of language use in the two linguistic communities reaffirms that the pattern of language use cannot be predicted; it varies from one society to another, depending on a number of factors. The in-group languages/dialects of Ekiti-East dwellers were relegated to the background in every domain of language use.

The result above confirms the view of Komondourous and McEntee-Atalianis (2007, p.98) earlier mentioned under the statement of problem section of this study that, "*it is difficult to generalise the exact constellation of the causes of language shift, every language contact situation is unique and must be evaluated on the basis of its own characteristics and dynamics*". The major cause of the seeming language maintenance in Saki is the overwhelming population of Yoruba speakers in comparison with the number of immigrants. Again, Yoruba is one of the three largest groups in Nigeria, and the government policy has awarded it the position of the major language in the southwest of Nigeria. Also, the positive attitude of the immigrants and the Yorubas influenced the heights achieved by the Yoruba in the language use pattern. Notwithstanding, we observed that some speakers of the language were not fluent, neither did they see the language as a prestigious one. This points to the fact that the language may be threatened in some ways. Looking at the evaluative factors of language endangerment as examined by UNESCO (2003), the use of Yoruba may fall under the fifth degree of language endangerment- stable but yet threatened.

According to UNESCO (2003), "*A stable but yet endangered language is spoken in most contexts by all generations with unbroken intergenerational transmission, yet multilingualism in the native language and one or more dominant language(s) has usurped certain important communication contexts. Note that multilingualism alone is not necessarily a threat to languages.*"

No fewer than three languages were about to disappear in Ekiti-East and Saki. The major reason for the shift in Ekiti-East was the position accorded to Yoruba and English in the educational domain by the National Policy on Education (NPE). Omuo, Ahan and Omuooke were not so much in use in almost all the domains except at home among adults. Similarly, Yoruba and English dominated Saki because Yoruba is also the regional language in the area, and English is the official language. All other languages were used by the immigrants at home when discussing with every other person, apart from their children. In addition, the shift by the immigrants in Saki to Yoruba was triggered by the economic benefits they stood to have, and the population of its speakers. The use of Yoruba was not threatened in any domain of language use in Ekiti-East and Saki.

The implication of this result confirms that wherever multilingualism operates, languages may expand their use, like the use of Yoruba in Saki or contract (for instance, the in-group languages in Ekiti-East). The inflow of various ethnic groups into Saki did not reduce the use of Yoruba at different domains of language use, whereas, in Ekiti-East, the influx of immigrants affected their Ekiti dialect linguistically and functionally. It is important to note that Yoruba is the out-group language of the people in Ekiti-East; other languages/dialects such as Omuo, Ahan and Omuooke/Yagba are their in-group dialects/languages. But Yoruba is the in-group language of the Saki community. Other languages in Saki belong to the immigrants. Series of evidence of the language situation in the foregoing confirms the UNESCO (2003) definition of language

endangerment which says that, "*language endangerment occurs when its speakers cease to use it, or use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next*". All these manifestations of language endangerment engulfed the language use pattern of our respondents in our study area.

The foregoing confirms that Yoruba, the local language of the community, is stable but yet endangered because English has taken over some certain important contexts like the formal conversations in education and the office domain. This brings to the fore the influence of the National Policy on Education (NPE) and the National Language Policy (NLP) on language maintenance. The position given to English has led to the endangerment of both major and minor indigenous languages in Nigeria. On this note, while Yoruba was not so much affected in Saki by multilingualism, since this phenomenon alone is not necessarily a threat to languages, other factors just mentioned have positioned it as an endangered language. This result, therefore, agrees with the words of Fabunmi and Salahu (2005, p.405) that, "*the largeness of the percentage of the speakers of Yoruba cannot stop its supplantive moves*". The fact that its speakers always code-switch to English is an indication that Yoruba also lacks fluent speakers, and this is one of the factors of language endangerment outlined by Fabunmi and Salahu (2005, p. 401). It is pertinent to note that Yoruba is threatened by English, a more prestigious language in Saki. However, Yoruba has posed a threat to the in-group languages of the people of Ekiti-East.

Nevertheless, our result still counters Fabunmi and Salahu (2005), who posit that Yoruba fall into the category of a severely endangered language. As earlier mentioned, "*various yardsticks have been proposed for determining endangerment situation, among which are: population, domination by a more powerful language and/or lack of adequate description of such a language*" (Bamgbose, 1976; Fakuade, 1999). Rafiu and Oshodi (2013, p.19) note that, "*while the parameter that is based on use is most favoured as a determinant of language endangerment, we observe that these variables work in varying ways for language vitality*". The study has employed vital variables such as: domains, population and use. However, the use of a language is an embedded factor in domains and populations. The domain of language use is one of the major factors that determines the vitality of a language. For instance, a language that is not transmitted from one generation to another and not used for other purposes in the vital domains may be threatened.

Again, taking a clue from our investigation, we presume that minority and majority languages may not follow the same pattern of loss and/or endangerment because languages are always open to different circumstances. Rafiu and Oshodi (2013, p.20) note that "*the length of contact with majority languages may differ*". This explains the differences in the pattern of language use in Saki and Ekiti-East and, by implication, the reason for endangerment. Although similarities are inevitable as the immigrants' languages in Saki are severely endangered, just like the minority languages in Saki, but Ekiti-East residents are homogenous culturally; they are all Ekiti citizens with equal rights. But they speak different languages/dialects, which explains why there were agitations from each quarter to gain autonomy. The use of divergent languages is the root of their agitation. Although they speak different languages, the length of stay from one generation to another brought about cohesion. Nonetheless, the immigrants in Saki do not see themselves as one people. Although our findings revealed that presently they speak Yoruba, they have a distinct culture and tradition.

However, it is important to note that, despite the dissimilar implications of the language pattern explained in the foregoing, the similarities of the pattern of language use in both areas can be viewed from the fact that Yoruba and English dominate the pattern of language use in both areas. Yoruba dominated the language use at home, in the market and in the religious domain in Saki and Ekiti-East, while English, closely followed by Yoruba, dominated the language use at school and office domains. A focus on the comparison of the summary of the pattern of language use in Ekiti-East and Saki in every domain confirmed that Yoruba, closely followed by English, dominated the pattern of language use (see Tables 4-9). The rationale behind this result is that Yoruba is a major language in south-west Nigeria, where the two study areas were located. As much as people may love to speak their dialect, they may be hindered from doing so because of the multilingual nature of their community. Therefore, they chose Yoruba because it is the language that is understood by almost everybody in the community.

On a final note, the last objective of this study seeks to compare the pattern of language use at school in the two selected border towns in order to suggest information that will help in formulating an appropriate and practicable National Language Policy. The results of the pattern of language use in the education domain in the two study areas are similar. English overshadowed every other language at school in both areas. In the two communities, Yoruba takes the second position in the education domain. This means that the language choices in education are mainly English and Yoruba, despite the fact that English is the official language in Nigeria. The basis for these similarities cannot be far-fetched, since English is the official language and the language of instruction in the school domain for both societies. Yoruba is also confirmed as the regional language of the two communities. Correspondingly, it is being taught in school as a subject. However, the major discovery in this study is that the respondents (in Saki and Ekiti-East) attested that they use Yoruba to explain difficult topics to the students in order to aid their understanding. The discovery confirms the words of Oyetade (2007) that "*Yoruba is the language of the immediate environment and it is constantly in use, although unofficially, even within the school system*" (Oyetade, 2007). This discovery suggests a bi/multilingual approach to language teaching- a step above the teaching of one of the major languages in Nigeria without its use for language instruction.

11. Conclusion

This research is a comparative study of the pattern of language use at the different domains of two border towns- Ekiti-East and Saki, and has contributed to the existing knowledge on language use, language shift, language endangerment and language maintenance. It has shed more light on the multilingual nature of border towns. It has also revealed that language has an indelible imprint on people and race. For instance, people may seem to lose their identity, but if their language is maintained, consequently, their identity may also be preserved. Not only that, it has also revealed that some languages in use in both study areas are on their way to extinction. The study, therefore, suggests that there must be active use of their language, especially in the home front among parents and children. This will prevent the death of these indigenous

languages/dialects. Parents should be encouraged to transfer their in-group languages to their children to avoid language extinction and death.

12. Recommendations

The government should ensure that teachers maintain the use of the child's mother tongue as the language of instruction, especially in the first three years of school. Omole (2011, p.5) posits that "*the most communicative language is the most effective language of education*". The government should also recognise minority languages in education. The government has developed a policy that puts minority languages at the level they are today. There must be a review of this policy if these languages are to regain their vitality. In addition, the teachers maintained that they use the pupils' mother tongue in explaining difficult topics to their students; this shows the importance of the mother tongue for proper understanding in the school domain. The government should consider the use of minority languages (Omuo, Ahan and Yagba), regional languages (for example, Yoruba) and the foreign language (English) as languages of instruction in border towns. A multilingual approach to teaching is hereby suggested. Nigeria can take a cue from Ghana, where three languages are used as instructional languages.

It seems the people, especially the older generations, do not know the implications of not using their indigenous language with their children in the home domain. Government should, therefore, through the media, create awareness on the importance of mother tongue to the culture and identity of the people.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflict of interest.

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