

Department of Educational Studies  
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**Investigating language use, shift and change across  
generations in Nigeria: The case of Ijáw**

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This thesis is submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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# Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted, in whole or in part, to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Bomiegha Ofeni Ayomoto

## **Acknowledgements**

This PhD has been a long journey for me and has affected me in ways I could never have foreseen. Regardless of the problems and struggles I experienced during this journey, my thesis has remained a source of delight for me. I ascribe all glory to God Almighty.

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## **Abstract**

This sociolinguistic study examines the life stories of a selected group of Nigerians spanning four generations. Their socio-economic backgrounds are varied, but they share the bond of the Ijaw language, which is key to their ethnic identity, Izon. The thesis investigates why the Ijaw language appears to be in decline and examines the way language use has changed across generations and why the language is apparently not being passed down from one generation to the next. In addition, it highlights the participants' own perspectives on this decline and their efforts to reverse it.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative approach by examining the life stories of the participants as recorded during interviews via the application of thematic analysis exploring the participants' experiences, beliefs, emotions, attitudes and practices pertaining to Ijaw. The data reveal several themes, including the emotional attachment of love and pride versus the sense of loss in terms of the language, the shift from Ijaw to English, Nigerian Pidgin English and Yoruba, and the issue of blame for its decline. Key findings include the identification of a shift in the use of Ijaw and the manifestation of new trends in language use which one participant describes as "funkyfied". This new trend reflects a tendency for the younger generation of educated, urban speakers to alter the Ijaw language by dynamically mixing it with other languages and viewing language, along with dress and music, not as a fence but as a cultural bridge.

This thesis focuses on language use, language shift and language change over time and across generations, providing useful insights for the exploration of other declining indigenous languages in Africa and around the world.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my late mother, Mrs Kolony Ofeni, and to the late Dr Tözün Issa who provided me with insights into to what endangered language was all about. They were my inspiration for starting this odyssey, and they are the reasons why I am where I am today.

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# Chapter 1

## Memories and Inspirations

“However creatively one travels, however deep an experience in childhood or middle age, it takes thought (a sifting of impulses, ideas, and references that becomes more multifarious as one grows older) to understand what one has lived through or where one has been” (Naipaul, 2002, p.47).

The purpose of this statement is to show that as humans our life experiences differ during our journeys and the tools that we use evolve. This is a central theme of this thesis.

### 1.1 Introduction

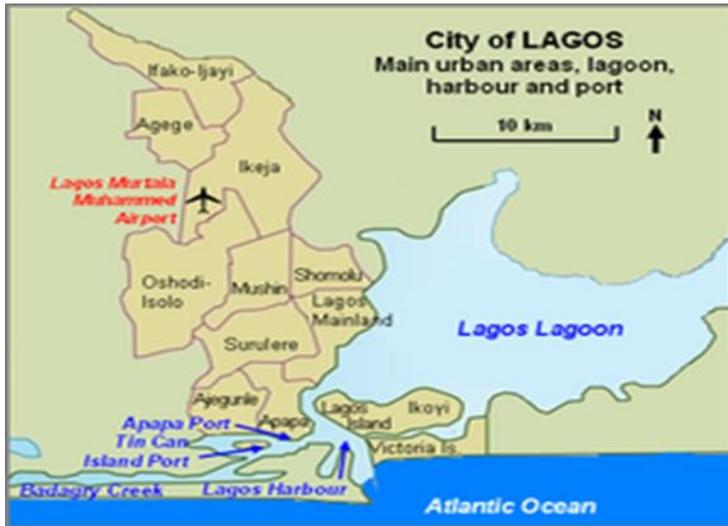
I was raised in Ajegunle<sup>1</sup>, a suburb of Lagos which is notorious for vandalism, gang rivalries and high crime rates. However, I remained sheltered from all this while I was growing up because my parents were strict disciplinarians. This is my story, and its distinctive viewpoints can represent more accurately what happened. In support of this, Chinua Achebe in his book *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (2012, p.34) reflects that:

One’s story should come from within and finding that inner creative spark requires deep introspective personal scrutiny and connection. This is not something anyone can teach you, because it is your own story and it is unique to you alone.

This implies that no other person will be able to tell my story the way I do because it is distinctive to me.

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1. I lived at Ajegunle, Apapa Ajegunle, not Sango Toll Gate Ajegunle and not Ikorudu Ajegunle. These Ajegunles are situated in different locations, miles from one another in Lagos State. Apapa Ajegunle is probably the most popular of the three, and it is also popularly referred to as AJ City. Ajegunle is a Yoruba word which literarily means “fortune has landed”. One would therefore expect – especially in a country like Nigeria which is so fond of meaningful and auspicious names – evidence of fortune in a community that has such an enviable name. But in the words of Shakespeare “the wish is father to the thought” (*Henry IV Part II, Act IV, Scene 5*). The name does not really suit the reality of life in AJ City.



**Figure 1:** Map of Lagos showing where Ajegunle is situated

Ijaw is a language spoken by the fourth largest tribe in Nigeria, but it is now being used less and less. The question this thesis asks is a deceptively simple one. Why is Ijaw in decline, and why are parents not transmitting the language to their children?

This chapter tells my life story. It covers my passion for selecting this subject, gender differences within the Ajegunle<sup>2</sup> community, how elders are addressed and the cultural implications of this, my experience of growing up in Ajegunle, language use at home, Ijaw and other languages and how the community uses Ijaw in relation to contact languages. In this chapter I also describe my early education and my adult years as well as the “paradigmatic moment” in which this thesis came to be conceived.

I describe certain incidents which made me think about the issue of endangered languages and eventually motivated me to undertake this study. This opening chapter is designed to help the reader access my thoughts and feelings about this thesis. It is pertinent to gain an insight into the context this research describes, as my work is not the result of chance. I am a native speaker of Ijaw, and I grew up in Ajegunle, which makes my thesis significantly philosophical in relation to the ethnic group of which I am a part and other member of that group whose lives are described here.

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2. Ajegunle shares many features with Trench Town in Jamaica and Soweto in South Africa, where many of its resident’s rank amongst the poorest. It is regarded as one of the most populous ghettos in Africa. In Ajegunle you find the good, the bad, the ugly and the downright terrible. Its name resonates across Nigeria.

## 1.2 My Motivation

There are several reasons for my interest in and passion for endangered languages. Firstly, as a native speaker of one such language (Ijaw is arguably one of the smaller languages spoken in southern Nigeria) I came to realise that as an adult I was no longer as fluent in it as I used to be when I was younger. Secondly, during my years at secondary school I used my mother tongue less, and my mastery of it weakened. People from other tribes living in Ajegunle or Lagos tend to follow the prevalent culture or even imitate their neighbours. In this process, one comes understand different cultures, and communicating becomes easier and more interesting. We do this not only to understand our neighbours better when they interact with us but also to comprehend criticism levelled at us by those neighbours. People distinguish between the Izon and others on two counts: firstly, their fondness for the local gin known as Ogogoro (which is consumed hot) and secondly from their accent, which is seen as a cultural factor.

Thirdly, Lagos is the largest city in Nigeria, the country’s most important seaport and its centre of commerce. Its cosmopolitan population represents almost all the hundreds of linguistic communities living in Nigeria [See Figure 7] and certainly the most popular six: Edo, Fulfulde, Hausa, Ibibio, Igbo, Kanuri, and Yoruba. The three major languages of Nigeria are ranked by estimated number of native speakers, with Hausa speakers numbering 29 million, Yoruba speakers coming in at 21 million and Igbo (pronounced “e-boh”) 19 million. Lemieux (2012, p.15) states that Nigeria is Africa’s most populous country. Its estimated population of over 185 million is made up of more than 250 different ethno-linguistic groups, each with its own history, culture, traditions, language and identity. English serves as a means of communication between people who do not have a common Nigerian language. English was the medium of instruction in my school. Standard English is used in most schools but contact with Pidgin affects the way many people speak English. As a means of everyday communication, Pidgin or Ijaw was our way of speaking at home, but within the community I spoke Yoruba or Igbo depending on who I was interacting with at the time.

Fourthly, I believe that research should make a difference to the lives of people. It should improve their lives or at least alert them to dangers. It is my intention to make people around the world – but particularly in Nigeria – aware of the dangers of losing their mother tongue if they fail to speak it, use it, or transmit it to the next generations. I want to raise awareness about the consequences of language loss and promote the restoration of the cultural values of

the Ijw people. This is particularly important, as some studies have shown that culture affects behaviour. Many societal problems can be traced to a loss of cultural values. Now we have a generation of Ijw youngsters who do not speak the language as expected yet still seem to identify with the Izons and the Ijw and show interest in the cultural values that link them to the tribe and the community. Although this thesis focuses on the Ijw people of Nigeria, the principles discussed here apply to many other indigenous language groups globally, and particularly to younger generations from different minority backgrounds.

Lately, there have been discussions around the idea that languages in Nigeria that are falling into disuse could be re-inserted into school learning systems. In 1981, the Nigerian government introduced the National Policy on Education (NPE), which stated that all media of instruction in primary schools should be provided in the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community, bringing in English at a later stage. However, it seems this is not happening in Bayelsa, unlike major urban centres such as Lagos, which makes everyone learn and speak Yoruba in schools. The fact that the Niger Delta States are not implementing the NPE in their educational system will be discussed in later chapters. While there has been general discussion on language policy in Nigeria, my study explores the much more specific subject of how it is used in other forms. My research takes a sociocultural approach, examining the interaction between society and culture and the importance of such interactions. My study investigates the use, shift and change in language use across generations in Nigeria, specifically relating to the case of Ijw. I believe that my thesis will contribute to research on endangered languages, reflecting prevailing literature such as Balogun (2013), Dada (2010), Lupke (2009), Blench and Dendo (2003), Ter-Minasova (2008) and Mufwene (2002). There are also African scholars who have examined related topics, including Omoniyi (2007), Emenanjo (1985), Batibo (2005) and Brenzinger (1992).

### **1.3 Early Years**

I was born on the Island of Lagos. My father was a police officer who was transferred to the mainland shortly after I was born. From the age of six I was brought up in Ajegunle. In my family, we usually woke up early and then greeted each other in Ijw saying, “*Serideee*” (Have you woken up?). Or we asked, “*Teebra*” (How are you; how is it with you?). The typical response to this would be “*emiee o*” (I’m fine.). When visitors entered the house, I would greet them respectfully. If they were older, I greeted them by saying “*Okeoidee*” (I am kneeling), to which they would respond “*Seri ooo*” (Stand up).

Most Ajegunle residents came from lower class families, but a few families were middle class and had white collar jobs. However, they had to travel to the Island or other parts of the mainland to work. Other families were engaged in petty trading in front of their houses or had small shops that barely turned over a profit. Trading was something that kept them busy. Ajegunle did not have many amenities<sup>3</sup>; drinking water was scarce and children would go to the houses of their richer neighbours to ask for snacks and water. Some were good enough to allow this, while others locked up their taps, making life more difficult for poor people. The toilet facilities were also shared. In developed countries, only family members share such facilities. In my community, many different families shared the sanitary facilities, even taking turns to use the bathroom and toilet.

Of course, owning a television set was a luxury. The local attitude was: “We are poor people, and nothing good can come from such frivolities”. People felt that television would not teach their children suitable or useful morals from which they could benefit later in life. My father was a perfect example of this attitude. He never bought a television set and never allowed us to sneak into other people’s houses to watch theirs. His aim was to teach us that one should be content with what one’s parents had to give or could afford to give. Life in Ajegunle was communal, moulding residents into bilingual or multilingual individuals so imperceptibly that they experienced little awareness of what was happening. Residents soon discovered that they could switch languages with ease to converse with their neighbours. If that failed, there was always Nigerian Pidgin, a language shared by all habitants, which flowed naturally during conversations.

Angrosino (1989, p.9) believes that autobiography taps into the common, unspoken processes of a culture’s ritualised behavioural norms. For instance, the Izón culture explored in this study encompasses the language and cultural representations as manifested in the food they eat, the clothes they wear and the way they speak. Rosen (1988, pp. 69-88) suggests that autobiographical impulses propel our lives, giving them voice through articulation to others, and that autobiography is a universally acceptable way of writing about ourselves so that

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3. The quality of housing in such settlements varies from simple shacks to more permanent structures, and access to water, electricity, sanitation and other basic services and infrastructure tends to be limited. (UN-HABITAT: United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2003; World Urban Forum on “Cities Without Slums,” Nairobi, 29 April - 3 May 2002). Slum dwellers occupy irregular settlements, squatter housing, unauthorised land developments, rooms and flats in dilapidated and uncompleted buildings, and Nigeria has its fair share of such irregular settlements, with an urban population growth rate of 4.23 per cent in 2007 (Agbola and Olatubara, 2013). Source: International Institute for Geoinformation Science and Earth Observation, 2002.

other people can understand where we come from and how we have progressed to the stage that we are at now. As Rosen observes:

People often feel the urge to write about their own lives. They want to show there is some coherence and logic in the events of their lives and the decisions they have made. They want, like the Ancient Mariner, to tell other people why they are where they are and how they got there (ibid).

People do not mind listening to such tales or reading them. This story is therefore a biography, which makes it a “story of a distinctive culture written in individual characters from within” (Olney, 1980, p.13). My context, Ajegunle, is in the Ajeromi/Ifelodun<sup>4</sup> Local Government Area of Lagos State, which is part of the Lagos mainland. Three bridges connect Lagos Island to the mainland.



**Figure 2:** A typical Ajegunle streetscape

One of these is the well-known Eko Bridge, which links the Ajegunle area to the Island, while Carter Bridge links settlements to other mainland areas. The third mainland bridge, which is 10 kilometres long, was built to ease traffic congestion on Carter Bridge. In a suburb such as Makoko<sup>5</sup> there are fishermen and women, typically Izón, who speak Ijáw. They tend to live on the water because of their occupation, although most of the Izóns live in streets

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4. This is one of the three councils under the Badagry Division after the issue in 1986 of the Administrative Divisions (establishment) Edict, which divided Lagos state into five administrations: Lagos Island, Badagry, Epe, Ikorodu and Ikeja. For Emmanuel Etu, an Ajegunle resident, most people do not even know the real Ajegunle: “Most people don’t know that we have Ajegunle and Olodi-Apapa. The Ayeke Bridge divides the area. On one side of the bridge you have Olodi Apapa, which is the cleaner Ajegunle. On the other we have Olayinka, Ogbowankwo, Arumo, Iyalode, Cemetery, which is the real Ajegunle. That is where you get the worst of the slums. But since inception, the whole area has been called AJ City and it has remained that way. This is where you will find the Yoruba, the Urhobo, the Ijáw, the Isoko, the Igbo and the Bini in large numbers.”

5. Ajeromi Ifelodun Local Government Area (LGA), Ijora Oloye in Apapa LGA and Makoko in Mainland LGA. The current populations (Ajegunle - 429,381; Ijora Oloye - 18,278; Makoko - 141,277) were calculated based on a projected growth rate of 7.5 per cent using the 2006 national census (Figure 8) as the baseline. A single proportion method using EPI Info version 6 was used to calculate the sample size (Akinwale et al., 2013).

such as Tunkarimu, Okorogbo, Uzor, Goriola, Abukuru, Orodu, Boundary Market and Navy Barracks, to mention only a few within Ajegunle.

The Izóns suffer from so much deprivation, subordination and devalued living that their region, despite its beautiful name “Wealth of the Nation”, is in fact largely cut off from any national resources that could enhance the standard of living of its residents. Instead, their region is subjected to oil and gas pollution,<sup>6</sup> which prevents them from pursuing their traditional way of earning a living from the sea, a living that is embodied in their heritage as fisherfolk.



**Figure 3:** Makoko houses for Izón people



**Figure 4:** Fishermen and women.

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6. According to a BBC News (2014) report: “There is oil here. We are suffering,” said Jeti Matikmo, carrying a pole on his shoulder on which bundles of fish were tied. “Many of our crops are not growing well because of the oil spill and we are not fishing in the ponds anymore. So, we have to trek for more than two hours to where it is clean and where there is no oil.”

#### **1.4 Language use at home: Ijw and other languages**

In my family, the language of communication was Ijw. Using Ijw was mandatory, especially for my father, who pretended not to comprehend English. He told us that he didn't understand English because it was not his mother tongue. If we wanted to speak with him, we had to use Ijw. If we were talking to him and inserted any English words or expressions, he would ask us what we meant or say that he didn't understand us. So, we always used Ijw when we were at home, but outside the family and the home we used Yoruba or Igbo. These were pressures that many families faced both within and outside the wider society (Curd-Christiansen, 2013; see also Spolsky, 2012).

My father entered Nigerian politics, although he was unaware at the time of the extent to which it was riddled with corruption. As a politician, he was forced to move closer to our home town of Warri while we remained in Lagos. However, he did not stay there for long because he wouldn't allow his colleagues to mismanage the budget. He was not a typical Nigerian politician, and his self-discipline and values led him to vacate office before the end of his tenure.

My mother normally spoke Ijw but could switch to Nigerian Pidgin or Yoruba depending on the situation. To communicate, she used Pidgin with a strong accent that I admired. When relatives who did not understand Yoruba visited, she would switch to Yoruba whenever she did not want to be understood.

Obviously, people tend to be happier and relate better to peers or colleagues when they know they can communicate in a common language. Lagos is inhabited primarily by Yoruba people, although people say that Lagos is a no man's land. When Yoruba people discover that members of other linguistic communities can speak their language, they treat them as part of their own tribe. However, if non-Yoruba people are unable to speak the Yoruba language, they are treated as foreigners or outsiders. In this sense, learning the language is a prerequisite for belonging, and it creates a warm and friendly atmosphere. It makes the individual feel at home, conveying the message that they belong to that community because they identify with its members.

#### **1.5 Education**

It's not surprising that people living in a district which is home to such a large population and such a wide range of people from different strata of society take education so seriously. For

them and their offspring, education is the only escape from poverty. I remember from my childhood that my peers were very ambitious, and that we never allowed our backgrounds to hold us back in our endeavours. Our parents had helped us to develop these ambitions. During my childhood years, pre-primary schools (day-care or nursery schools) did not exist for those who could not afford them. People who sent their children to these institutions knew that during their formative years the schools would help lay the foundations for their education. These pre-primary schools were therefore considered very important.

The curriculum at that time did not emphasise the importance of pre-schools and did not compel parents to enrol their children into them. To be admitted to primary school, children had to satisfy two conditions: they had to be six or older and to be able to touch their ears when told to show that they were of the right age for school. If they could not satisfy either of these conditions, they were not admitted. The significance of language was well defined under the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1981). The government appreciated the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction, national cohesion and cultural preservation. Every child was therefore expected to learn the language of the immediate environment. English was the medium of teaching and communication within the school, and the study of Yoruba was enforced because our school was in Lagos.

## **1.6 My Adult Years**

As an adult, I observed that my father, who spoke only Ijaw, no longer insisted that I should speak it exclusively. I wondered why he no longer insisted on speaking Ijaw with me. I felt that my use of the language had become rusty, but I could still understand everything my father said in Ijaw whenever he used it. I expect he felt that there was no point trying to put me under stress during our conversations, as I was no longer fluent in Ijaw. At times he did try speaking Ijaw with me, but I tended to respond in English. However, since I started work on this thesis, people have noticed my perspective beginning to change, and I have taken to encouraging Izon parents to teach their children Ijaw and to motivate members of other tribes to speak their own languages as well.

While living in Lagos, I learnt Yoruba and Igbo as well as my native Ijaw. According to the constitution, English is the official language of Nigeria, and is used in the law courts and in parliament. In Nigeria it is, therefore, not considered to be a foreign language. It was adopted as a national means of communication in a country in which (unlike in European countries)

hundreds of languages are spoken. In the homes of educated parents, Standard English serves not just as the national medium of communication but also as the only language used within the family. Uneducated parents continue to speak Pidgin or their mother tongue. My parents – particularly my father – felt strongly about the value of Ijw and therefore insisted that their children should speak it. In other words, they believed that use of the mother tongue could lay a better foundation for self-actualisation.

Many of the unanswered questions surrounding the use of English as the medium of instruction since the days of my early education have catalysed my research. I observed that some children coped easily with the demands of speaking English, while others found learning and using English much more of a challenge. Why was this? I believed that the children of parents who could afford private schools were better off because they had been taught through the British curriculum. But nothing was done to support those who were less proficient in English, and there were no teaching assistants to support teachers in the classroom. Teachers used the lecture method to deliver content, and students demonstrated their understanding by performing efficiently in examinations. In those days, students were assessed through controlled exams without the use of coursework or assignments.

I found secondary school fascinating because we learnt foreign languages, including Arabic and French. I learned these too, but lack of use beyond school has impaired my fluency. Learning foreign languages was compulsory from Years 1 to 3, but in Year 4 students had the option of discontinuing foreign language study. The nature of our language studies has left me with an eclectic mix of languages, and I have grown up to become multilingual in terms of Nigerian languages.

### **1.7 Gender Disparities**

This section examines the different roles women and men have in relation to their language use, as well as the way in which they are addressed within the local communities. In earlier days, some tribes believed that the woman’s place was in the kitchen. One of the participants in my research (Papa) mentioned that when he was growing up only the boys received an education, while the girls usually stayed at home or went to the market with their mothers to trade or help provide for their families. As soon as the girls were old enough to get married, they were contracted into early marriages. In Nigerian communities, food was mostly prepared by women while the men were engaged in other activities. How the older people

were addressed and greeted varied according to each ethnic group. In terms of family language policy at home or in families, women made more effort to speak or use Ijáw than their male counterparts, especially those who had grown up in the villages. Nowadays, however, a new trend in which locals try to impress one another by speaking English has become overwhelmingly prevalent.

In Nigeria, younger children are not allowed to call or refer to adults by their first names. Adults are addressed as “Uncle” or “Auntie”, even when there is no blood relation between the adults and the children. The terms “Auntie” and “Uncle” (or “Papa and Mama”, which are reserved for very elderly men and women) serve to convey respect combined with affection, whereas “Sir/Madam” or “Mr/Mrs” conveys only respect. In Nigeria, all adults in the community are to an extent considered responsible for bringing up a child and for ensuring that he or she behaves properly in public. An adult in a village can justifiably reprimand any child for being too noisy or violent or for damaging property. However, this custom and its attendant responsibilities is gradually disappearing as people begin to adopt an attitude of “Mind your own business”. I also noted that women and girls in the Izón community tend to make a greater effort to speak Ijáw than their male counterparts or adult males. I remember that even when I was a child, my uncles struggled to communicate fluently in Ijáw, and they tended to switch to English, or simply use English all the time. While growing up in my neighbourhood, I remember the boys being obsessed with watching football and believing that expertise in the sport would one day turn their lives around. They would play street football or would go to a disused naval football field nearby. They organised local matches, which were exciting to watch. These impromptu games produced footballers<sup>7</sup> like Samson Siasia, the late Stephen Keshi (former head coach of Nigeria’s national football team) and Finidi George, who later became national and international footballers. Meanwhile, the girls

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7. Why has a Lagos slum produced Nigeria’s top football talent? Ajegunle is known for being one of Lagos’s toughest, most dangerous slums, but it also has another claim to fame - for producing some of Nigeria’s top footballers. So, ‘what’s the secret of its unlikely success? BBC Africa’s Stanley Kwenda reported that Ajegunle has been churning out football talent since the early 1990s. Famous names such as Taribo West, Odion Ighalo, Brown Ideye, Samson Siasia, Obafemi Martins, Taribo West and Jonathan Akpoborie all came here. “It’s a raw talent hub of Nigeria,” he told me. Source: [bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-39587899](http://bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-39587899)

used to remain at home to help with the cooking or with other household chores, and they were taught to trade or hawk their wares on the streets or to help in local shops. There are strong ethno-linguistic differences between English and Ijáw food cultures. For example, many of the Yoruba women buy “*Iya Rice ti dee oh*” (“Mother, please put” is a common form of address for the women who sell the food). The women are street sellers who shout out to customers to buy food, which is usually *Ewa* (beans) and *Agege Bread* (it is called *Agege* because the dough is usually very thick, and the bread is filling). The bread is usually hawked and bought when it has come fresh from the local bakeries. This makes it very popular because of the softness of its texture. It can sustain people throughout the day, which is an important consideration in developing countries like Nigeria.

The next section will discuss the triggers that led me to start my research and the context of Nigeria in relation to three locations.

### **1.8 The Paradigmatic Moment**

This thesis was fuelled by puzzlement and frustration over the unanswered questions from my past. Why do people like me no longer teach Ijáw to their children? And why do we no longer talk to them in Ijáw? Margaret Meek (cited by Eve Gregory in Conteh et al., 2005, p.8) referred to this experience as a “paradigmatic moment”, which symbolises the central questions of my study: Why is intergenerational transmission of Ijáw declining? Why is the use of Ijáw declining?

A moment to which I will return again and again, and one which I will never forget, occurred during the bilingualism module I studied as part of my MA. It was my “paradigmatic moment” because Dr. Issa (my MA tutor) encouraged me and spoke emphatically about the significance of being bilingual. He said it was wonderful to be bilingual and to speak an international language, but that we should also continue to speak our mother tongue. My language represents who I am in society, he told me, and if I cannot speak it, what will become of me and what will become of my identity? Language is a way of life; it is an inherent part of one’s culture because people’s characteristics are attributable to where they come from and the way they behave.

I am no longer fluent in Ijáw, and my own children cannot speak the language at all. Whose fault is this? Am I to blame because I did not teach them Ijáw? Or has the world moved on from my youth and my father’s insistence? Are any efforts been made to encourage the

intergenerational transmission of Ijw – and perhaps more importantly, should any such efforts be made? I felt my mother was doing the job for me when my children stayed with her, but my children did not get enough exposure to language lessons for them to absorb Ijw, the culture, or even to use the language at all. All they understand are the basic greetings, such as “*Okoidee*” (I am kneeling), or “*Bo eyi fe*” (Come and eat with me). Perhaps I did not explain to them well enough how important the traditional language of our family is. Language is extremely powerful; it distinguishes us whenever we go somewhere or visit someone. Language is a tool which can be a help or a hindrance, a benefit or an obstacle, depending on the situation in which we find ourselves.

In a similar spirit, Deutscher (2005, p.1) says that “of all mankind’s creations, language must take pride of place and its advent is what made us human”. Without language, we may be no different from other animals. Language makes us unique because it gives us a way of communicating and identifying with a group or community. According to Ellis and Mac a’Ghobbainn:

...a language cannot be saved by singing a few songs or having a word printed on a postage stamp. It cannot even be saved by getting official status for it, or having it taught in schools. It is saved by its use (no matter how imperfect), by its introduction in every walk of life and at every conceivable opportunity until it becomes a natural thing, no longer laboured or false. It means in short, a period of struggle and hardship. There is no easy route to the restoration of a language.<sup>8</sup>

This implies that the revitalisation of language is a complex issue, and that a language cannot be saved if it is not in daily use. So, for any language to survive, people must continue speaking it whether it has any form of recognised status or not. People need to take pride in their language no matter where they are, as language is what differentiates humans from other species and accents represent our places of belonging and who we identify with as a community.

## **1.9 Outline of the Thesis and Research Questions**

My study aims to answer two overarching questions and three minor sub-questions. My primary research questions are:

1. Is Ijw declining and, if so, why?
2. Why is Ijw not being passed down through generations?

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8. Cited in Nettle and Romaine (2000, p.17).

These questions give rise to three sub-questions:

1. What language is used in people's homes?
2. How do the participants in this thesis value Ijw?
3. What new forms of Ijw language, culture and identity are emerging?

The thesis consists of seven chapters, laid out as follows:

**Chapter 1** sets out the background, aims, research questions and significance of the study.

**Chapter 2** addresses the context of the study.

**Chapter 3** is a literature review. The existing literature that illustrates the debates and studies on endangered languages, language shift and loss, code-switching, translanguaging, intergenerational transmission and revitalisation is reviewed.

**Chapter 4** represents a justification of the methodology that guides this research. Here I explain my rationale for the research, my personal journey into ethnography and how my interest in it was first kindled. I also discuss my own positionality as an insider and the data collection tools I use.

**Chapter 5** contains the data analysis which focuses on three themes:

(1) The participants' emotional attachment to Ijw, which is analysed through discourses of love and pride for Ijw versus discourses of pain for its loss.

(2) The participants' beliefs about Ijw and its relationship with their other languages. This is analysed through the reported lack of use and visibility of Ijw in public and domestic environments, respectively, and the perceived reasons for the shift from Ijw to the use of Pidgin and Standard English.

(3) The participants' moral stance regarding the lack of transmission of Ijw, which is analysed through the attribution of responsibility and blame to a range of social actors.

**Chapter 6** focuses on the new trend of language use in a "Funkyfied" manner by the younger generation.

**Chapter 7** brings the thesis to a close and offers suggestions for further research.

## **1.10 Summary**

In this autobiographical chapter, I have given a chronological outline of events in my life and explained how I became multilingual because of growing up in a close-knit community consisting of people belonging to many different tribes and cultures and using many different languages. I described my early years in terms of my primary, secondary and tertiary education, and set out the factors that led to the initiation of my research project.

If I am not fluent in Ijáw, it is not because I seldom used the language (especially for speaking and writing, as opposed to listening to it) but for reasons I cannot yet comprehend, and which I seek to uncover through this research.

# Chapter 2

## Context of the Study

The three fundamental features of ethnic identity are race, language, and religion. Other features are nationality, sex, class or social group, clan, family and so on ... Language has the power to name, express and communicate cultural elements. It promotes social integration and allows the exchange of information essential to human life (Bouchard, 1998, pp.19-39).

### 2.1 Introduction

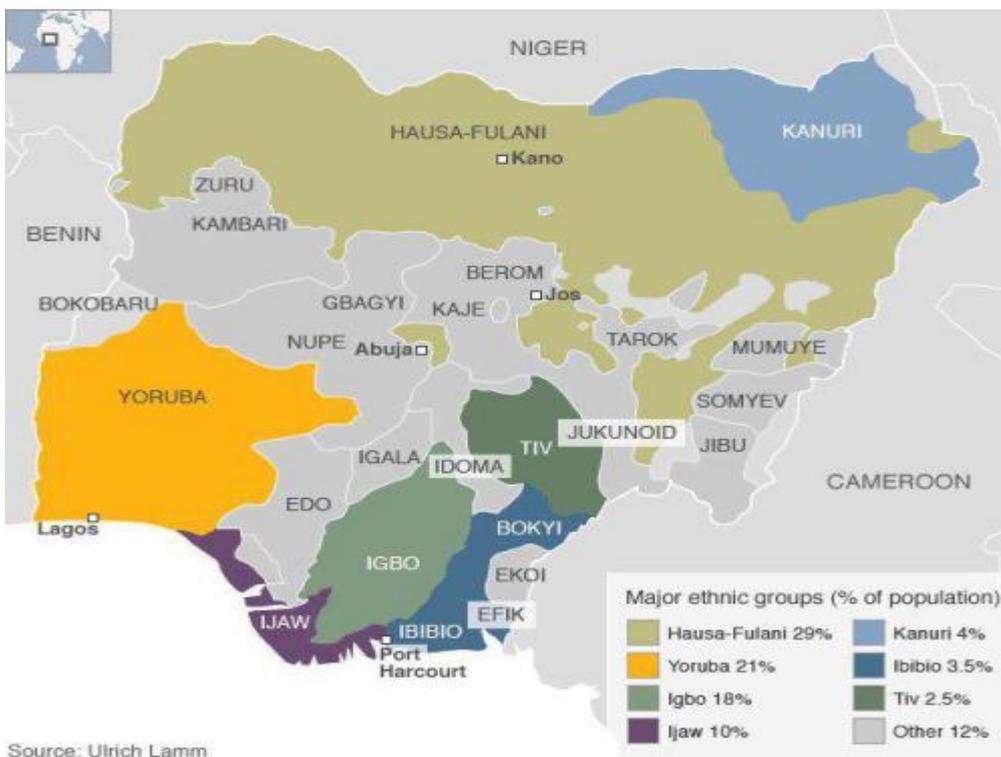
This chapter provides an outline of Nigerian history, customs, socio-economic factors and language use in relation to the linguistic settings in Nigeria that are relevant to the context of this study.

**Figure 5:** Nigeria's position on the African continent, in the West close to the Gulf of Guinea and the Equator. (Source: World Atlas map of





**Figure 6:** National Flag of Nigeria with the Coat of Arms (Motto: Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress)



**Figure 7:** Nigerian ethnic groups and their languages (Percentages of a population of over 180,000,000)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://onlyinnigeria.wordpress.com/2013/04/10/nigerian-map-by-language/>

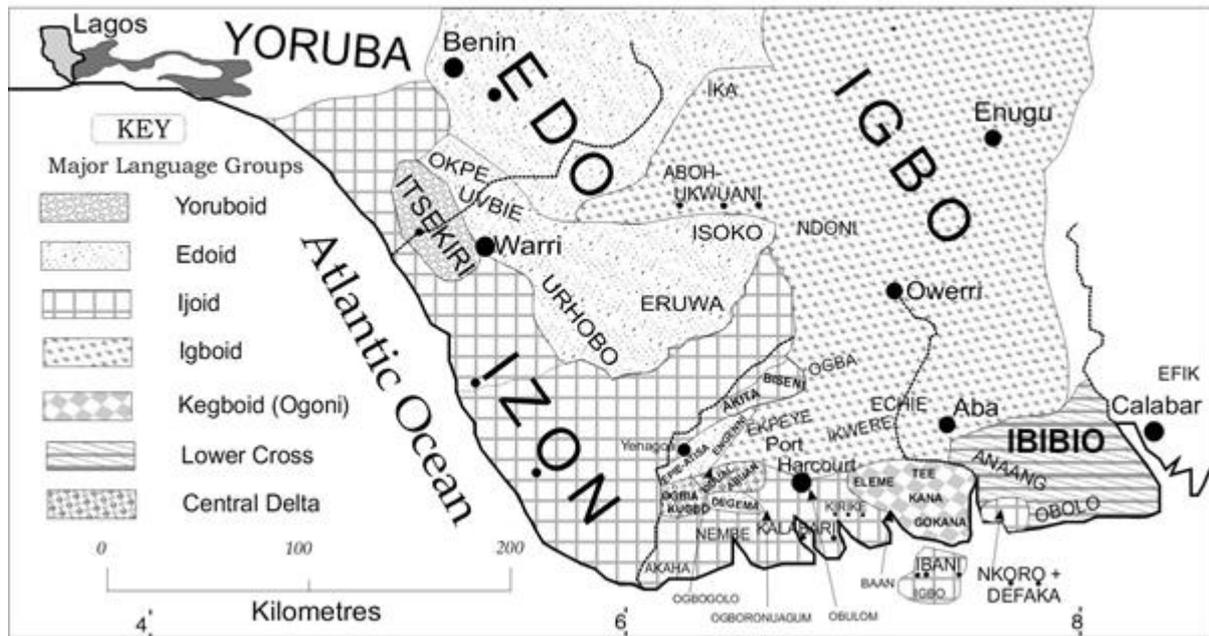
Figure 7 shows the major ethnic groups and their indigenous languages in relation to population. Ijaw is spoken by 10 per cent of Nigeria’s population. Although English is not located on this map, it is still the accepted and acknowledged national language of the country. Abuja, the country’s capital, lies almost exactly in the centre. What constitutes a language or a dialect has been debated by linguists for a long period, but Hoffman (1974) has identified 396 languages in Nigeria, excluding recognised dialects, while Hansford (1976) recognises 395 languages. Blench and Dendo (2003) recorded 550 languages as being spoken in Nigeria. However, according to Professor Ahiri-Aniche, more than 400 Nigerian indigenous languages are now endangered (Vanguard, 2014).

Nigeria has 36 states, and its three dominant linguistic groups are colour coded in Figure 8: Hausa [light Green] is predominantly spoken in the North, Igbo [Green] in the East and Yoruba [Yellow] in the West. Ijaw [Purple] is spoken in the Southern area of the country. Nigeria is a federation of 36 states, and the consensus (as discussed above) is that it has more than 550 languages, although the exact number is unknown through lack of documentation. Nigeria declared independence from the United Kingdom on 1 October 1960 after being colonised by the British since 1900. At the time of independence, Nigeria was a Federal State comprising three regions: Northern, Western, and Eastern Nigeria. The country is currently divided into six geopolitical regions consisting of states with similar cultures, histories and backgrounds. These zones were created by the regime of former President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, and are as follows:

- North Central (7 States): Niger, Kogi, Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, Kwara and FCT
- North East (6 States): Bauchi, Borno, Taraba, Adamawa, Gombe and Yobe
- North West (7 States): Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano and Jigawa
- South East (5 States): Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, Abia and Anambra
- South South (6 States): Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Rivers, Cross River and Delta
- South West (6 States) Oyo, Ekiti, Osun, Ondo, Lagos and Ogun

The area covered by this thesis falls under the South South geopolitical zone. The combination of Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta States form the Niger Delta regions. Previously, the Izon people predominantly resided in Rivers State.

## PEOPLES AND CULTURES OF THE NIGER DELTA REGION



**Figure 8:** Map of Niger Delta showing tribal and cultural regions

Figure 8 shows areas in Nigeria populated by the Izón people. The exact figures for the Izón population are not known. Some 31 million people belonging to more than 40 ethnic groups including the Bini, Efik, Esan, Ibibio, Igbo, Annang, Yoruba, Oron, Ijáv, Ikwerre, Abua/Odual, Itsekiri, Isoko, Urhobo, Ukwuani, Kalabari, Okrika and Ogoni live in the Niger Delta political region, and they speak about 250 different dialects. I belong to the Izón community,<sup>10</sup> and Izón belongs to the Niger-Congo<sup>11</sup> family of languages, the largest in Africa [Figure 14]. There are many hundreds of Niger-Congo languages, which have as many

10. The meaning of Izón, however it is spelt, means 'Truth', "which is very evident among the Izón people, who are very honest, trustworthy, intelligent, brave and eloquent" (Prezi, 2014, p.263). Other names referring to Ijáv people are: Uzó (in Benin), the original ancestral name Oru (in Ijáv and Ibo land), Umu-Oru or Idinbamere (Children of Oru or water) or Kumoni (in Ijó). These names were used throughout the Niger Delta as noted by early missionaries (Alagbo, 1964, p.7).

11. The Niger Congo family share a common language. The word 'Ijáv' is the anglicised version of Ijó or Ejó, a variation of Ujó or Ojó, the ancestor who gave the Ijó people their name. Other modern variations include Izón (Ijón), Ezón (Ejón) and Uzón (Ujón). Missionaries who visited Nigeria during the colonial period were mostly British and Portuguese and usually came via the sea. Inhabitants of the Niger-Delta area were the earliest people to encounter them. Izón (also known by the subgroups as Ijó or Ijáv) are a collection of peoples mostly indigenous to the forest regions of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States within the Niger Delta in Nigeria, according to Talbot (1967, p.5). The Ijáv can be divided into three sub-tribes: Western, Lower (Brass) and Kalabari. Some are natives of Nigeria's Akwa-Ibom, Edo and Ondo states. The myth of Ujó/Ojó was written by Benaebi Benatari of the International Phonetic Alphabet, UK in "Ijáv history", cited on the Ijáv National Alliance of America website. One might say that Ujó is to the Ijáv's what Adam is to the Christian faith.

as 300 million speakers (Katzner, 1986, p.29). Ijáw is one of the four major languages of Rivers State (South South geopolitical zone) which is the region in which Izón mainly reside (Egberipou, 2013, p.005). The dialect used for broadcasting and television in Rivers State is Kolokuma (Prezi, 2014, p.266). The Izón is the fourth largest tribe in Nigeria, and Ijáw (the language) was previously studied at primary level within the regions where Izón people were dominant (cited in Jenewari, 1983, p.3). The Izón in the Niger Delta have never constituted a single political society but have occupied the Niger Delta since at least the fifteenth century, when travellers reported encountering them; and probably much earlier in view of the linguistic classification of Ijáw, which confirms it as a separate language or subdivision of Kwa within the Niger-Congo language family (Greenberg, 1963, p.11). The National Population Commission of Nigeria Census (2006) has calculated there to be at least 305,850 Ijáw speakers living in the Niger Delta community. The native speakers of less popular languages and dialects tend to speak and communicate with other groups in one of the major languages. This puts pressure on minority language speakers to abandon their own language, and in most cases, they then adopt one of the three major languages for communicative purposes.

## **2.2 Background History of Nigeria**

The tale of present-day Nigeria began on 1 January 1900 when the flag of the Royal Niger Company was lowered at Lokoja, which is the city where the river Benue joins the Niger. Prior to this date, the southern part of what is Nigeria today was administered by the Royal Niger Company, a merchandising company that had been in operation since 1886. The Northern part of the country was administered directly by the British government. On 1 January 1900, the North and South territories were brought together to form a single administrative unit under direct British colonial control (Falola and Heaton, 2012, pp. xv-86). This was the first major step towards the creation of contemporary Nigeria. In 1914, Sir Frederick Lugard was appointed first Governor General, and he established the Nigeria Council, which included six Africans. The name Nigeria was taken from the Niger River that wound its way down the country. The name Niger may also suggest an amalgamation of a local name with the Latin word *niger*, meaning black. The name Nigeria was coined by Flora Shaw, the wife of Sir Frederick Lugard. In 1914, the British formally united the Niger region as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria (Crowder, 1962).

Administratively, Nigeria remained divided into the Northern and Southern provinces and Lagos Colony. Living closer to the coast, the people of the South had more contact with the British and other Europeans, adopting a Western education and developing a modern economy more rapidly than those in the North. In 1922, Sir Hugh Clifford (1866-1941) formed a Legislative Council of which ten members were Nigerian. Alongside the Legislative Council there was an Executive Council, which did not include any African members. Traditional chiefs were still recognised, but their power was limited, and they functioned under the direction of the Legislative and Executive Councils. It was not until 1942 that a Nigerian was appointed to the Executive Council. The Advisory Regional House, which formed the basis of today's Federation, was also inaugurated with a new constitution in 1946. Regional differences continue to be reflected in Nigeria's political landscape. To gain their freedom, Nigerians had to unite nationally and fight against the colonists, which then led to the emergence of nationalist movements in both Nigeria and Ghana. However, the fight against the colonial powers did not lead to a rejection of English as a colonial language. The Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) expressed his feelings about English in the following observation:

I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience ... But it should be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings (Achebe, 1975, p. 62).

This suggests that English had begun to be considered as a unifying language amongst Africa nations, although its suitability for use in Africa was linked to the need for modification in line with the requirements of the local context. Perhaps Pidgin should have been adopted as the *lingua franca* of Nigeria since it belonged to no ethnic group. It is not clear why Pidgin was not chosen as the country's unifying language, even though Pidgin predates indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria.

After World War II, in response to a growth in Nigerian nationalism and demands for independence, successive constitutions legislated by the British government moved Nigeria toward self-government by increasing the country's representativeness within a federation. By the middle of the twentieth century a wave of independence was sweeping across Africa, and Nigeria was one of its beneficiaries, gaining independence from the UK in 1960. Following independence, the Nigerian government consisted of a coalition of two conservative parties. The first was the Nigerian People's Congress (NPC), a party dominated by Northerners predominantly of Islamic faith who lived in Northern Nigerian states such as Kano, Sokoto, Kaduna, Maiduguri and Bauchi and who spoke a common language like

Hausa. The second party was the Igbo and Christian-dominated National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), founded in 1944 by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904-96). Azikiwe became Nigeria's first Governor-General in 1960. Forming the opposition was the comparatively liberal Action Group (AG), which was largely dominated by Yoruba from the Western States of Ogun, Oyo, Lagos, Osun, Ondo and Kwara and led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1909-1987) (Falola and Heaton, 2008, p. xxi; Ogundiran, 2005, p.120).

Awolowo promulgated a policy of free education and supported many Yoruba people in travelling abroad for educational purposes. He was popularly known as Papa Awo. The cultural and political differences between Nigeria's dominant ethnic groups, the Hausa (Northerners), the Igbo (Easterners) and the Yoruba (Westerners) were more prominent than differences among other ethnic groups. Linguistically, English serves as the Nigerian *lingua franca*, while the three major indigenous languages are Yoruba, spoken by the Westerners in Osun, Edo and the Delta States (Benin), Hausa, spoken by the Northerners in Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, Gombe, Adamawa, Niger, Taraba, Yobe, Zamfara and Kebbi, and Igbo, spoken in the Eastern states including Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Cross Rivers, Hausa is also spoken by the Ijaws in Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa States.

### **2.3 Nigeria Economy**

At school in Nigeria, we were taught about the major rivers, the Niger and Benue (Benué) (/benu'e/), although there are many other smaller rivers that we were not taught about in the classroom. The two preeminent rivers dominate the smaller ones, just as the three major languages dominate the minor ones. Nigeria<sup>12</sup> is Africa's most populous nation (Cunliffe-Jones, 2010, p.1) with a population of over 180 million people spread across diverse ethnic groups. Economically, the country is dominated by the oil industry, which has attracted the focus of the government for many years.

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12. In about 30 years time Nigeria is predicted to overtake the US as the world's third most populated country, ranked below China and India. It vies with South Africa for the status of 'Africa's biggest economy', although it is currently in recession, beset by a drop in oil prices and conflict with both Boko Haram Islamists and separatists targeting oil pipelines in the Niger Delta. Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/ids-sh/lagos>

According to Falola and Heaton (2008, p. 2), Nigeria is a large country in West Africa covering 356,668 square miles – roughly twice the size of California and three times the size of the United Kingdom. The country is bordered on the south by the Bights of Benin and Biafra, on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. To the West, Nigeria is bordered by Benin, while to the North it is flanked by Niger, and to the East by Cameroon. In its extreme north-east corner, Lake Chad separates Nigeria from the country of Chad. Nigeria stretches roughly 700 miles from West to East and 650 miles from South to North. As mentioned above, the Nigerian economy is heavily dependent on oil and gas, which account for approximately 95 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings and about 80 per cent of government revenue.

## **2.4 Nigeria Geography**

The geographical representation of Nigeria is shown on the linguistic map, which demonstrates just how populous Nigeria is compared to its neighbouring countries. Lemieux (2012, p.34) observes that:

[Nigeria] is currently the seventh-largest exporter of oil in the world and eleventh-largest exporter of natural gas. It is estimated that around 70 percent of its workforce is active in the small farm agricultural sector and in the informal sector in urban areas: roughly 80 percent of the population are self-employed.

While Lemieux places Nigeria amongst the world's top oil exporters, there is a great diversity in its geographical terrain, with habitats varying from plains to mountains, tropical jungles and deserts and to beaches which may be either pristine or polluted. Agriculture and plantations exist alongside big cities and small villages. Nigerians are encouraged to embrace 'oneness', with the sentiment of national unity reinforced by influential Nigerian political leaders like Azikiwe, Awolowo and others who fought so hard for Nigeria's independence (Aka, 2012, p.3).

According to Falola and Heaton (2008, p.7) Nigerian leaders including Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belewa spearheaded mass nationalist movements, which eventually transformed into fully-functioning political negotiating bodies striving for an end to British colonial rule and independence for Nigeria. These leaders, who belonged to Nigeria's dominant tribes, mobilised and led the movements that secured independence for their country.

Ethnicity bears within it the seeds of conflict and disunity, exemplified in cases such as Scotland where there is a growing demand for independence from the United Kingdom. In Nigeria, disunity surfaced during the Biafra conflict when the Igbos, led by Oguku, demanded a separate homeland for Nigeria. The founders of independent Nigeria were aware of the danger of such conflicts and set great store on national unity. Secure unity does not need to be emphasised – it simply *is* (italics mine), but despite the calls for unity, it was difficult to maintain because of the tribal differences within the country. The larger linguistic groups<sup>13</sup> in Nigeria include the Hausas, Fulanis and Kanuris in the North, the Tivs and Nupes in the central belt and the Yoruba, Igbos, Efiks, Ibibios, Izóns and Edos in the South. Numerous other groups with a sizeable population exist, such as the Kamberis in the North, Idomas, Igalas, Biroms and Jukuns in the centre, and Urhobos, Itsekiris, Ikweres, Ijebus, Egbas, Ondos, Afemais and Ishans in the South. The Izóns live in the South in Port Harcourt, Ibibio, Itsekiri and other regions that are further apart in geographical terms. Between 1967 and 1970, a civil war which became known as the Biafran War of 1967-1970 raged as Eastern Nigeria tried to gain independence from the main country (Achebe, 2012, p. 143). Achebe (ibid, p. 103) recalls that:

Thirty thousand civilian men, women and children were slaughtered, hundreds of thousands were wounded, maimed, and violated, their homes and property looted and burned – and no one asked any questions ... the world only reacted with dismay when the magnitude of the human suffering in Biafra became known, and it was considered unacceptable to the civilized world opinion.

This civil war led to the deaths of many Nigerians, particularly the Igbos, who were rendered homeless and poverty stricken. People began to question the motive behind the war – during which understanding and speaking a common language proved crucial in helping people group together to avoid persecution by opposing parties. Those who could speak the opposition groups' language ensured their survival by adopting another identity through their use of language. For instance, in the Eastern states – such as the Rivers State where the Izóns lived – if an individual was unable to speak Ijáw, it was assumed that he or she was from Yoruba, and they were summarily executed (Diary Notes, 13 February 2012).

Those who witnessed the civil war described it as a terrible spectacle, and they prayed they would never have to experience such deprivation and violence again. Many thousands of

innocent people lost their lives, and many never returned to their loved ones. For a while, martial law rules in times of crisis, alternating with democratically elected governments. The governments were based in Lagos, the state capital of Nigeria at the time. Lagos was the centre of political affairs, but the capital was moved to Abuja for political reasons, with Abuja officially becoming Nigeria's new capital on 12 December 1991, effectively displacing Lagos. However, Lagos has continued to be the most cosmopolitan city in Nigeria because it has the country's seaports, and the seaports have brought trade, a multi-cultural society and missionaries to Nigeria.

Lagos<sup>14</sup> State was officially created in 1967. It was broadly divided into Island and Mainland, although since then it has been sub-divided into several local government areas to facilitate rapid development. Island is the elite area of the city. As its name suggests, it is surrounded by water, although a good portion of the marine areas have been reclaimed over the years for housing developments such as Lekki (Phases 1 and 2) and Aja further down towards Epé. The Island links Ajegunle via the third Mainland Bridge, and it was here I stayed during my visits to Nigeria. Lagos<sup>15</sup> State is dominated by the Yoruba, who mainly occupy the Western regions. The name of the language reflects the ethnic group to which it belongs, and the Yoruba language puts a huge strain on other spoken languages within its ambit, including Ijáw. From the time of the early settlers to the era of slave traders and colonial officials, the city and its mainland towns have always been a magnet, drawing people in search of better opportunities, political power, better living standards and exposure to the economic opportunities offered by the world beyond.

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14. The tall men wrapped in white jump and crouch, sweeping their long sticks at the crowd. Their heads are veiled and topped with brightly coloured hats as they spin through the streets towards the palace of their "Oba" – the King of Lagos. The Eyo Festival (pronounced Ay-oh) usually marks the death of the city's most important or influential people, but this ceremony – the first in seven years – is celebrating the 50th anniversary of Lagos State. The original spot where fifteenth-century Yoruba fishermen settled on Lagos Island is now an edgy, poor, densely packed neighbourhood. Source:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/lagos>

15. Lagos has been called the "megacity of the future", with the potential to become the "Singapore of Africa". There's plenty to think about if the Nigerian city of 16 million tightly packed inhabitants is to be thought of as the ultimate expression of modern urban living. Lagos is growing at such an astonishing rate that by 2015, it is predicted to be the third largest city in the world, behind Mumbai and Tokyo, but it is an unlikely model metropolis. Although the country has vast oil resources, the city's infrastructure is appalling. Three-quarters of Lagos residents live in slums. The rail network manages one train per week. Despite being the world's sixth biggest oil producer, power cuts are a daily occurrence and a national joke. Lagosians have renamed the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) as Never Expect Power Always. Source:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/04/documentary-film-welcome-to-lagos-nigeria>

One of the city's nicknames, *Ekó Ilé Ogbón* reflects these themes, translating literally to “Ékó, fountain of common sense”, but the metaphorical point is that a mixed fate awaits the visitor to the city who is not streetwise or the new migrant who is slow to adjust to urban and competitive lifestyles in greater Lagos (Lemieux, 2012). Lagos State largely reflects the customs and traditions of the Yoruba, who had their own religion before the advent of Christianity and Islam, and believed in their own deities, which changed according to geographical location. There were many deities, including Sango (god of thunder), Ogun (god of iron) and Soponna (god of smallpox), while Yemoja and other gods in the pantheon are believed to be intermediaries between God (Olodumare) and man. The Yoruba people take their culture extremely seriously, with respectful greetings forming a vital part of daily life. For instance, the young do not call elders by their names and they kneel, bow or prostrate themselves on the floor when greeting older people. When greetings are exchanged, it is important for people to smile, and when a question is asked regarding someone's wellbeing, time is given to respond as this is considered a polite precursor to conversation. The Yorubas greet their elders with great respect, with the boys prostrating to greet their elders and the girls greeting them by kneeling on one or both knees, depending on the tribe to which they belong. The Yoruba people have a very rich cultural background with different forms of dance, art, music, dress and philosophy. Proverbs and adages form an important part of everyday language and are used extensively in all forms of communication. Music is very important and can also be used as a form of communication. The talking drum often served as a means of communication in older times, and is still used when high chiefs, kings or oba are being hosted. Drums are used to welcome well-renowned obas from the Western regions, which include Lagos. The Izón have similar traditions in welcoming highly placed dignitaries in traditional events or ceremonies.

The next section will explore Nigeria's culture, which includes traditional dress worn by both men and women in Izón.

## **2.5 Customs and Values**

A clan comprises a group of villages with a common heritage and language; however, these villages do not usually have to be close for them to be considered as a state in Nigeria. Some villages or clans share a common language, which links them to the culture and traditions of

the people. Customs and traditions<sup>16</sup> handed down from one generation to the next take place through the intergenerational transmission against these backgrounds. These transmissions include the inheritance of knowledge, wealth or whatever the ancestors chose to leave for future generations. When I say that these villages are “not contiguous”, I mean that they are miles apart, and the only factors linking them are language and belief. Distance seems not to be a consideration when the government creates states. In Nigeria, the distribution of states and the drawing of boundaries appear arbitrary but are usually done to suit the personal interests of powerful people. For example, the Delta State capital is at Asaba, which is located a great distance from it. It was chosen because the wife of the then president of Nigeria came from that region, which also reflects how power or position affects change.

In Nigeria, differences in customs and traditions are identifiable by the ethnic groups who follow them, but in terms of this study, only the three major tribes and the minority grouping of Ijáw are discussed. The Yoruba from Western Nigeria are known to favour Buba (Blouses) and Iro (wrappers) for the women while the men wear (Trousers) and Agbada (Tops or Shirts). The Hausa men wear Danshiki and Shokoto or Babariga, whereas the women from Northern Nigeria use Boubou, which is a flowing dress that is suitable for all ages (see Appendix 5). Accordingly, the Yoruba traditional costume shows how junior women show respect to their in-laws (Figure 11). People wear the Boubou when they want to look smart and clean inside their homes instead of tying wrappers, which is the normal practice. But globalisation is changing all these customs and cultures, and many people are now wearing shorts and simple tops instead of the traditional Nigerian dresses.

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16. Nigeria is a hierarchical society. Age and position earn, even demands, respect. Age is believed to confer wisdom, so older people are accorded respect. The oldest person in a group is revered and honoured. In a social situation, the elderly are greeted and served first. In return, the most senior person has the responsibility to make decisions that are in the best interests of the group.





**Figure 9:** Traditional Ijaw outfits

In linguistic terms, we can take Urhobo (also known as Wayo) as an example. Like Ijaw, it is a tone language. In Urhobo society, a younger person greets an adult by saying ‘*Migwo*’ while bending her/his knees slightly as a form of curtsey or respect. The adult responds

'*Vieredo*'. In contrast, in Yoruba culture, younger people kneel on the floor for the senior women while the men or boys prostrate themselves, with a finger touching the floor. This form of obeisance is for the normal day-to-day greetings. However, at weddings, the groom and his family will all lie flat on the floor, face down, demonstrating to the bride's family that they are well cultured and brought up to respect people<sup>17</sup>.



**Figure 10:** Yoruba traditional wedding greeting; Ijw women dance

## 2.6 Socio-economic Changes

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has experienced increasing social and economic changes as the country moves from a colonial, agrarian-based economy to an independent, industrialised nation (Odularu, 2008). The Biafran Civil War during the 1960s slowed this process. Nevertheless, despite income from oil (the first oil well was dug in the village of Oloibiri on Sunday, 15 January 1956), most of these villages are still poor and underdeveloped, as they were before the oil began to flow. Yet these villages were referred to as the “treasure of the nation”. Nigeria has become the “seventh largest exporter of oil in the

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17. Source: Dr rinpe Adejumo LUMINA, Vol. 21, No.2, October 2010, ISSN 2094-1188: 8. “Yorb culture that was impaired by the assimilation of the European culture by the freed slaves from Sierra Leone is its polite culture. An average Yorb has the attribute of politeness. Politeness is even a key part of the socialization process. Yorb people have forms of greeting for all occasions. Thus, anybody that fails to greet appropriately cannot be regarded as Omolb (gentle man and gentle woman). The formal traditional ways of greeting have faded away and nowadays there is an elusive search for a complete Omolb culture among the Yorbs”.

world and eleventh-largest exporter of natural gas” according to Lemieux (2012, p.34). But this so-called oil wealth is not reflected in the lives of the people, and the oil-rich regions are amongst the country’s poorest. In the past, the women used to carry fish and garri (made from cassava) to sell on market days, which rotate from town to town within a given district. The women can go to a different nearby market every day selling smoked fish, plantain and garri<sup>18</sup>.



**Figure 11:** Garri: plantain and smoked fish

All these traditions have changed with the arrival of globalisation. In the past women only went to local markets, but now they are much more enterprising and travel to Onitsha or even Lagos to buy goods that can be sold at various markets within their region. This is a departure from the past practices, when they sold only food which they had grown themselves and fish which their husbands had caught. Now they have become traders buying and selling goods for profit. The effects of globalisation have opened the door, especially for those who have close relatives in the coastal regions to help move goods across to neighbouring communities.

## 2.7 The Origin of the Izóns and Migration

The Izóns are one of Nigeria’s ethnic groups, and the latest census figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (2011) conclude that 6.5 per cent of the population is composed of Izóns who occupy the Niger Delta region (which contains six of Nigeria’s 36 states). Below Nigeria’s three dominant ethnic groups (the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) the Izóns can be considered the fourth largest tribe in Nigeria. However, this importance in terms of their numbers is not reflected in their development, because they reside in one of the worst areas of the country in terms of infrastructure, including roads, electricity and tap water. The road

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18. Garri is Cassava root, dried and ground into a flour. It is used in West - African countries such as Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. It needs no cooking to be eaten, it just needs moistening. It has a slightly fermented, sour taste. Overlooked by many and regarded as a poor man’s food particularly by those who live a life of privilege, it remains unknown to them how enjoyable this native and simple meal combination can be. Trust me, a spoonful of the mix (in cold water) and a little fish on a hot afternoon will impress you.

links between Ijw towns are poor and make travel and commerce challenging. Figure 13 depicts the cities in which Ijw languages are spoken, including Benin, Bonny, Calabar, Ibibio, Itakiri, Kalabari, Nembe, Okrika, Opobo and Warri.



**Figure 12:** Map of cities with the largest Izn population

The Izn are also scattered geographically, covering areas like the Delta State (which they share with Urhobo-Isokos, Itsekiris and Anioma), Bayelsa State (their main homeland), Rivers State (shared with Ikwerre, Ogoni and other Igbooid groups), Edo State (shared with Edoid groups such as Bini, Esan, Afemai, etc), and Ondo State (which they share with Yorubas). The Izns are also present in Akwa-Ibom State, Cross-Rivers State, Kogi State and Lagos State. Unlike the major tribes – and even some of the other minor tribes that have a central language they use for daily communication – Izn do not have such linguistic representation. Most of the languages or dialects they speak are not mutually intelligible, and they might not be readily understood without prior familiarity. In this thesis, I examine one such language, Ijw, which has many dialects.

Although Bayelsa state is called “The Wealth of the Nation”, it is a poor and miserable area. As discussed earlier, local people battle every day with oil spillages, which affect their livelihood. Spilt oil kills the fish the Izns have been used to catching and has destroyed ten per cent of the region’s mangrove forests. Water hyacinths, which thrive in polluted waters, have clogged up waterways to such an extent that fishing boats can no longer negotiate the water. Unable to earn a living in the traditional ways, the Izns have drifted into the main urban areas, where they hope to find jobs but often become slum dwellers. Many Izn have moved from the villages to Lagos, an urban migration that may also be playing a role in the decline of the Ijw language. When people move to cities, they pick up the major spoken

languages and dialects of the places to which they locate. In Lagos, this is Yoruba, which is a Western Nigerian language.

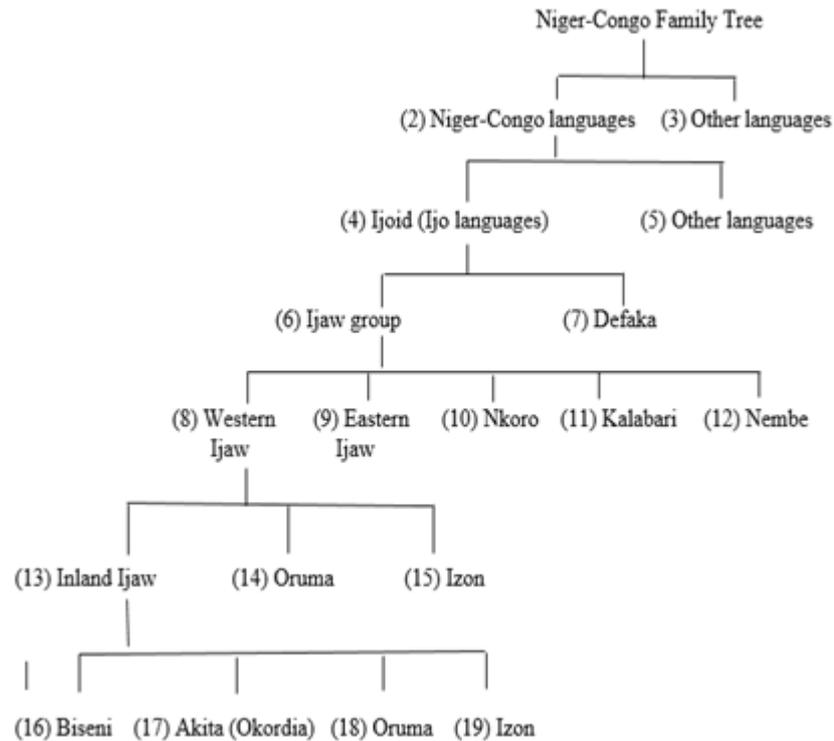
Political interests also militate against the Izón. Since the Izón regions have oil, the government has a special interest in them. However, several analyses of Nigeria's economy insist that petroleum resources have been more of a curse than a blessing in terms of the development of the Izón region (Iwayemi, 2006).

## **2.8 Language Clusters**

Data documentation is generally very poor and shows inflated estimates in numerous statistical enumerations. In estimating which language is spoken by whom and how many speakers of it there are, authors offer different accounts due to lack of documentation. The older living branch of Ijáv is the Nkoro and Defaka, although the Defaka people, who also speak Ijoid languages, (see Figure 14) are also worthy of note. Sadly, this language is facing extinction<sup>19</sup>. The Defaka people occupy Bonny LGA in Rivers State, administered under the Opobo-Nkoro local government area of Rivers State (Alagboa, 1972, pp. 4-10). Only 200 speakers of Defaka are still alive. Meanwhile, the Ibani of Opobo only moved into the Niger Delta in the nineteenth century, consolidating and increasing the activities of the Ijáv Kingdoms of Bonny and Okrika (another ethnic group in Rivers State) from earlier times, moving Eastwards through the waterways of the Nigerian shore into Ibibio and Efik, and beyond Cross Rivers State (ibid, p. 7). The Izón people can therefore be found living as significant independent communities, or as isolated migrant units, along the Nigerian shore lines (Talbot, 1967, p. 49<sup>i</sup>). They are spread across the Niger Delta, Western Izóns, and the South-Eastern region, as shown on the Niger-Congo family tree in Figure 13. The Niger Congo family tree shows how the different language clusters are represented within the various clans.

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<sup>19</sup>. <http://www.nairaland.com/2685893/ijaw-dialects-where-spoken>



**Figure 13:** The Niger Congo family tree

The family tree refers to the large Ijaw group and the minor Defaka language of Rivers State. The Ijaw groupings comprise Nkoro, the Kalabari-Kiribe (Okrika) Ibani cluster, and the Nembe-Akana (Akassa) cluster. Western Ijaw encompasses three groups, including Biseni, Akita (Okordia), and Oruma on the one hand and Izón with its several dialects on the other. However, different Ijaw speakers cannot readily converse with one another unless they have previously been exposed to the dialects of the other clusters in question (Williamson, 1989). This study focuses on the Western Ijaw [Mein], which consists of the Tuomo, Ekeremor, Sagbama, Bassan, Apoi, Arogbo, Boma, [Bumo], Kabo [kabuowei], Ogboin, Tarakiri and Kolokumo-Opokuma clans. However, for the purposes of this thesis, and following the labels used by my informants, I refer to the Western Ijaw as “Ijaw” throughout the thesis.

## Central and Western Ijw Dialects

1. *Ekeremor Dialect* (spoken in Ekeremor LGA of Bayelsa State). It is intelligible to some extent to the other Ijw clans.
2. *Mein Dialect* (spoken in Sagbama LGA of Bayelsa State and Burutu LGA of Delta State). It is intelligible to other Ijw clans.
3. *Bassan Dialect* (spoken in Southern Ijw LGA of Bayelsa State). Intelligible to others.
4. *Apoi Dialect* (spoken in Ese-Odo LGA of Ondo State). This dialect has been infiltrated by Yoruba and it is unintelligible to others.
5. *Arogbo Dialect* (spoken in Ese-Odo LGA of Ondo State). This dialect is deep, Yoruboid and not intelligible to others.
6. *Boma Dialect* (spoken in Southern Ijw LGA of Bayelsa State). This dialect is easily understood by others.
7. *Kabo (Kabuowei) Dialect* (spoken in Patani LGA of Delta State).
8. *Ogboin/Amassoma Dialect* (spoken in Southern Ijw LGA of Bayelsa State). It is a reclusive dialect but easily understood by others.
9. *Tarakiri Dialect* (spoken in Sagbama LGA of Bayelsa State and Patani LGA of Delta State). This dialect is Urhoboid due to its proximity with Urhobo people. Most of its speakers in Ofoni, Uduophori and Odorubu are outright Urhobo speakers, while others are bilingual.
10. *Kolokuma-Opokuma (Yenagoa) Dialect* (spoken in Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA of Bayelsa State). It is a major facet of Ijw and understandable by most Ijws. It is also the dialect spoken in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State Capital, and some of its suburbs as Central Ijw.

## South Eastern Ijw Dialects

11. *Nembe Dialect* (spoken in Nembe LGA of Bayelsa State). It sounds cumbersome to most Ijw speakers.
12. *Brass Dialect* (spoken in Brass LGA of Bayelsa State). This is a very deep dialect. It should be noted that Brass forms the first letter of the acronym, BAYELSA. The other parts of the acronym are YENAGOA and SAGBAMA to form BA-YEL-SA.

13. *Akassa (Akaha) Dialect* (spoken in Brass LGA of Bayelsa State). This is also a deep dialect.

### **Inland Ijw Dialects**

14. *Buseni (Biseni) Dialect* (spoken in Yenagoa LGA of Bayelsa State). Easily understood by the average speaker.

15. *Okordia Dialect* (spoken in Yenagoa LGA of Bayelsa State); similar to Buseni Dialect.

### **Eastern Ijw Dialects**

16. *Kalabari Dialect* (spoken in Degema, Asari-Toru and Akuku-Toru LGAs of Rivers State). It is not understood by most Ijw speakers and it is considered as a language on its own by most.

17. *Okrika Dialect* (spoken in Okrika LGA of Rivers State); it is also deep and hard. This is where the former First Lady, Patience Jonathan, hails from.

18. *Ibani Dialect* (spoken in Bonny LGA of Rivers State); this is generally ostracised and extremely deep. It is also deemed as a language of its own by most.

19. *Nkoroo Dialect* (spoken in Opobo/Nkoro LGA of Rivers State). It is like Kalabari and Okrika. Also, hard to understand.

### **Edoid Ijw Dialects**

Some Ijoid dialects, for one reason or another, are classified as Edoid. This is mainly due to the interference of Edo and other Deltan Languages in the Ijw language.

20. *Epie-Atissa Dialect* (spoken in Yenagoa LGA of Bayelsa State). It is not intelligible to other Ijw speakers and its origin is traced to Benin.

21. *Engenni Dialect* (spoken in Ahoada West LGA of Rivers State). It sounds like a mixture of Edo, Igbo and Ijw and it is not easily understood.

### **Efik/Ibiboid Ijw Dialects**

These dialects originate from Efik/Ibibio in Akwa-Ibom and Cross-Rivers State. These people share a culture with the Efik/Ibibio people.

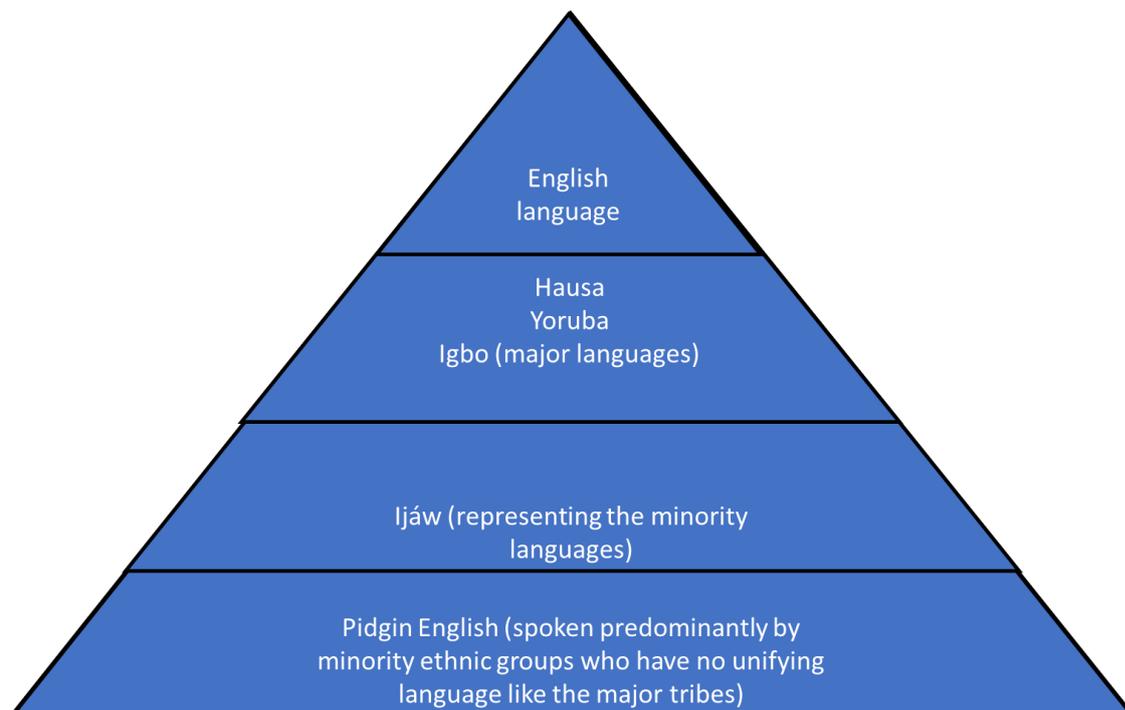
22. *Ogbia Dialect* (spoken in Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State). This dialect is completely incomprehensible to other Ijw speakers.

23. *Andoni Dialect* (spoken in Andoni LGA of Rivers State and Eastern Obolo

LGA of Akwa-Ibom State). It is also incomprehensible to other speakers Oruwa.

## 2.9 Language use and Hierarchies

According to Udofot (2011, p.5), even those Nigerians who call for the institution of an indigenous language as the *lingua franca* of Nigeria have helped to spread the use of English. Udofot argues that educated Nigerians should not seek to teach English, which is acknowledged as one of the national languages of the country in preference to the mother tongue of their children. It is however actively encouraged over other national languages such as Hausa, Yoruba or Igbo. Udofot questions whether English is replaceable in Nigeria, when despite the efforts of the Nigerian government to ensure that children are instructed in Nigerian languages for the first six years of their lives, parents prefer saturating their children with English to enable them to excel at school and to communicate outside the home. It is therefore easy to see how English has been propelled to the top of the language hierarchy in Nigeria to the point where it now seems irreplaceable. The language hierarchy of Nigeria within the context of this thesis is illustrated in Figure 14 below:



**Figure 14:** Language Hierarchy (adapted from Udofot, 2011, p.47)

There are great differences in the status of Nigeria's many languages. English (as shown in the pyramid above) serves as the national language, and some major languages like Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have a high status too, while Ijaw and other minority languages have a lower status. English is mostly used in education, and some people use English as their first language, which then becomes the only spoken language at home, in social gatherings, and at school. Others speak English along with Pidgin at home. Pidgin English, unlike English or Arabic, is neither foreign nor indigenous to Nigeria. It was brought by religion, Nevertheless it has become a viable medium of communication, especially in its use as intergroup language by uneducated, ethnically heterogeneous urban populations in many Southern communities. In the highly multilingual states that also lack widespread indigenous *lingua francas* such as Bendel, Rivers and Cross River, Pidgin English readily complements English to address important communication needs. In urban communities such as Benin City, Warri, Sapele, Onitsha, Port Harcourt and Calabar, more than 70 per cent of the adult population and practically all children of school age typically communicate fluently in Pidgin English (Agheyisi, 1984, p.237). They speak Pidgin as a unifying language, since all of them have their own dialects or languages.

Pidgin, like most indigenous languages, has a low status. Nigerian Pidgin<sup>20</sup>, an amalgam of Standard English, Portuguese, Spanish and various Afro-Caribbean languages such as Jamaican Patois<sup>21</sup>, is an efficient means of communication for millions of people with different native languages across Nigeria. In *Dialects and Registers*, Halliday (1978, p. 35) states that a dialect is "what you speak determined by who you are" in terms of socio-economic region of origin and/or adoption". Dialects express the diversity of social structure (patterns of social hierarchy). This supports my thesis because Nigeria is a mixture of languages and dialects linked by the geopolitical zones. The hierarchy of language in Nigeria places English at the top followed by indigenous languages and dialects. In contrast, this study seeks to examine individual viewpoints in terms of how they use Ijaw daily and why

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20. Nigerian Pidgin is an English-based Pidgin and creole language spoken across Nigeria. The language is commonly referred to as Pidgin or Broken (pronounced "Brokin").

21. Jamaican Patois, known locally as Patois (Patwa or Patwah) and referred to as Jamaican Creole by linguists, is an English-based creole language with West African influences (mostly loan words of Akan origin) spoken primarily in Jamaica and among the Jamaican diaspora: Examples are "I Will Be Right Back" – Mi Soon Come. Jamaican – "Yardie," Yard man. "To Eat" – Nyam.

the language seems not to be passing down to younger generations. In a study entitled *Language Policy in Nigeria: Problems, Prospects and Perspectives* (Ogunmodimu, 2015, p.154), the need for a national *lingua franca* that indexes the identity of Nigeria has been theorised and debated through different lenses within the frame of language policy.

According to Ogunmodimu (ibid), what has been overlooked is the intra-indigenous language dichotomy that exists between minority languages and major languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) in the formulation of a more inclusive language policy for Nigeria. Furthermore, the reason why Pidgin English has not been chosen as the national language remains unexplored, although the debate for a national language continues to be a concern that is highlighted extensively. Most language hierarchies seem to work in two ways. Some married couples come from different ethnic backgrounds or tribes, and such families resort to speaking English or Pidgin at home. However, it might also be the case that families regularly choose the father's language because in Nigeria the father is the head of the family. The bride and the children join the father's clan rather than the man joining the mother's clan, as would be the case in matrilineal societies. In his study, Ehala (2009, p.39) says that "the fate of a language may depend less of (sic) its legal status than the attitudes of its speakers". This appears to imply that languages thrive when speakers have a positive attitude towards using them. If the Ijaw speakers themselves could demonstrate that they appreciate the language more than its status suggests, it is likely that use of the language would increase rather than decline. The use of a language should not change based on the circumstances of one's life; it should be part of a culture and a people. Ehala comments that people's approach to language and culture is very important, and that when their attitudes towards languages become linked to language in contexts like Nigeria, Standard English begins to dominate homes and the wider society.

Languages such as Pidgin are often used for "vertical" commands when a superordinate group needs to communicate but has little interest in reducing social distances. Creoles, meanwhile, are "horizontal" languages that become mother tongues or languages of intimacy. Creolisation is in some ways the opposite of pidginisation, since it represents a process of expansion and inclusion rather than reduction or command. As in other languages, creoles experience a continuous process of change in response, for example, to educational policies, identity politics, and social status. The process sounds simple but is understated in abstract discussions in comparison to the way it plays out in everyday life.

There is a tendency for people to ridicule the Ijw pronunciation, which may not be because of its status. Accents or pronunciation are peculiar to every tribe, although the prevalence of pronunciation type varies. For example, the Yoruba have their own way of pronouncing certain words – as do the Calabars or Ibibios, who seem to embrace their identities. Other tribes or countries are particularly biased. However, some individuals show disdain towards a way of speaking because of how it sounds or towards speakers who are unable to pronounce English. They express their disdain for the Izns, who are considered backward, even though the region contributes so much to Nigeria’s economy. The sentence “I will sump into the river to Kakhe some fich” (with its typical Izn intonation of “jump” and “catch”) has become proverbial in Nigeria, just as “English as She is Spoke” has become proverbial in English, making fun of the ill-fated attempts of well-meaning foreigners to speak idiomatically correct English. There is a pecking order in the status of languages, including English and Pidgin. Some are perceived superior while others are considered inferior (Bauer and Trudgill, 1998, p. xvii). This suggests that English has a superior status, while Pidgin does not, even though it is widely spoken across Nigeria.

Even though Pidgin is considered a debased form of English, people prefer to speak English or switch between English and Pidgin than to use Ijw. This may be due to the status which is ascribed to English and to the fact that Pidgin is widely spoken alongside English. Trudgill (2000, p.69) comments that “many people have objected to Pidgins because they have corrupted the ‘purity’ of English (or some other European language)”. To claim that Pidgin contaminates English is unfair to those who use it to communicate within a community. Views like these are often accompanied by sentiments about racial and cultural “purity” as well. If one regards Pidgin as a debased and inferior form of English, it may be quite easy to regard its mostly non-European speakers as also being “debased” and “inferior”, which is far from the objective of this study. Pidgin is widely spoken by people in Nigeria, and there is no reason why it should not be used as a *lingua franca* irrespective of its status. In her study, Falola (2001, p.7) observed that:

Pidgin, a combination of English and indigenous languages, has also spread very widely, especially in cities, and with the advantage of simplicity and linguistic innovations, has succeeded in promoting creativity in popular culture.

This reveals that Pidgin is not just composed of English alone but is rather of a combination of English and indigenous languages; for instance, some words in Yoruba serve as substitutes within the lexis. Pidgin is also being used to promote culture in Nigerian comedies and films.

**Table 1:** Examples of Nigerian Pidgin, adapted from Lemeiux (2012)

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>How now or How you dey?</i>               | <i>How are you</i>  |
| <i>Pikin</i>                                 | <i>A child</i>  |
| <i>Wahala</i>                                | <i>Trouble</i>  |
| <i>Oyinbo</i>                                | <i>This is used to describe a white person</i>                                      |
| <i>O</i>                                     | <i>This is used for emphasis at the end of a sentence, for instance – ‘Sorry O’</i> |
| <i>Naija</i>                                 | <i>This is a hip word for Nigeria</i>   |
| <i>Se you dey come? Or You dey come abi?</i> | <i>This is used to ask the question – ‘You are coming, right?’</i>                  |
| <i>You go whak? Or you go chop?</i>          | <i>Will you join me in meal?</i>  |
| <i>I no sabi</i>                             | <i>I don’t know</i>   |
| <i>Abi? or No be so?</i>                     | <i>Isn’t it?</i>  |

As Table 1 shows, there are some basic phrases or words that people use on different occasions. For instance, when you do not understand what is going on, you can use the Pidgin word “*wahala*” (trouble) as an exclamation. It is worth noting that Pidgin is not written; it is an oral language that people use for convenience. Since Pidgin seems to be the language of the minority, which includes Ijaw, the next section will discuss cultural practices in Nigeria.

The former president of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Jonathan (1957- ), is an Ijaw. He was sworn in on 29 May 2010 to preside over Nigeria. However, despite his status as a president and leader, culturally speaking, his background as an Ijaw has been manifested in dress but not in education. Although the older generations were taught in Ijaw, or used to speak the language in schools, they no longer use it as a medium of communication, which begs the question as to why indigenous languages such as Ijaw have been peripheralised in education, and whether this neglect is due to changes in cultural practices.

The next section discusses the deities which the Nigerians were worshipping before English or Western beliefs came to dominate the nation, and the worship of which influenced cultural practices in relation to language.

## **2.10 Cultural Practices**

In Nigeria, the dominance of a religion is determined by the way each geographical area is occupied. Nigeria is split roughly in half between the Muslims in the North and Christians in the South, and Islam and Christianity are recognised as Nigeria's two main religions. A very small minority of Nigerians practise traditional African religions. Since 2009, there have been growing clashes, particularly in the North of the country, between government forces and the Islamist organisation Boko Haram<sup>22</sup> (meaning literally “Western Ways are *haram*”, or “Western Ways are forbidden/sinful”). Its members comprise militant jihadists who seek to establish sharia law.

The infighting in Nigeria began in 2009 although Boko Haram came into existence in 2002, claiming to fight for an Islamic state. Its members have been killing Christians, especially in the North, where Muslims in general have the greatest strength in terms of numbers and influence. There have been many incidents involving sectarian violence, several of which have been reported in the British media. For example, on 28 October on a Sunday morning in 2012, a suicide bomber crashed his car into a Roman Catholic Church in the city of Kaduna (located in the central belt of Nigeria). The church was filled with worshippers attending mass. Eight people were killed and over 100 injured (Aljazeera, 2014). The same source, Aljazeera (2014), reported that in June Boko Haram attacked three churches in the state of Kaduna, including one in the city. At least 50 people were killed in the bombings and the reprisals that followed.

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22. An armed group seized 276 pupils from the Government Girls Secondary School in the town of Chibok on the night of 14 April 2014, with 57 of them managing to escape in the immediate aftermath of the abduction. About 2,000 girls and boys have been abducted by Boko Haram since 2014, with many used as sex slaves, fighters and even suicide bombers, according to Amnesty International. Some 20,000 people have been killed and about 2.3 million displaced since Boko Haram started its armed campaign in 2009. Source: Aljazeera.news.com.

The Izóns are 95 per cent Christians, mainly Roman Catholic and Anglican in their sectarian affiliations. This is because the Izóns have always lived close to the coast and the river because of their fishing tradition and were therefore were the first to encounter missionaries travelling up the River Niger. Ancestors play a vital role in Izón land because they are spoken with during ceremonies, and elders pour some alcohol or Ogo [local Gin] on the floor to pay homage to their forefathers by speaking in Ijáv in praise of the ancestors before drinking the alcohol and telling the ancestors to partake in the drinking too. Religions can be chosen by a group – as in the case of the Kalabari who believed in the python as a spiritual god that would protect them from any evil that could befall them. The Kalabaris (see Section 2.7) are surrounded by the ocean and because of their terrain they commute to their destinations in boats and are thus faced with the likelihood of capsizing during strong tides. On occasions such as this they believe that the python will appear and rescue people from drowning and may leave a mark on the ankles of those it has rescued. Some Izóns believed that humans live among the water spirits (a kind of mermaid) before being born. For example, while at secondary school, I read *Abiku*, a Yoruba poem by Wole Soyinka (1934- ), which expresses the popular belief in reincarnation that our soul can inhabit a human body or the body of an animal (a python perhaps) in turn. Thus, it is believed that if we kill a snake (or an albatross, for that matter), we may be killing our own children:

“Mothers! I’ll be the  
Suppliant snake coiled on the doorstep  
Yours the killing cry.”  
(from: *Abiku*, 1967).

*Wanderer child. It is the same child who dies and  
returns again and again to plague the mother.*

***-Yoruba belief***

The Igbo version of *Abiku* is *Ogbanje*; Igbo language is “children who come and go” ... *Ogbanje* was popularised by the critically acclaimed book by Achebe (1958, p.9) *Things Fall Apart* which includes the character *Ezinma*, who was considered an *Ogbanje* because she was the only one of ten children born to her mother who did not die in infancy.

This teaches us respect for nature because we are one with it, and the same divine spirit lives in all creatures, whether human or animal, and even in plants. As ancient religions are superseded in the name of progress, nature loses its divinity and becomes merely an

economic resource to be exploited and destroyed in the quest for profit. A good example is the destruction by the oil industry of the waters from which the traditional Izóns eked out their livelihood. Thus, the decline in the economic viability of the traditional Izón community is paralleled by the decline in its status and the use of its language.

Coleridge <sup>23</sup>sends out the same message in the *Ryme of the Ancient Mariner*:

*“Farewell, farewell! but this I tell  
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!  
He prayeth well, who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.*

*He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us  
He made and loveth all”.*

According to this belief, human beings return to earth and are born into the same family or into others. It is believed that gods should be appeased to stop these eternal wanderings. In the traditional Izón religion, prayers are offered to keep the living in the good graces of the water spirits, amongst whom they dwelt before being born into this world. Every year Izóns have a festival to honour these spirits, which lasts for several days. Based on earlier discussion, we can conclude that ethnic groups in Nigeria seem to have no specific policies on when their languages should be spoken or within which domains they must be used, so prayers and festivals are run in whatever language is most appropriate to the supplicants. People tend to speak the language that is most dominant wherever they live, not only in religious litanies, but also in the educational sector. Students are also taught in the language of the community.

## **2.11 Language Policies in Education**

Education is the most important engine of development and change. In Nigeria, as in other African countries, education is believed to be the key to opening doors and bringing progress, which is why many students from Nigeria head to the UK to pursue their higher education. Their parents believe that good qualifications will change the lives and improve the prospects of their children and their entire families. In terms of the National Policy on Education (1991) Dr Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma, the Chief Executive of Nigeria’s National Institute for Cultural Orientation (cited in Egberipou, 2012, p.006) has stated that:

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23. Coleridge PART VII; Stanza 22-23, cited on poets’ graves.co.uk

The medium of instruction in early school life for every child in the (pre-primary and primary schools' stage) in Nigeria must be principally in the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community.

However, this policy is emphasised and practised to a greater degree in the Western and Northern Regions of Nigeria. Dr Ayakoromo, however, comes from the Izón regions, which do not practise this policy, highlighting the lack of consistent policy implementation in the country.

A study by Ogunmodimu (2015) discusses the different languages spoken in Nigeria and how they are represented politically. He explores the historical and sociolinguistic factors that forged the Nigerian linguistic landscape. Ogunmodimu argues that ethnic diversity has always been a factor of the people living around the Niger, and in this light, it is not ethnicity or ethnic diversity which is a problem for the nation but rather the politicising of ethnicity according to linguistic parameters. However, from the perspective of this study, this limitation could be overcome if every state was to incorporate indigenous languages within the school curriculum. Dada (2010) who analysed Nigerian language policies in education offers a different perspective, looking at policy as the major influence on language use and language maintenance. Having examined issues arising from the diversity of language and efforts made to resolve these issues, Dada recommends that appropriate strategies should be put in place to ensure the implementation of the nation's language policies. As far as language policy in education is concerned, Dada concludes that every school student should be bilingual in English and Yoruba. This reflects the influence of an exoglossic language policy adopted for Nigerian citizens. Since Nigeria uses English as its primary language, Oyetade (2002, p.53) observes that:

Attempts have been made in one way or the other to harness the linguistic resources of Nigeria for national development. But much has not been achieved [as the] policies are made to fail or are designed in such a way to make implementation difficult

Oyetade's comment that policies are "made to fail" refers to built-in pitfalls – political or social – that favour one ethnic group or the other, putting education at the receiving end of the fallout from poorly-structured policies. Oyetade argues that in a state like Lagos, the policy asserts that the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment (which is mainly Yoruba) for the first three years and that English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth year onwards English will also be used as the medium of instruction and the language of the immediate environment, while French shall be taught as a subject. However, this does not happen, because English is spoken or taught alongside

Yoruba in primary schools. In secondary school, students have the option of choosing French or Yoruba, depending on the social environment.

A further study by Dada (2013) employed a descriptive survey design and used a structured questionnaire to collect data from 300 individuals across Nigeria. Dada's survey found that the data supported the use of indigenous languages in education to reduce over-dependence on English. Earlier research (Dadzie and Awonusi, 2009; Lawal, 2014) as well as newer investigations (Ibrahim and Gwandu, 2016) also highlighted the growing dependence on English in the Nigerian educational sector, as it plays an important role as the language of officialdom. These findings list many issues pertaining to the provision of education, including the challenges of multi-linguality, poor policy planning and implementation, as well as teaching quality and curriculum materials. Ibrahim and Gwandu (ibid) recommend that the Federal Government of Nigeria should do more about the enforcement of the provisions across all sectors of education and develop more educational resources and orthographies of indigenous languages to meet the demands of multilingual education. Notwithstanding the above suggestions, it seems that these policies are usually more easily discussed than implemented by the authorities.

Ndukwue (2015, p.135) observes that the challenges of language teaching and learning in Nigerian schools today are at the heart of the issues regarding language education. The significant role that language plays both individually and nationally cannot be overlooked. Language education is vitally important in Nigeria's educational system due to the multilingual nature of the country's society.

The government has decreed that each state can teach in the local community language if it wishes to, which may be Yoruba, Hausa or Igbo [see hierarchy of languages in Section 2.8]. In the context of my thesis, this implies that primary school children may be taught in Ijáw or in the language of the community in which they reside. Nigeria language policies are designed, among other things, to counteract the decline of minority languages like Ijáw and other threatened languages. This shows that policymakers are aware of the issues and dangers of language decline, and they seek to impart awareness of this to teachers and parents alike. According to Section 3:15 (4) of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1981 and 2004:

The government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, English.

This language provision (see Sections 1:8, 2:11 [3] and 3:15 [4]) also stipulates that junior secondary school students will be required to learn English as well as Nigerian languages, composed firstly of “the language of their own area” and secondly “any of the three main Nigerian languages, Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba, subject to availability of teachers” (ibid). At senior secondary school stage, the students will be required to learn English and one Nigerian language. Education in Nigeria is based on a 6-3-3-4 system, which involves three levels of institutional learning: primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The tertiary level includes polytechnics, colleges and universities, whether private, government-owned or state-owned.

Similar issues have arisen in other countries, such as Jamaica<sup>24</sup>, where the question as to whether children in primary school should be educated (and text books be published) in Standard English or in English-based Jamaican Patois has been fiercely debated. The Malawian government recently proposed that the Ministry of Education should change the existing language policy in primary schools. Currently a Malawian language (which in most primary schools is ChiChewa,<sup>25</sup> a spoken dialect of Malawi) is the language of instruction for the first four years, with English being taught as a subject. Thereafter English becomes the medium of instruction, and then in secondary school the students can choose between French, Arabic and any other indigenous language of the immediate environment (this is similar to the Nigerian context, with Yoruba in Lagos, Igbo in the East and Hausa in the Northern regions). Tertiary institutions in Malawi are open to individual choices and are not controlled by the government.

Nigeria is linguistically extremely diverse, and this seems to affect the way languages are arranged in hierarchies, which place some languages at the top and some nearer the bottom (Figure 14). In Nigeria, certain languages are taught as curriculum subjects, but this varies between states. This is indicative of the States to which that setting belongs. For example, in Lagos state (one of the Western States) Yoruba is the language of instruction, and people learn to speak it in the environment of the setting. When I was young I learnt Yoruba in primary school, while in secondary school I learnt Arabic and French as curriculum subjects. However, this trend seems to have changed as the world evolves. Secondary school students presently learn Igbo as an optional subject in Lagos alongside Yoruba or Arabic, reflecting their multilingualism.

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24. <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20120826/cleisure/cleisure2.html>

<http://www.mona.uwi.edu/Dllp/jlu/projects/index.htm>

25. <https://www.rippleafrica.org/education-in-malawi-africa/general-education-in-malawi-africa>

## 2.12 Summary

Nigeria has a great variety of cultures and languages and has passed through radically different political phases ranging from colonial, independent and post-independent, under military and democratic regimes. It has experienced an oil boom, which has led it to be included in the list of top oil-producing countries in 2012. However, the wealth of the country is not evenly distributed. We have oil barons, and we have people living in abject poverty in cities and in villages. The practical importance of English for Nigeria as a nation of many tribes, cultures and languages has ensured its dominance. It was the language of the ruling colonisers and was declared Nigeria's (only) national language in its own constitution, which accompanied independence in October 1960. The indigenous languages of Nigeria should, however, contend with English in terms of dominance, and this should be enshrined by the constitution and in educational policies. Many people use English or Nigerian Pidgin rather than their mother tongue. In terms of this study, when parents do not speak Ijáw with their children, the chain of transmission becomes broken. This language shift is motivated by socioeconomic reasons, which have led to the promotion of English over indigenous languages.

The next chapter will discuss how language endangerment practices relate to culture, language and identity, factors which are discernible in most African countries, not just in the Nigerian context.

# Chapter 3

## Language, Culture and Identity

Before Nigeria came into contact with Europe and colonization, it existed as a sprawling territory of diverse ethnic groups, with each group having a distinct (and to some extent overlapping) historical, linguistic, cultural patterns expressed in traditional socio-political, educational and religious systems... Therefore, in the northern hemisphere, there existed the Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Eggon, Mada, Tiv and the Nupes to mention a few. In the Southern protectorate are the Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Efik, and Ibibio etc. When Britain took over as the colonial power in Nigeria, English became the tool with which the new territory would be administered (Ogunmodimu, 2015, p.155).

The quote above helps demonstrate the linguistic diversity of Nigeria and the dominance of English language.

### 3.1 Introduction: Stirring Senses

This chapter sets the stage for surveying the relevant contributions of researchers whose writings have inspired me during my research. The three key concepts covered in this chapter are language, culture and identity, which are discussed from a sociolinguistic standpoint. I begin by providing the historical background of language loss in global terms before discussing more specifically how African countries have experienced their own language loss, linking this discussion to Nigerian indigenous languages. I move on to discuss the concepts of language use and language shift, as well as language hierarchies and ideologies, and specifically the dominance of Standard English language as the official language followed by Pidgin English. I discuss the relationships between language, identity and ethnicity, contrasting essentialist and anti-essentialist approaches (social constructionist and post-structuralist approaches). I also examine culture before moving on to a discussion of language, culture and emotions by looking at people's attitudes and behaviours towards languages. I explore multilingualism and the relationship between language and globalisation. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on translanguaging and intergenerational transmission.

### **3.2 Language loss: A Historical Perspective**

In the past decade, there have been various publications resulting from different initiatives to foster awareness of the accelerating rate of language loss (Moseley, 2007, p. x). Although the active involvement of the United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in fostering global language diversity is comparatively recent, it builds upon various initiatives of the last two decades. In the 1980s, UNESCO began to highlight language diversity in collaboration with selected organisations globally as a crucial element of the world's cultural diversity. The first World Conference of Indigenous Peoples was held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, where people declared their desire for self-determination, educating their children, and preserving their cultural identity. Other groups, including the UNESCO (2010) Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger have argued that language loss entails human cultural impoverishment in countless ways. Each language – large or small – captures and organises the reality of its speakers in a distinctive manner. Thus, to lose even one language closes off avenues for potential exploration about human cognition. The death of a language inevitably leads to the disappearance of various forms of intangible cultural heritage connected to that language, including the performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events. Often traditional crafts and the priceless legacy of a community's oral traditions and expressions – from poetry and jokes to proverbs and legends – are lost too. Languages represent a people, their cultural practices, beliefs and identities, which would be irrevocably lost if nothing was done to revitalise languages that are facing extinction.

Ostler (2005, p.7) examined communities of the world that are identified by the first languages they speak, explaining that there are variations in relation to strengths and sizes. Mandarin Chinese, for example, has some 900 million speakers, who account for one sixth of the world's population. English and Spanish have approximately 300 million each, but at the other end of the scale there is a long list of smaller communities accounting for over half of the languages in the world, with some having fewer than 5000 speakers and over 1000 languages having only a dozen or so speakers left. It is estimated that there are 6000 languages in the world, a figure which is subject to change depending on whether a language is counted as language or a dialect (UNESCO, 2010). A great deal has been published on language endangerment in the literature (Krauss, 1992, p.7; Crystal, 2000; Ostler, 2005; UNESCO 2009), with linguists predicting that by the end of the twenty-first century 3000 languages will have become extinct. Wurm (1996) observes that this refers to half the languages spoken in the world today. The term "language shift" was introduced to the field of

sociolinguistics through the influential work of Uriel Weinreich (1953) and Joshua Fishman (1966). Mesthrie et al. (2009, p.245) define “language shift as the replacement of one language by another as the primary means of communication and socialisation within a community”. This is exemplified in the case of the attitude towards English as a preferred language over indigenous languages by many African states. Up to ten per cent of African languages, especially those spoken by small communities, may disappear within the next hundred years. Most of these are among the 2,500 or so languages included in the Atlas discussed earlier. Over one hundred further languages exist only in name and have been omitted from our endangered language overview because there are no speakers left. In addition to those small speech communities scattered across the African continent, there are other high-risk areas for languages and their speakers. The most serious threat to African language diversity, however, has still not been documented adequately by scholars, and has also been left out of this survey, namely the slow drift of hundreds of languages whenever they are in contact with genetically related languages. Batibo (2005) describes Zaramo as slowly giving way to Swahili despite having an ethnic population of over 200,000 speakers. But not even the speakers themselves are aware of the gradual erosion of their language, and it is believed that many African languages, despite being generally considered as spoken by 100,000 people or more, might in fact have already almost disappeared (UNESCO, 2010, p.20).

As language shift continues, bilingualism is expected to decline among younger generations, who have become progressively monolingual in the dominant languages (Dorrit and Zeller, 2016). Grenoble and Whaley (1998, p.24) assert that “the subjective attitudes of a speech community towards its own and other languages are paramount for predicting language shift”, from which we can infer that cultural attitudes are encouraged to avoid shift. In the end, language shifts occur when the attitudes of speakers towards the languages in terms of usage or transmission to the younger generations begins to change. Surveying the literature, I was inspired to consider the case of Ijáw and work towards reversing its decline, because I had read of cases in which people had succeeded in reviving dead languages. Austin and Sallabank (2011) argue that it is imperative to study language ideologies as part of the investigation into endangered languages. More significantly, they argue that effective language revitalisation hinges on an awareness of language ideologies which are achieved in part through ethnographic research. They propose that by researching and revealing unconscious language ideologies as well as challenging consciously accepted ones, it is

possible to overcome deeply ingrained beliefs about the cultural inferiority of a way of speaking; the notion that acquiring a language of wider communication necessitates abandoning other languages and dialects, and the assumption that a small language needs to have all the attributes of a larger one (ibid, p. 7). Research in Nigeria dealing with language shift and language *maintenance* as opposed to *endangerment* is almost non-existent in the sociolinguistic literature (Dada, Owoeye and Ojo, 2015, p.37). Endangerment is the start of a gradual process leading to language death, according to Fabunmi and Salawu, (2005). While Whaley (2011) is of the notion that endangered languages has a range of complexities and social dynamics. This resonates for a shift away from the vague idea that documentation and related research might facilitate language revitalisation and argues instead for an active practice of supporting and pursuing language reclamation, a “larger effort by a community to claim its right to speak a language and to set associated goals in response to community needs and perspectives” (Leonard 2012, p. 359). However, this thesis supports this perspective that a community has rights over their language, but in this case, Ijaw needs documentation to support revitalisation.

The attitudes of parents, government, schools and the wider society come into play in a language’s death or revitalisation. The most common cause of language death in the world today is not population death, which is a reduction in the number of people in a country, but language shift, which occurs when two languages come into contact and one of them gains greater dominance. This also happens when parents no longer pass on their language to their children. Once there is no intergenerational continuity in the learning of a language, the language is most likely to fall into decline. Sometimes a language may function well enough in the school environment and other domains, but it is still hindered by lack of transmission. The lack of documentation of (and in) a language also affects its transmission because there may not be ways others can use it in teaching or learning the language. However, Yoruba, which has documentation, is nevertheless considered to be endangered (Balogun, 2013, p.70).

### **3.3 English as the Official Language of Nigeria**

The English Language has been clearly associated with attempts at assimilation by the British throughout Great Britain’s colonial history. English and French languages have come to occupy a prestigious place in African countries such as Nigeria and Cameroon, even after independence and long after colonialism has become a matter of history. Languages, Pennycook argues (1998, p.8) represent a “significant site of cultural production”. English as

a medium of instruction (EMI) has been defined by Dearden (2014, p. 4) as “the use of English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of most of the population is not English.” EMI was incorporated into school systems to support those citizens who could attend schools, but if the teachers who are expected to teach in English lack proper teaching resources in implementing this policy, unforeseen issues might arise from EMI implementation. These observations have been borne out by Ibrahim, Anka and Yabo (2017, p.63) who carried out studies in Nigeria to ascertain the pattern of using English as the medium of instruction, and the challenges as well as the effects of this process. Their results indicate ineffective implementation of EMI in primary schools, which is contrary to the provision of the National Education Policy of Nigerian Federal Government. Primary school teachers and pupils faced various challenges associated with using English as medium of instruction, especially due to the influence of local languages and the students’ mother tongues. However, some of these challenges could have been overcome by implementing the recommendations.

Despite English being the medium of communication and teaching, it has become evident that there are many challenges regarding language teaching, particularly in English within Nigeria. Similar challenges exist at university level, as reported by Adegbija (2004, p.4) based on the findings of two consultants from the British Overseas Development Administration who visited five Nigerian universities to evaluate the limitations of English language teaching in Nigeria. The consultants found that the standards of teaching of English were poor and that teachers were unfamiliar with modern teaching techniques, strategies and methods. Students and teachers lacked adequate materials, and the standards of learning were poor, with the consequent poor standards of academic English having a negative impact on the general standard of education, and indirectly on wider socio-economic development, since English was of immediate relevance to all disciplines taught in Nigerian universities. Although English is used as EMI, there is a lack of adequate materials, implementation and monitoring of policies.

Colonialism alone cannot be blamed for all that is wrong with the educational landscape in Nigeria, especially with reference to the use of EMI by under-prepared teachers in under-resourced pedagogical settings. Essien (2006, p.4) observes that the language one knows well is usually one’s mother tongue. However, due to the dominance of English and the ideological hangover from colonialism, most Nigerian parents do not teach their children their mother tongues. This is from where the gap in the intergenerational transmission of

language stems and this is what this current study seeks to investigate as a contributing factor to the decline of the Ijáw language. Essien places the blame for the decline of indigenous languages on government ineptitude, since the government controls language policy and planning processes in Nigeria.

Essien (2006) further observes that a people who are limited by the language they consider to be their *lingua franca* are linguistically under-nourished, and like under-nourished children they will be unable to grow and develop properly. In contrast, it is one of the premises of this current study that parents have a greater role to play in language learning, as well as a greater responsibility, because home is where the learning of a language begins. Colonialism may have set up English as the chosen official language in Nigeria, but this process has simultaneously imperilled indigenous languages. English language teaching was a crucial part of the colonial enterprise, and English remains the major language of the establishment in the expression and perpetuation of the colonial system. In addition to colonialism, Nigeria has witnessed the rise of bilingualism and multilingualism, since official policies require English to be learnt by its citizens in addition to their mother tongue and other indigenous languages (see Chapter 2).

Colonialism brought more than religion in its wake, essentially formulating a form of communication that took over indigenous languages in the colonised countries. As a result, Ricento (2000 p.200) observes that “independent states found themselves in some ways more dependent on their former colonial masters than they had been during the colonial era” when African countries adopted English as their official language in preference to indigenous languages even after their independence. This gave English a higher status compared to indigenous languages or mother tongues in many West African countries (Omoniyi, 2007). Kachru (1994, p. vi) states that “West Africans have over a period given English a Nigerian identity”, because Nigeria uses English as its only official language, unlike some other African countries (such as Cameroon) that use it alongside their indigenous languages. De Klerk (1999, p.6) postulated that “Cameroon English has been somewhat neglected within the ‘World of Englishness’”. De Klerk’s study explores the structural consequences of contact between Mande and Atlantic languages and the reasons for this mono-directionality, concentrating primarily on the affected group – the speakers of Atlantic languages. In terms of Mande-Atlantic interaction, the most common practice has been for speakers of Atlantic languages to adopt the culture and language of speakers of Mande languages (Childs, 2010,

p.15). The studies discussed above show that some countries decide to choose English as their official language, whilst others choose English alongside indigenous languages.

According to Wolf (2001, p.1), “although English is not an indigenous African language, it is undoubtedly a language in Africa.” A good example of the need to see dominant languages in terms of power is provided by the familiar expression ‘English-speaking African countries. Such a description indexes the positionality of English in the domains governed by former colonial masters; even after the colonial period, English continues to be given credence above other languages, and many natives tend to be English speakers. English has an unquestionably prestigious role. Abdullahi-Idiagbon and Olaniyi (2011) note the domination of English over 500 Nigerian indigenous languages (see also Adegbija, 2004; Bamgbose, 1971). The dominance of the English language over the indigenous languages, in this case Ijáw, could be described as severe (see Section 2.2). It was the missionaries who first arrived with English as the medium of communication, but it outgrew its primary religious context and transformed into the language of politics, education and everyday communication.

### **3.4 Hierarchies of Languages: Ideologies and Values**

This section discusses the ways in which languages are accorded status in Nigeria. Since we first learned how to speak, language has been a dominant weapon in the suppression of peoples and nations (Moseley, 2007, p. viii). According to Crystal (2000, p.40), a language is the “most massive and inclusive art we know”. Language is embedded in who we are, what we do, where we live, how we integrate within society, and how others negotiate and come to understand who we are. Sociolinguistics is the study of language and society. The inter-relationship between them represents variations in language or how people’s attitudes towards a language are constructed or dictated by the social factors of a society (for example, cultural values in terms of accents, word choice and vocabulary).

Communication is used for interactions and to make sense of conversation through the means of language. However, society accords status to some languages, which has led to the creation of hierarchies of languages within communities. “Hierarchy of languages” in this study signifies the way languages are situated in society in terms of the status afforded to some languages and how people perceive them (Adegbija, 2004). Language ideologies refer to how society constructs policies that embody the pattern of behaviours towards a given language. In the first instance, language is a communication tool that enables people to interact daily as they wish. Without language, there would be no community, as the concept

of community forms who the people are and where they belong. Language is the bond that links people, sharing beliefs, cultures, customs and values within a community with a speech community. Linguistically Nigeria is a nation that is immensely diverse in linguistic terms, and even these statistics may well be under-reported due to lack of proper documentation. Nevertheless, even though Nigeria has linguistic diversity as stated by Childs (2010), the stronger and more legitimate argument is that speakers are not passive victims of world forces but instead can make active decisions about using a language. Language speaking or use depends on individuals, and the presence of English alongside the dominant spoken languages should not be a hindrance to people who speak those indigenous languages (Omoniyi, 2007).

Language predates hierarchy: without languages to communicate or speak with, there would be no hierarchies. Instead, hierarchies are imposed on the people at a later point, either by governing forces or by individuals themselves by making conscious choices (as my own father did; see Chapter 1).<sup>26</sup> This argues against the hierarchy of language in Nigeria. Ogunmodimu describes the sociolinguistic situation in Nigeria as being symptomatic of the linguistic situation in a broader context in which local languages are in a subtractive polyglossic relationship with English. Subtractive polyglossia, in turn, results from Nigerian English users' own subtractive bilingualism. Unless urgent steps are taken to redress the geolinguistic imbalance between English and Nigeria's minority languages, Nigeria's local dialects, except for Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, face continuing decline and degeneration, if not possible extinction (Ogunmodimu, 2015).

My own feeling is that English has the functional capacity of a national language in Nigeria and, although a colonial heritage, it has become a major emblem of the Nigerian nation since its independence. It is the language that indexes Nigerian history as a political creation in its manifestation as a non-native variety, in the context of which English in Nigeria has become nativised as it has in other contexts such as Singapore, India, Jamaica or Ghana (Tunde-Awe 2014). However, Ogunmodimu (2015) is of a different opinion that English is no longer a foreign language, as Nigerians have indigenised it. Within the Nigerian linguistic landscape,

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26. The choice of language and the use to which it is put are central to a people's definition of itself in relation to its natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. Hence language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces [imperialism and the struggle for liberation from imperialism] in the Africa of the twentieth century (Ngũgĩ 1985, p.109).

the variety of English spoken by the Igbos is different both in sound and structure from the variety spoken by Hausas or Yorubas or people of any other ethnicity. Nigerians can now claim ownership of a variety of English that has become natural to them, a variety that has been domesticated, and as such can express their socio-cultural worldview. In a multicultural context like Nigeria, English has become a language that fosters national identity and democratic cohesion. According to Ogunmodimu (2015), English is no longer a foreign language. For practical reasons, English remains the preferred choice, especially given its tribal neutrality, and it can unify all the nation's linguistic diversities (Ogunmodimu, 2015, p.158). This thesis supports the argument that English, given its prestigious status, can be used to unify people if they have no other choice. But despite this, meaningful efforts should be made to restore indigenous languages.

Another study (Igboanusi, 2009, p.300) notes that there seems to be a separation in terms of ethnicity, although African languages are changing in their practices. Linguistically, West Africa is the most diverse sub-region of Africa, accounting for more than half of Africa's 2000 languages. As obvious as this situation is with respect to the literature, it is not well documented by sociolinguists. The discussion above shows that language shift might occur because some languages are afforded higher status, while minority languages are at the bottom of the hierarchy – which is the situation that Ijáw seems to be facing. In such contexts, dominant languages are preferred by speakers. However, according to Hoffmann (1991, p.186),

When a community does not maintain its language, but gradually adopts another one, we talk about language shift, while language maintenance refers to a situation where members of a community try to keep the language(s) they have always used.

This implies that when communities – or even parents – decide to use another language instead of their own, they start experiencing a language shift (see Batibo, 2005; Christopher, 2014). Nettle and Romaine (2000, p.7) state that “language shift and death occur as a response to pressures of various types – social, cultural, economic, and even military – on a community”. For instance, the decline or shift in Ijáw could be due to a combination of social and cultural factors relating to beliefs and attitudes towards the language as identifiable in people's perceptions of that language (see Section 1.3).

Sociolinguistic landscaping has often resulted in a pyramidal, hierarchical pattern in which the former colonial language (in Nigeria's case English) occupies the top position, and a selection of local languages (usually the widest spread languages) occupies the middle

(Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa). Other languages such as Ijáw are at the bottom of the pyramid. European languages are often found as the language of higher education, business, government and law, with selected local languages often comprising “national” languages that could be used if needed, and “the remaining languages [being] relegated to the domain of everyday local in group communication” (Blommaert, 1999, p.310). This is the case today in Nigeria (see Section 2.3). English is enshrined in the constitution as the official language, along with Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa, but people seldom use the indigenous languages in government. English dominates most of the discussions in the Nigerian National Assembly and the House of Representatives (Christopher, 2004, p.382). For instance, as Adegbija (1994) argues, while most of Nigeria’s social and political problems are not related to ethnic and linguistic differences and attitudes, camps are often pitched along these lines. At other times, speakers of different languages are often suspicious of each other, and this has considerable impact on attitudes towards each other’s languages, and consequently on any meaningful attempt at language planning and action (ibid, p.53).

Language is embedded in ethnicity in a way that distinguishes one group from another, and groups share or differ in language superiority or dominance. In Nigeria, for instance, the three major tribes are perceived to dominate the minority tribes or languages; which affects the minority languages in terms of their development and use. Language is what humans use to express themselves, and it is usually taken for granted as people ascribe little importance to it within their social interactions.

### **3.5 Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Language**

The above discussion offers a comparatively simplistic definition of language, which is addressed in greater depth by sociolinguists. The list of eminent experts in the field is very long, although the contributions of Sapir (functionalist) and Crystal (structuralist), whose perspectives support sociolinguistic notions of understanding language, are pivotal to this study. According to Sapir (2004, p.5), “language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols”, which are “in the first instance auditory and...produced by the so-called ‘organs of speech’” (ibid). Crystal’s impression of a language hierarchy is one which allows the placement of language in the form of “higher and lower” sounds and words (Crystal, 1985). The beauty of language is its flexibility, and from the above discussion, we can infer that language changes to suit our social beliefs or values as well as our needs. This thesis

does not support the view that language is of mind or thought, but instead adopts the stance offered within sociolinguistic perspectives, which considers language as both human and socially constructed. Hymes (1974, p.4) notes that:

It is not linguistics, but ethnography, not language, but communication, which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be assessed.

Following Hymes' notion, we can understand humans as using language to communicate their values or beliefs within society. Language and culture are intertwined, but culture is discussed in a separate section.

Language has been expressed as the symbol of a group's collective identity, but it may not be the only feature that determines collective identity, and there are other factors – such as culture, attitude and beliefs – which are embedded in language. Heller (2007, p.15) views languages as sets of resources situated in cultural, political and social constructs in such a way that a specific or single category cannot be attached to individuals based on their “ethnicity or language” (see Blackledge and Creese, 2010).

Language can also be viewed as a unifier of peoples that share the same identity. Studies have revealed that language is socially situated and is a culture-based phenomenon. Being socially situated is not just a *function* of language – it is a central and inseparable *characteristic* of language. Thanasoulas (2001 cited in Elmes, 2013, p.12) argues that “language does not exist apart from culture.” Instead they coexist, and this view is based upon the idea that most functions of language are fulfilled culturally (Shahidi, 2015, p.85). This implies that there may be other ways in which individuals can use languages, for instance through music, beliefs or practices that are unique to each group as an essential aspect of language identity. This concept links to the essentialist view of identity, as stipulated by Hacking (1999, p.17) who contends that “most people who use (essentialism) use it as a slur, intending to put down the opposition”. Essentialists perceive identity as something that is not socially constructed, but as a symbolic representation of everyone. However, this thesis takes a social constructivist viewpoint which sees language from the anti-essentialist view.

In discussing the essentialist perspective, Hall (2012, p.31) views language as something that is embedded in the variables that are considered when shaping individuals as society evolves in response to trends. Hall refers to identities from an essentialist point of view as a “set of essential characteristics unique to individuals, independent of language, and unchanging

across contexts. Language users can display their identities, but they cannot affect them in any way”. He contrasts this essentialist perspective with an anti-essentialist perspective, one wherein

...language use and identity are conceptualised rather differently in a sociocultural perspective on human action. Here, identity is not seen as singular, fixed, and intrinsic to the individual. Rather, it is viewed as socially constituted, a reflexive, dynamic product of the social, historical and political contexts of an individual lived experience (ibid).

It is therefore the individual’s choice as to which language he or she uses in each specific situation. Some of the choices individuals make are socially or politically constructed to suit various contexts. Ochs (1996, p. 424) views identity as a social construct noting that social identity encompasses participant roles, positions, relationships, reputations and other dimensions of the social persona which are conventionally linked to epistemic and affective stances.

### **3.6 Language, Identity and Ethnicity**

Identity involves people sharing the same culture, language, customs and traditions. This supports Lytra (2016, p.131) who states that “Identity encompasses everything about an individual, which automatically links shared culture and usage of language”. Identity is a package that comprises a group of people, their culture and traditions. There is a strong link between language, identity and ethnicity, one example of which is found in Lytra’s (2012) study on Turkish diaspora. In Nigeria, however, instead of fostering the use of indigenous languages, some parents will encourage their children to use English over indigenous languages because they believe that it is the language of power and it will open doors for their children. Many of these parents simultaneously wonder why indigenous languages are in decline.

Blench (2003) analyses the dimensions of language, culture and ethnicity which can be conceptualised in many ways, with each concept providing different insights into their character. Blench comments that:

Language, ethnicity and culture form a triad that has an increasingly powerful impact on the political economy of Nigeria. They determine the allocation of resources in many arenas and can conversely become a tool of social exclusion (2003, p.7).

These changes appear to be influenced by globalisation and changes in ethnic identity as people migrate either locally or internationally. Meanwhile, language contact in the form of globalisation might also temper ethnic identities. Friederike and Storch (2013) looked at

language as evolving rather than being fixed. As Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p.4) aptly put it, “languages may not only be markers of identity”. As mentioned above, these choices could favour one language over another (dominant or minority languages) or labels constructed by societies for ethnic groups. Acknowledging that language and ethnicity are social and cultural constructions allows us to explore how individuals and groups mobilise linguistic resources and beliefs about languages to define their own identity and those of others by social interaction. From the constructionist point of view, Carla (2014) argues that mainstream constructivist theories about ethnicity should be expanded to consider essentialist aspects that are present in the notions of “potential ethnics”. By focusing on this notion of potential ethnics – for instance in this case Rwandans and Burundians – one can avoid the oversimplification that persists in the debate about essentialist and constructivist approaches to ethnicity. Qualitative interviews conducted between September 2007 and May 2008 showed that Rwandans and Burundians did not consider ethnic categories as either constructivist or essentialist, but that constructivist and essentialist notions coexist and are strongly intertwined in the different lines of reasoning. These findings support arguments criticising dominant constructivist theories (in this case about being Hutu and Tutsi) as being unable to capture the complexity of ethnic realities.

It is equally important to acknowledge that individuals bring their past histories and stereotypes into social encounters, which may in turn inform their thoughts and actions. For example, in Nigeria – particularly in Lagos – even if you are not Yoruba, and wear a traditional outfit instead, onlookers treat you as a Yoruban, and speaking the Yoruban language serves as an advantage within the community. When people observe that you are adapting to their culture by speaking their language, they see it as an attempt to embrace their identity and this means you will be included in any interaction and conversation. This demonstrates how material resources can be used in constructing ethnic identities (Llamas and Watt, 2010).

Africa has regions that encompass numerous different ethnic groups with distinct languages and dialects that represent the languages spoken in each of its regions. Friederike and Storch (2013, p.3) state that, in the African context, there is no clear notion of language that is independent of linguists. They observe that language is only meaningful in geopolitical terms, lending a discrete identity, status, and power to otherwise fluctuating, hybridised and changing linguistic practices and creating the illusion of an undifferentiated and

homogeneous associated community (ibid, p. 3). Languages are therefore seen as socially constructed in relation to the constitution or people's choices.

Social constructs could be indicated by the way the society reacts to the ethnic practices that define people's identities, and this could in a way affect the language they choose to use in different domains. The coexistence of the concepts of language and ethnic identity seems to prevail in our daily interactions and dealings with others as well as in our everyday behaviours or experiences. The social constructionist paradigm is dominant within the people's language practices and the linguistic strategies they deploy to make identity claims. Social constructionists are active in the practices that occur within the society because it is "who we are to each other, then, [that] is accomplished, disputed, ascribed, resisted, managed and negotiated in discourse" (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006, p. 4). Postmodernism is a wide-ranging paradigm that extends over a wide range of fields: it is a cross-disciplinary movement that has generated a great deal of academic research. Post-structuralism is primarily a linguistic movement associated with the development of literary, cultural and discourse theories from the 1960s onwards (Baxter, 2016). Baxter (2016, p.36) explains that:

Poststructuralist thinkers consider that language is the place where our sense of self and our identity or 'subjectivity' is constructed and performed. The founding insight of poststructuralism, taken from the structuralist linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1974), is that language, far from reflecting an already given social reality, constitutes social reality for us. Meaning is produced within language rather than reflected by language.

This view conceptualises language identity as an individually formed entity within the community, but one that is formed by language itself, rather than by the wider society. As Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p.10) maintain, poststructuralist theory recognises the socio-historically shaped partiality, contestability, instability and mutability of the ways in which language and identities relate to power and political arrangements in communities and societies. This implies the role of power in negotiating and constructing identities within those communities or societies. For instance, this could be the role of government in the language distribution of regional ethnic groups with their unique identities. Block (2007, p.13) suggests that the post-structuralist approach allows for "more nuanced, multi-levelled and complicated framings of the world around us". However, poststructuralists have their own stance, which can be defined as the belief that "language attitudes and practices in multilingual context [are] embedded in larger social, political, economic and historical contexts" (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004 cited in Portolés, 2015, p.3). Multilingualism encompasses the individual's language and extends into the wider society.

Blench (2003, p.6) states that “ethnicity has been a major factor in the path of Nigerian political development, with power almost exclusively in the hands of a few dominant groups”. A nation is not visible without language that distinguishes or unifies its population as an ethnic group. Ethnicity is therefore a form of identity which qualifies one to become a member of a community, which in turn presumes that there is a commonality binding members together as a people or group. However, there may be other aspects of identity that people usually overlook – for example clothing; the way people dress is often attached to a culture and represents an aspect of the “nonverbal semiotic system” (Young, 2008, p.12). For example, the Izóns dress in their native attire and are joined by other tribes on Fridays, but their dress represents their distinct identity. Similarly, Young (2008) states that dialects also form regional identity. People who speak the same dialect may share a common identity. However, although Ijáw has dialectical variations, the people who speak it identify with each other as a group in the same way as Yorubas, who speak different dialects. Young (2008, p.108) further distinguishes identity as having two dimensions, noting that firstly “it is the stable sense of self-hood attached to a physical body which, although it changes over time, is somehow the same” and that secondly “it refers to what we do in a context, and of course we do different things in different contexts”. Identity formation can occur in different settings or domains, and can manifest itself in our speech or accents, which we can change over time or retain, and which allow people to identify who we are without knowing us formally. Garuba (2001) highlights ethnic identity using examples of how the major tribes were merged. For instance, Hausa was formed by the Caliphates that visited the North. They imposed Hausa as the regional ethnic language, while other minority dialects were side-lined, as happened in Western Nigeria. Yoruba was spoken by the Oyo, but it was then accredited to other dialects spoken within the South West of Nigeria as an ethnic identity because the Yorubas wanted commonality.

This thesis supports the points made above because people tend to change their accents or form different identities to suit the social settings in which they find themselves. Individuals tend to become “more British than the British themselves” when acclimatising into a foreign culture or society. Likewise, Nigerians may change ethnic identity to suit the environment; in which they find themselves. This may affect the individual’s choice of language (or dialect), and ultimately the vitality of that language, which is the case with Ijáw. The case of

languages<sup>27</sup> not spoken by individuals might have come about because of the status of these languages, which is particularly applicable to Nigeria. Bamgbose (1971, p. 21) observes that in the Nigerian situation “the rules of language use typical of English in native situations have been modified under pressure from the cultural practices of the Nigerian environment”. Indigenes in contact with English speaking and education have contributed to the fluidity of the language, which some use to represent identities in the form of class strata. Essentially, disentangling the schools of thought mentioned above from the communication relating to language identity at various levels can help us understand how power is represented and reflected in and through language.

### **3.7 Culture**

This section discusses culture and how it relates to this sociolinguistic study. Several studies view culture as a social practice, as something that is socially constructed. A study by Nwaolikpe (2013, p.63) examines culture, the impact of globalisation on Nigerian cultural heritage and the role the print media play in inculcating Nigerian cultural heritage into the country’s citizens in terms of the preservation of this heritage, concluding that “Nigerian cultural heritage [is directed towards] ensuring positive behaviour and social change among the citizens”. This implies that cultural practice moulds one’s behaviour as an ethnic group or as individuals within a society. In fact, culture includes the way a community or group perceives its habitus or how it behaves in ways that are unique to it, or those which individuals have learnt from a larger group encountered in the wider society. Culture is a unique aspect of people’s lives, which distinguishes them from others (Ayeomoni, 2011). Culture also varies from one speech community to another, reflecting the values that are distinct to each group because each group has values that are unique to it alone and not shared by others.

In another view, Eze (2014, p.141) analysed culture from two dimensions, suggesting that:

Culture means a people’s totality of a way of life... expressed in their language, music, food, dress [and comprising] the totality of a group behaviour derived from the whole range of human activity.

Culture evolves, and this generates cultural differences amongst individuals that are transmitted via older generations to younger ones [see Appendix 5 culture dresses].

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27. In the Nigerian context, culture varies with each ethnic group and people tend to respect these values and bond together in communities.

Nigerian cultural values are different because of the complex linguistic nature of its society (Nwagbara and Umor, 2012). However, Nigeria differs from other African countries because of its cuisine, names, dress, languages and religions. Many religions are followed in Nigeria, and the constitution guarantees religious freedom. Christians predominantly live in the South of the country, whereas Muslims mostly live in the North. Native religions in which people believe in deities, spirits and ancestor worship prevail throughout the country, and many Muslims and Christians also intertwine their beliefs with more unorthodox indigenous religions. The major Christian celebrations of Christmas and Easter are recognised as national holidays throughout Nigeria. Muslims observe Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, and the two Eids. Working hours in the North often vary from those in the South so that Muslims do not have to work on their holy day, which is Friday.

Swilla (2005, p.25) argues that by recognising “language choice, maintenance and shift of group identity and speech, members recognize and value their membership in each community...”. All ethnicities are linked by the language they choose to speak or recognise as a form of identity. What, then, in the context of this study should make the owners of the language strive to maintain Ijaw? People make choices about their behaviour towards language. Portolés (2015, p.77) noted that “attitudes towards a language may explain certain behaviours such as language choice and use”. Individuals choose languages of their own accord. Holmes (1992, p.346) posits that “people develop attitudes towards languages which reflect their views about those who speak languages, and the context, and functions with which they are associated”. In line with this, language attitudes permeate our lives as they are present at all levels of language.

Research by Jiang (2000, pp.328-9) discusses the inseparability of culture and language, presenting three new metaphors that relate to them and exploring cultural content in specific language items through a survey of word associations. He analysed the concepts of language and culture from a philosophical standpoint, stating that, with language, a culture can combine to form a living organism of flesh and blood. In this combination, language is flesh and culture is blood. From a communicative view, cultural content in specific language design is a form of swimming skill in which communication equates to swimming, language is the swimming skill, and culture is the water. Without language, communication would remain restricted to a very limited area, and without culture there would be no communication at all. From a pragmatic viewpoint, communication is like transportation: language is the vehicle and culture is the laws pertaining to driving that vehicle. Language

makes communication easier and faster; culture regulates (sometimes promoting and sometimes hindering) communication. Without culture, language would be dead, and without language, culture would have no shape. Jiang's study demonstrates that language and culture are inseparable no matter how people tend to define both terms.

According to Nwaolikpe (2013, p. 64), culture is dynamic and ever-evolving, and changes in response to the natural world as well as human activities. Culture involves non-verbal cues picked up in our observations of what our elders, siblings or peer group may do. For example, in a family where the parents like dressing in native costumes, the children might also do the same as they grow up, but this may vary according to the cultural practices of each family (Novinger, 2008). There are many cultural differences and meanings of issues or ideas that could be perceived differently within Nigeria (Olajide, 2012). For instance, given the country's linguistic diversity, one might misinterpret certain expressions of culture or traditions practised by certain groups. According to Otopo (2008), this may reflect on one's presumed beliefs or aspects of culture that older generations have tried to ingrain into the outlook of the younger ones. Nigeria is a country that is culturally and linguistically endowed with distinct cultures because of the number of ethno-linguistic groups that exist within its entity. Cultures are therefore bound to differ. For example, in cultural terms, younger children are not expected to look straight into the faces of adults while speaking with them because it may be perceived as bad manners. The child should be looking downwards during conversations. Kearney (2003, p.2) asserts that:

The great majority of us need wide cultural and linguistic repertoires merely to survive. At times, it could not be that we approve of the culture but for us to be accepted as part of the community, we could show respect for the culture by doing what is expected of us by the society or adapt to the culture (see Section 2.4).

Inevitably, this reiterates that individuals create forms of action and situations to suit their circumstances. In doing so, these eventually become part of a way of life not because of conformity to cultural practices but because of the need to gain acceptance in the wider community. For example, when one ethnic group in Nigeria is having an event or celebrating, people from other ethnic groups that attend the event always dress in the cultural outfits of that group, although they do not belong to the community. This shows solidarity in the sense of respect for the hosts' situation. This supports the discussion above, which concluded that culture is learned through observation, imitation and interaction with the surroundings.

### **3.8 Language and emotions**

Language and emotions are concepts that reflect attitudes, beliefs or moods. In discussing language and emotions, references to emotion are defined as linguistic forms that occur when someone's language includes "any mention of an emotion or feeling" (Mulac et al., 2001, p.148). People tend at times to be hesitant when they discuss emotional issues, and this hesitation is usually reflected in the behaviour and use of language. Alternatively, emotions might be linked to the status of the language in that situation. Baker (1992, p.10) defines attitude as a "hypothetical construct used to explain the direction of human behaviour". Attitude is a reproduction of social reality, and the future of any multilingual community depends on community language use. In the context of this thesis, the survival of Ijaw depends on the Izon group. Their attitude towards the language is crucial to its existence and its survival or decline, and even to how the language is perceived within the society, as this would go a long way in determining its users' affection, desire or pride in that language. Baker (2011, p.16) highlights that "behaviours tend not always to be consistent across contexts", further emphasising that the characteristics of language attitudes – namely attitudes that are learnt within the environment – tend to vary from individual to individual.

### **3.9 Multilingualism and Globalisation**

Nigeria is undoubtedly linguistically diverse (Adekunle; 1976; Agheisi, 1985; Blench 2003; Blench and Crozier, 1992; Hansford et al., 1976). According to Bamgbose (1971), there are many definitions of multilingualism. For example, Wei (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)". This suggests that multilingualism not only relates to speaking *per se* – as other perspectives imply – but also to the ability to write in another language or simply understand it. A well-known definition of multilingualism is offered by the European Commission (2008, p. 6), which describes it 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". These definitions are relevant for some of the dimensions of multilingualism: the individual versus social dimension, the proficiency versus use dimension, and bilingualism versus multilingualism. Franceschini (2009, p.28) believes that multilingualism not only exists at the individual level but that it can also be experienced within a society at large.

In contrast, the European Council (2008) claims that the term “multilingualism” should only apply to societal levels and not at individual level as Franceschini suggests. The European Council (*ibid*) considers that individual multilingualism should be referred to as “plurilingualism” instead of multilingualism. While multilingualism refers to presence in a geographical area, large or small and which may boast more than one variety of language, plurilingualism refers to the repertoire of language varieties which many individuals use. It is therefore the opposite of monolingualism, as it includes the language variety referred to as mother tongue or first language and any other languages or varieties. In some multilingual areas, some individuals are considered monolingual while others are plurilingual (European Council, 2017, p.8). This refers to individuals who speak diverse languages as opposed to those who speak one language or remain monolingual by choice.

Multilingualism refers to a situation in which different languages are spoken simultaneously within the community. Dada (2007, pp.85-87) states that “bilingualism is widespread among Nigerians. This is a pointer to the country’s multilingual and multi-ethnic nature”. Nigeria is a nation that has witnessed a cross-current of linguistic activities due to its inherent multilingual nature coupled with its colonial experience under the British (*ibid*, p.87). Because of multilingualism in Nigeria, languages that meet each other usually create some sort of struggle for the speakers of the minority language as the dominant language is preferred. Based on the discussion above, when languages are in contact there is always a tendency to make choices, which creates challenges for the minority language users. Indeed, languages in contact are often languages in competition, and there is no such thing as language contact without language conflict (Egbokhare, 2004; Igboanusi and Lothar, 2005). Cenoz (2013, pp.3-4) suggests that “multilinguals can be speakers of a minority indigenous language (e.g., Navajo in the United States, Maori in New Zealand, or Welsh in the United Kingdom) who of necessity need to learn the dominant state language”. In terms of migration people from one country move to another, and in such a situation, they become immigrants and should learn the language of the host state. Alternatively, multilingualism will be established, and this may happen locally (such as internal movement within Nigeria) or internationally due to globalisation.

A study by Are (2011) reviewed the issue of multilingualism in Africa and the language-planning responses of governments. Are argued that the general objective of empowering African languages and ensuring their equality has so far failed. Indeed, African multilingual contexts are today characterised by the increasing dominance of international languages at the

expense of African tongues, or the increasing dominance of major African languages at the expense of smaller ones. It appears that practical sociolinguistic realities are overwhelming most language policy objectives. Are therefore suggests a sentiment-free approach to language policy, which emphasises the functionality of languages; (ibid). However, another study by Dada (2010, p.429) indicates that “Nigerians are not learning any other language in addition to their mother tongue, despite the country’s multilingual language policy”. This suggests that Nigerians are not developing multilinguality in terms of the languages of their community but are focusing instead on international languages – in this case English. This raises questions over what is happening to indigenous languages and whether multilingualism is failing in Africa or simply favouring English. Either way, indigenous languages are not thriving in African countries such as Nigeria due to the status given to English (see Appendix 8 questionnaires).

Speaking different languages provides added value. As Edwards (2004, p.164) points out, speaking English can be necessary “but the ability to speak other languages nonetheless ensures a competitive edge”. The multilayering patterns or the hierarchy of languages that come in contact afford people individual choices as to which language to use in different circumstances. In these cases, individuals are most likely to favour the dominant language. This phenomenon is a trend that flows with globalisation because it ultimately brings together people from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds during communication or conversation. Heller (2007), in contrast, states that multilingualism emerged from the ideological complexity of the nation state with its focus on homogeneity. But a critical perspective on multilingualism is needed because debates about minority languages and linguistic minorities have become enmeshed in the construction and reproduction of social differences. A critical ethnographic approach would allow us to make connections between the politics and practice of multilingualism (Blackledge and Creese, 2010).

Hornberger (2005, p.600) suggests that implementational spaces for multilingual practices can also serve as wedges to prise open powerful ideological positions.

When languages collide for whatever reason, individuals carry other cultures both internationally and within the society. Some of the issues of globalisation could be externally imposed while others are self-administered or deliberately selected. An example is the Tyap element of Atap languages of Southern Kaduna in Nigeria, which is under threat from the effects of globalisation. Ndimele (2015, p. 99) postulates that the only intergenerational

linguistic transmission that the community observes is the teaching and speaking of Tyap in primary schools and through a very limited provision of Atyp literature. The author blames globalisation for not giving adequate room for the preservation of the Tyap language.

Agwuele (2008 cited in Onadipe-Shalom, 2015, p.97) states that:

Globalization is arguably a formidable factor of endangerment and language death because of its capacity to diffuse societies around the world into close-knit circuit, from which it is difficult for any society to disentangle itself.

The diffusion of globalisation, as mentioned by Agwuele, could be a negative influence on language preservation in Nigeria because in the process of contact it favours languages perceived to have functional benefits such as English.

On the other hand, when considering globalisation, Mufweni (2002, p.162) observes that as interactions take place between members of different tribes, an avenue for the absorption of “optional language selections” opens. In this context, globalisation produces a regional *lingua franca* or urban vernaculars. Globalisation is a phenomenon which infuses all aspects of human endeavour. Based on the preceding discussion, globalisation has both positive and negative impacts on languages. In summary, the linking of individuals from around the world brings together people from different ethnic backgrounds, binding them in line with new trends that reflect the world around them.

### **3.10 Translanguaging**

Translanguaging was a term originally used by Williams (1994) to refer to “the planned and systematic use of two languages inside the same lesson” in a school environment (Baker, 2011, p. 288; García, 2009; Lewis, Jones, and Baker, 2012). Similar terms, each with a slightly different emphasis, include heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1975), polylinguaging and polylingual languaging (Jørgensen, 2008; Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen and Møller, 2011), metrolingualism (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2011), code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2011), translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013), and multilinguaging (Nguyen, 2012). In addition, prevailing terms also include translanguaging (Duran and Palmer, 2013; García, 2009; Gort, 2015; Gort and Sembiante, 2015; Henderson and Palmer, 2015; Hornberger and Link, 2012; Martin-Beltran, 2014; Martínez, Hikida and Durán, 2015; Martínez-Roldan, 2015; Palmer et al., 2014; Sayer, 2013; Smith and Murillo, 2015) and hybrid language practices (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Tejada, 1999; Gutiérrez, Bien, Selland and Pierce, 2011; Palmer and

Martínez, 2013). Translanguaging is a process whereby people use other codes to make meanings, which could be a mixture of a popularly spoken language with words and phrases from minor languages adding to the bilingual speaker's situation (Bailey, 2007; García, 2009).

MacSwan (2017) discussed translanguaging as a new term in bilingual education, and one that supports a heteroglossic language ideology which views bilingualism as valuable. Some translanguaging scholars have questioned the existence of discrete languages (Blommaert, 2010; Kravchenko, 2007; Makoni and Makoni, 2010; Makoni and Pennycook, 2007, García, Flores and Woodley, 2015). MacSwan calls the viewpoint developed here a multilingual perspective on translanguaging. My study supports MacSwan's standpoint on translanguaging, since Nigeria is a multilingual society in which people tend to mix and combine diverse languages during conversation. In Nigeria, everyone acquires a language during complex social interactions with people who differ in the ways they speak and interpret what they hear and in the internal representations that underlie their use of language (McSwan, 2017, p. 16).

Translanguaging recognises the complete repertoire of speakers' discursive resources, according to Mwanik (2016, p.187), who suggests that "languages are not sealed units with distinguishable boundaries, nor are they capable of being forced into boxes". Instead, languages overlap one another in a continuum of discursive development that is naturally available to multilingual speakers (Mwanik, 2016, p.187). Translanguaging recognises the way other people use language daily but does not stick to the norms of group traditions, and instead uses personal repertoires to make meaning.

Wei's (2011) interpretation of translanguaging offers insights into one such approach. According to Wei (2011, p.1223), translanguaging involves moving between different linguistic structures and systems, including recognising different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading and remembering) and going beyond them. It includes the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users for purposes that transcend the combination of structures, the alternation between systems, the transmission of information and the representation of values, identities and relationships. The act of translanguaging is thus transformative in nature, as it creates a social space for multilingual language users by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, as well as their attitudes, beliefs and ideologies and their cognitive and

physical capacities into one coordinated and meaningful performance and turning this into a lived experience. Wei further argues that it is not the fact that different languages and identities exist side by side waiting to be called upon for separate monolingual events, but that they merge and inform each other to construct new and more complex literacy practices and identities for each person. Pacheco and Smith (2015) argue that translanguaging abilities allow people to discuss issues that are fascinating to them personally in ways that are understandable to others. Therefore, bilingual and multilingual speakers use language as a matter of choice during interactions both within and outside their homes (Smith and Murillo, 2015, p. 61).

In a similar vein, Makelela (2015a, p.202) argues that translanguaging is premised on the recognition of a full account of speakers' discursive resources, and posits that languages are not hermetically sealed units with distinct boundaries, nor are they capable of being placed in boxes. Instead, languages overlap one another in a continuum of discursive resources that are available naturally to multilingual speakers. García and Seltzer (2016) explained the concept through a simpler analogy of using a smartphone keyboard to differentiate between code-switching and translanguaging. However, bilingual speakers use their phones to share texts with other bilinguals; they use their entire repertoire of language of features, with some words and phrases associated with one named language and other words and phrases associated with another; for example, when texting in Ijáw people mix Ijáw with English words or at times with Yoruba depending on the recipient. Translanguaging is the ability to precisely ignore this kind of language function on a smartphone and to use all language features fluidly because they form part of the bilingual speaker's repertoire (Garcia and Seltzer, 2016, p. 22).

Likewise, Lewis, Jones and Baker (2012) view translanguaging as "essentially sociolinguistic, ecological, and situated" (p. 659), focusing on the process of flexible and integrated language use across contexts. The bilingual's practices are then "acts of feature selection" from a "unitary collection of features" from one's full linguistic repertoire, rather than a multilingual switch between two separate grammar systems (Otheguy, García and Reid, 2015, p. 281). Therefore, newly constructed meanings through translanguaging cannot simply be assigned to one language or another; they go beyond the limited view of one language for one identity (Canagarajah, 2013; García, 2009; García and Li, 2014). Kim (2017) relates to my study as far as aspects of digital practices and translanguaging are concerned. Kim examines one transnational youth's digital translanguaging practices, with a

focus on how the youth drew from a complex semiotic system to communicate with local and transnational audiences.

Kim further suggests that translanguaging refers to the multilingual's flexible use of his or her full semiotic system of communication (García and Seltzer, 2016; Li, 2011a). Another important focus is hybridity, which is the creative practice of combining and reconfiguring existing literacy resources and modes leading to the construction of new and hybridised identities of youth (eLam, 2004; 2009). The studies mentioned below expand the notion of literacy as sociocultural practices for relationships, identity construction and positioning, which includes various formats, can be specifically mediated by digital media technology (Chen, 2013; Flewitt, 2011; Kress, 2003; Luke, 2003).

There has been a rapid increase in global connectivity (Kim, 2017), and any study of translanguaging is incomplete without understanding the trend of globalisation, and without languages coming in contact (Canagarajah, 2015; García and Seltzer, 2016; Li and García, 2016). In turn, such practices index the complexity and richness of youth identities. Since the younger generation represent the future, seeking to understand identity practices and considering their choices and actions will at some stage become both necessary and inevitable.

### **3.11 Intergenerational Transmission of Language**

Language and culture are practices that the older generation of each ethnic group pass on to the younger generation. This may comprise a lot more than just learning and speaking the indigenous languages; it may also include beliefs, values, norms and practices which belong to the customs of a people or group. In some cases, the behaviours or attitudes of communities (personal or group influences) towards their language may have undesirable consequences which might at times be caused by how people or society perceive the language. It is for these reasons that dominant languages end up affecting the intergenerational transmission of language because of external influences that emanate from an environment (see MacSwan, 2017; Spoksy, 2012). Kulick (1993), for example, reports how parents in Papua New Guinea attribute their children's monolingualism to the children's choices and personalities, rather than to how interaction takes place within the families or the community, thereby "allocating blame for language shift to the children themselves" (as cited in King et al., 2008, p.912). In my opinion, each family has a role to play in the intergenerational transmission of languages, because language is integral to their identity and

represents who they are in communities. It is argued that “speaking the same language does not guarantee communication and peace...all languages are subject to change over time” (Kulick, 1993 in King et al., 2008, p.88). Curdt-Christiansen (2013, p.3) observes that state policy plays a very influential role in shaping parental decision-making in terms of language shift by undertaking intergenerational transmission of the language. Lane (2010) demonstrates how a minority group of Kven speakers in Norway were “coerced” into changing their family language policy (FLP) by ceasing use of Kven with the younger generation because of the official policy of Norwegianisation. In her study of Chinese-English bilingual families in Singapore, Curdt-Christiansen (2014) also found that FLPs constantly interact with and shape the national language policy and the language-in-education policy. When facing the socio-political and educational realities of Singapore, parents had little choice but to place Chinese and English into an opposing position, resulting in lower expectations for their children’s Chinese proficiency and insufficient provision of Chinese literacy resources.

In Nigeria, the gap in intergenerational language transmission [see Appendices 1 and 2] has been aggravated by the government, which has refrained from implementing policies to incorporate indigenous languages into the curriculum. Inquiring into linguistic diversity in a multilingual society such as Nigeria, Christopher (2014) observes that given the lapse in the intergenerational transmission of languages, the chain of transfer has been broken and children are now struggling to understand their native languages. Christopher also argues that children who are exposed to private schooling speak better English than their peers attending public schools, and this inadvertently contributes to the gap in intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue. In discussions on intergenerational transmission of languages, the question often arises as to how family practices are set up. Spolsky (2012, p.2) asks “where does the family fit into language policy? Is it within the family or is it the government that controls it?” The loss of “natural intergenerational transmission”, as it is called, has been recognised as a key marker of language loss, occurring within the family. However, Spolsky (2012, p.4) states that “each identifiable domain has its typical participants, and each participant may have their own beliefs about language choice”. This could mean that parents choose their preferred languages, which means that the family added to the state as a domain relevant to language policy (Spolsky, 2008). Kay Williamson (1999, p. 162) asserts that what happens to small languages is determined by decisions made by its speakers. To ensure the growth and development of their language, the speakers must ensure that they expose their

children to the language, maintain it as the language used in the home, and transmit it to the next generation. Williamson observes that if parents fail to do this, their children will lack knowledge of their language and the language itself will die out within a few generations (see Appendix 1).

As society changes and evolves, so does language, and this tends to affect families. Family members' interactions, such as those of grandparents, great-grandparents and parents are shaped by changing trends. Williams and Nussbaum (2001, p. 184) describe:

...the simple dyad of parent-child or grandparent-grandchild operating in an interactive vacuum [wherein] families increasingly consist of several levels of intergenerational interaction affecting each other in complex and hitherto underexplored ways.

King, Russell and Elder (1998) refer to overlapping ecological contexts of the three-generational family as "linked lives". To re-tell links among generations, Gregory et al (2004, p. 10) enlighten us that:

The adult brings her idealized memory of her cultural past and her assumption of cultural continuity in the future to actual interactions with the child in the present. In this non-linear process, the child's experience is both energized and constrained by what adults remember of their own pasts and imagine what the child's future will be.

The older generations bring their inherited beliefs and values into the lives of the younger generations, although in this case this was not the practice because parents did not pass on the language to their children.

Intergenerational communication links are experienced or expressed by the stakeholders, which in this case include the grandparent-parent-child use of the language. Families look at the current situation and reflect on what the implications would be for the children if the changes that are occurring in the wider society or even in families are all taken into consideration. However, Moll et al., (2001) argue that all families possess "funds of knowledge", which they define as historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of information and skills. This implies that familial groups have identity practices that should be treasured and used as the culture evolves.

### **3.12 Summary**

This chapter reflected on the effects of colonialism on indigenous languages within the British colonies, mostly in Africa, using Nigeria as a case study. The dominance of English and its prevalence as the *lingua franca* of many African countries has led to shifts of indigenous languages and the emergence of multilingualism and bilingualism as well as

groups that construct and perform their identities through language in social interaction. Repertoires of identity and culture form through language and people's perceptions of indigenous languages, which experience categorisation of status according to high or low prestige or exist as minority languages like Yoruba and Ijáw, as is the case for Nigeria. The perspectives of the sociolinguistic scholars and others have been drawn upon to substantiate the discussion and provide coverage of relevant perspectives.

In sustaining languages, one aspect that cannot be disputed is the transmission of indigenous or minority languages to younger generations. Languages that are not passed on risk extinction, particularly when there are not enough speakers, or if the language lacks usage. Languages are markers of identity and intergenerational transmission is crucial for sustaining languages. In the case discussed in this thesis, translanguaging comprises identity practices for a group of people who are members of the younger generation.

The next chapter describes the methodology used in this study and explains my methodological choices.

# Chapter 4

## Research Methodology

Motto: “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.” (Nelson Mandela)

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology used in this study, including the chosen data collection techniques and approach to data analysis. I will also present details of the research design, the settings and participants.

#### 4.1.1 Qualitative versus quantitative

The inductive approach is crucial to qualitative research, while the deductive approach is fundamental to quantitative research. This approach involves the random sampling of numbers or experiment (Newby, 2010). Whereas qualitative focuses on people's experiences, opinions and interviews; quantitative centres around statistics and numbers, qualitative research tailors itself around the personal experiences and choices of individuals and as a result is varied in terms of approach. Some examples are ethnography, action research and case study, which this thesis falls under [see Chapters 4 and 6].

#### 4.2.1 My journey into ethnography

One does not go on a long journey into “The Heart of Darkness” (Joseph Conrad), unless there is a reason and an expected benefit – for example business, education, employment, meeting people, family reunions, adventures, sunshine, out of curiosity or simply for fun. Sometimes the journey is nothing but toil and trouble. All of this is particularly applicable to researchers. Their journey is not all fun and games – nor indeed is it supposed to be, given the seriousness of academic endeavour. But they should not start a project unless they are passionate about it. The whole journey, like mine was at times, can be very lonely and only their strong motivation and their desire to reach their goal will enable them to persist until they reach their destination.

I became so engrossed with my study that (rather like the Ancient Mariner) whenever I met people from the Izón region, I tended to introduce myself and tell them about what I was doing. I concur with Stake (1995, p. xi) and others (DeKlerk, 2001; Edwards and Newcombe, 2005; Fishman, 1991) that when we study a case, it should be of the greatest interest to us. Without that driving force, the energy required might desert us when the going gets too tough.

I wanted to go into my participants' community, into their houses, to find out why speaking Ijáv is no longer a routine part of their daily lives. Who or what is to blame for that? The community and its participants themselves? Society at large? If there is a problem, what can be done to remedy the situation? I said "If" since I did not want to be pushed by assumptions and prejudice into assuming that there was a problem. My aim was not (or at least not yet) to change the situation and to rescue Ijáv, but to establish the facts, to find out how language and culture influences people's attitudes towards their mother tongue. I was concerned with the fate of Ijáv and wanted to explore it as an insider of the community. My chosen approach was an ethnographic one, and this choice was strongly influenced by the work of Heath (1983) and Gregory and Williams (2000). I wanted to observe the interactions and discussions that took place within the homes of my participants. This included listening to them discuss their experiences in their natural settings to gain the best possible understanding of their social perspectives and ordinary activities, which would involve the researcher participating directly in the setting (Brewer, 2000, p.10). During my visits, I became part of each family. We talked informally, ate together, talked about my problems as well as theirs – for example, how my mother taught me Ijáv and how I was struggling now to remain fluent in it.

I decided to collect a wide range of qualitative data using an ethnographic approach. I wanted to learn more about family policies and social interactions. I wanted to follow the children's journeys from birth and early language acquisition to adulthood. What did the parents do when the children were babies? How did they encourage them to speak, and in which language(s)? How did the children respond? How did they communicate with their parents? And with their siblings or with visitors and peers from other families? Heller's (2007, p.13) chosen method was sociolinguistic ethnography. She wanted to look closely at language practices in specific settings, namely at the "danger zone" of what was being done to linguistic minorities, particularly in the name of nationalist politics. Similarly, my research aimed to find out how the government had encouraged or discouraged the use of minority

languages. However, I also sought to investigate whether – and how – the Izóns themselves might be contributing to the lack of usage and the possible demise of their language.

I chose ethnography to explore the language and cultural practices of a linguistic community. This involved spending a reasonable amount of time with the participants who were the subjects of the study. Ethnographic research takes a cultural lens into the study of people's lives within their communities (Fetterman, 2010; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In contrast to other research methods, ethnography is entirely participant-centred as it requires the participants' commitment to the study. As opposed to quantitative research, which deals with numbers and statistics, ethnographic studies take place within natural settings relating to the participants. Ethnography was chosen because it enabled overt and covert narrations in relation to their language and cultural practices. The participants shared common features, yet they remained distinct because of the individual experiences that made them culturally unique. Ethnographic studies are usually longitudinal, stretching over several years and requiring rich, deeply rooted discussions to form their data. My time and resources were not enough for that – but I used an ethnographic perspective because it suited my work, and I shall now explain why.

When reading Chris Kearney's *The Monkey's Mask* (2003), I observed that he looked for patterns that linked his six participants, each of whom had a very different ancestry. In contrast, my participants came from the same socio-cultural background, although each of them was clearly distinguishable from the others through their life stories and their present role in the community. It is a joy for me to present them as they are in this thesis. They do not need any embellishment by me as a researcher. Their life stories will be presented in the analysis chapter.

I started my research filled with optimism, excitement and enthusiasm:

I loved my topic and my language.

My topic was new and had never been tackled using the methods I planned.

I looked forward to my results, whatever they might be.

I was working with my own community, the Izóns.

I would be meeting people who had volunteered to discuss the problems I was interested in.

I would have an open mind about what I would find.

I was full of confidence because I was an insider and therefore I already possessed a lot of background information.

I understood how “my people” thought and what made them tick.

I had no teething problems. My participants welcomed me with open arms and were not inhibited when talking to me.

I was not worried about any downsides because I knew and accepted that life has its ups and downs.

Not all insights were the result of clever research planning: “The data from the ethnographic work can be ‘opportunistic’ because certain themes just emerge without our recognising them as useful” (Silverman, 1997, p.10). Some information or new aspects might “pop up” quite unexpectedly when the participants tell their stories. This can be dealt with through interviews exploring life stories, especially those of elders.

#### **4.2.2 Benefits of doing ethnography**

1. Ethnography gives the researcher a first-hand experience and allows him or her to have in-depth discussions with the participants.
2. The researcher can spend a lot of time with the participants and can therefore understand them better and get a clearer idea of how language is used in their homes.
3. Ethnography allows many ways of collecting data to be used.
4. The data have greater validity: the information is first-hand, since the researcher is usually present during the events he or she describes.
5. Ethnography makes it possible to compare the different perspectives of the participants.
6. Ethnography helps the researcher to understand the participants’ emotions and attitudes towards the subject of the research.
7. Ethnography can help to explore unexpected issues in relation to the topic being discussed.
8. And last, but not least, my role as a researcher is also vital because I come from the same culture as the participants (Adapted from Newby, 2010, pp.621-3; Denscombe, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

When conducting qualitative research, the ethnographer tries to view a situation from the perspective of the people he is observing rather than his own (Davies, 2008). This can be done through interviews exploring life stories, especially those of elders. Gall et al. (2005 cited in Nurani, 2008, p. 441) note that ethnographers are “making the familiar strange”. This

means that ethnographer examines cultural phenomena from the perspective of outsider (to whom it is strange) while trying to comprehend them from the perspective of an insider (to whom it is familiar). Researchers actively question from own experiences, interpretations and assumptions.

I chose the ethnographic approach because it allowed me to collect data in a holistic and comprehensive manner, paying attention to a functioning living whole rather than to sterile parts, and to use triangulation to meet the desired goal to find out where Ijáv is declining and why, and where (if anywhere) it is thriving. Exactly how to proceed can vary from one researcher to the next: while there are general principles that must be kept in mind, and which have been pointed out in the literature, there is no rigid standard procedure for doing this kind of research. Researchers have different personalities (Hall, 2004), and an approach that one person can pull off with great success could end in abysmal failure for another person. The approach used should suit the researcher just as much as the participant. When conducting qualitative research, the ethnographer tries to view a situation from the perspective of the people he observes rather than his own (Davies, 2008).

#### **4.2.3 The researcher's positionality**

Motto: Under the remit of divine orthodoxy, the social scientist is transformed into philosopher-king (or queen) who can always see through people's claims and know better than they do. Source: Silverman (2000:198).

I shall now discuss the fundamental relationship between the researcher and the people whose lives he or she is setting out to investigate: does he or she look at them through a stranger's eyes, as a newcomer with no background knowledge about their lives, or is he or she to be considered as a member of the same community, or a similar community with a lot of background knowledge of things that may be unspoken, hidden to outsiders? This relationship, this viewpoint, this perspective is called "positionality". The question arises as to what difference positionality makes to any results which may or may not be obtained. Several researchers have stressed how important it is that people like me (insiders) remain aware of the fact that we are part of the social world we are studying (Borhek and Curtis, 1975; Gouldner, 1970; Hammersley, 1982b; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.14). I took great care to avoid the pitfalls that could arise from the fact that I was writing about my own linguistic community.

The presence of a researcher who is an insider can have unpredictable consequences – which can be good or bad. It can make the participants more relaxed and open or it can embarrass

and inhibit them. It might inhibit them if they do not want to disclose intimate issues to someone who is comparatively close to them and who can easily figure out the undercurrents and deeper implications of apparently factual observations. [The analogy might be that of a troubled teenager who would prefer to seek advice on sexual problems from a distant adult rather than from his own parents.] An insider will bring to the surface hidden truths, which might cause trouble in the community. Research has shown that “the more cultural diversity there is, the more likely it is that high levels of tension, lack of respect for group members, and inequality in turn-taking will exist” (Wallerstein et al., 2008, p.385). If the participants fear that delicate matters might be raised, that trouble might result, it will make them reluctant to talk. Insider researchers are uniquely positioned to understand the experiences of groups of which they are members (Kerstetter, 2012, p.100) but must remain sensitive in the way these are dealt with.

There is a trade-off between proximity (which promotes confidence and openness) and distance (which promotes reliability). The researcher should strike the right balance between the two. I was aware of this and tried to find that balance. On one hand, I had to make sure that my participants were happy to reveal their thoughts and feelings to me and did not clam up. On the other, I had to avoid becoming too close to them and entangling my research with them since that would have endangered its reliability and objectivity. Saville-Troike (1997, p.4) observes that:

Ethnography by no means requires investigating only ‘others’: one’s own speech community may be profitably studied as well. Here, however, discovering patterned behaviour which operates largely unconsciously for the native investigator presents quite different problems for ‘objectivity’. One of the best means by which to gain understanding of one’s own ‘ways of speaking’ is to compare and contrast these ways with others, a process that can reveal that many of the communicative practices assumed to be ‘natural’ or ‘logical’ are in fact as culturally unique and conventional as the language code itself

A quote from German poet Goethe (1749-1832) makes a similar point: “*Wer fremde Sprachen nicht kennt, weiß nichts von seiner eigenen*” (He who does not know foreign languages knows nothing about his own).<sup>28</sup>

Delgado-Galian (1993) is a researcher who, like me, has the same ethnic background as her participants. To both of us this has served as an advantage. It enabled us (the participants and

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<sup>28</sup> Source: Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*. *Aus Kunst und Altertum*, Vol 3, Number 1, 1821. I have given the source as quoted on the Internet. This aphorism is contained in many collections of German aphorisms. Translated by a friend.

me) to relax and be comfortable with each other. These participants discussed their views about the use of Ijáw intimately and without inhibitions in my presence and did not mind disagreeing and arguing with one another. But I had to be careful not to get emotionally involved and to remain objective and impartial. However, Delgado-Galian considers that being part of the research group “does not make the researcher more knowledgeable about the meanings of the participant’s feelings, values and practices based on influences such as assumed cultural knowledge” (ibid, p.391). Young (2008, p.9) sees no harm in the researcher taking an insider position, observing that “the ethnographer does not need to be an impartial outsider observer. Instead of trying to be a fly on the wall, the ethnographer takes a role in the interaction, a role that is acknowledged by other participants”.

Saville-Troike (1989) also supports insiders working as ethnographers. They can legitimately study not only alien communities but also their own. She does, however, warn of the pitfalls when the researcher is (like me) a member of the community she is studying. For example:

1. The researcher may not be aware of certain biases.
2. She may consider features as natural (God-given, inevitable, universal) when they are not.
3. It is not easy to be “objective”, even though “objective” is what we are trying to be.
4. Accents, language and culture unify communities and distinguish them from each other.

The insider may also have the technical advantage of needing no interpreter or translator, or any other form of intermediary. For me as an insider, there was no language barrier. I could speak and understand whenever Ijáw was spoken in any home or setting. An interpreter or translator can, deliberately or inadvertently, falsify the results in ways which the outsider cannot detect or prevent. He or she can hide embarrassing facts about the community from the outside, she can mistranslate, and she can miss, or misinterpret, cues which are vital for the researcher and which the researcher might wish to investigate more thoroughly.

Simultaneous language interpretation may also inhibit the speech flow of the participant, and a summary every few minutes of what the participant has said would be sure to miss out essential information (since it relies on the memory of the interpreter), and the result might well be largely the interpreter’s view of things rather than the participant’s or the researcher’s views. In this respect, any insider who does not need a translator or interpreter has a clear advantage.

#### 4.2.4 Benefits and the limits of an insider positionality

Gaining access to a community is not easy for researchers, especially if they are not familiar with the culture of the people whose language they want to investigate. Here, an insider has the advantage that at least the language barrier is less of a problem. But despite being an insider, I no longer lived in Nigeria. It was therefore not easy to contact the families. I had to be tenacious, make several phone calls to inform close relations of my plans and to discuss when I might visit Nigeria. They were delightfully responsive: They looked forward to seeing me. Some suggested other people I should visit as well. But I had to behave like a researcher in order not to compromise the data by forming relationships with the participants.

Researchers must perform a fine balancing act, finding the right compromise between two conflicting demands: On one hand, they should become part of the community they investigate, but on the other, they should preserve some distance (Denzin, 1997). Over-familiarity is to be avoided since, as the English proverb puts it, “Familiarity breeds contempt”, or, as the Jamaicans have it, “Play wid puppy, puppy kiss you mout” (If you play with puppy, the puppy will kiss your mouth).

As recommended by Pink (2007), I usually greeted elders by kneeling on the floor as a way of showing respect or giving honour to those to whom it is due whenever I visited them in their homes. I tried to make them aware that I belonged to their speech community, that I was one of them, and that they should not feel that my having travelled from abroad made me distant, superior or unsympathetic. I spoke Pidgin (which is the informal *lingua franca* of Nigeria) and shared their meals, thus becoming literally their “companion” (Latin *cum+panis*, with+bread = sharing the bread, one with whom one eats) to put them all at ease and reduce the distance between the observer and the observed. The reader will note that I balanced two “opposing” aspects: distance (for the greater benefit of my participants) by showing my respect to the elders, and friendship (not quite familiarity) by sharing their meals.

Making initial contact with my participants was not easy. Phone calls had to be attempted again and again. I did not always get through to the person I wanted to speak to, and emails had to be sent repeatedly before they got through and were answered. But eventually all my participants gave me permission to come into their homes to discuss the problem of Ijaw. I had, however, no reason to be overoptimistic or complacent at this stage. Researchers (such as Gregory and Ruby, 2011) mention the difficulties of obtaining access to participants for insiders and outsiders alike. There are always hurdles to overcome and dilemmas to resolve before one can settle into a community. During discussions and conversations, we must be

careful not to use leading questions, not to influence the participants, and not to make them give answers they think we want to hear. Questions should be as open and neutral as they would be in a court room, and this is no easy task.

For some participants, such as the ones who were introduced to me by my uncle, I was quieter in their homes since I was in unfamiliar territory. I was simply a researcher, but for others I was a “Dota” (daughter) or “Aunty”, expressions of affection and respect respectively. That gave me quite different positions in relation to my participants, and I had to take great care that these relations did not influence my participants’ perspectives. I allowed them to try recording and taking photographs themselves during my visits, and they did this with enthusiasm. My participants enjoyed the recording activities so much that some of them talked about them during the discussions. This led to quite unplanned, unexpected, off-topic but very memorable vignettes and life stories. Gauntlett (2004) supports such an approach. He thinks that participants should be allowed to take responsibility for their interpretations and discussions to understand what they are saying, since it is being recorded.

#### 4.2.5 The participants by settings

**Table 2:** The participants’ settings

| <b>Families</b>   | <b>External members</b>               | <b>Occupation</b>   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Ajgunle Family</b>   |                                       |   |
| Papa<br>Beauty<br><br>Children: Fini; Perere,<br>Paul<br>Grandchildren: Bobo;<br>Okubo, Dein, Akpos, Ebi,<br>Great-grandchildren:<br>Braila | Two Elders<br><br>Officer<br><br>Kemi | [Retired civil servant]<br>[Businesswoman]<br><br>Two Elders who are Retired Military Officers Retired civil servant]<br>Officer [Retired Customs Officer; Now self-employed and a Pastor]<br>Kemi [Student]<br>Fini, Perere [Self-employed]<br>Paul [Civil Servant]<br>Grandchildren and great-grand children [All Students] |
| <b>Abuja Family</b>   |                                       |   |

|   |                                 |   |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Opuowei<br>Akpos<br>Pam<br>Pastor<br>Children: Oyinpreye;<br>Emomotimi, Oyintare,<br>Oyinkuro                 | Aunty [cousin]<br>Family friend | Accountant<br>Civil servant/Business woman<br>Civil servant<br>Businessman<br>Students              |
| <b>Bayelsa Family</b>   |                                 |   |
| Ebiniepreye<br>Felicia<br>Children: Amaebi;<br>Depreye, Keys, Ekiyor<br><br>Grand-children: Princess;<br>Bris | Relative                        | Self employed<br>Self employed<br>All graduates<br>Amaebi: teacher<br>Depreye: Musician<br>Students |

I shall begin with some plain facts about the families with whom I carried out my research, the towns in which they lived, and my travels to them. This will enable the reader to understand future references to these participants and help put places into context. My research was carried out in three towns: Ajegunle, Abuja and Bayelsa. In each town, my research was focused on one family, and sometimes a few peripheral characters associated with that family. When discussing the families in this thesis, I shall refer to them by the name of the town in which they lived and not by the surname of the head of the family. This will make it easier for the reader to remember the names, to imagine the location, to keep the families separate and to keep what I say about my experiences in each family together. We therefore now have the Ajegunle family, the Abuja family and the Bayelsa family.

#### **4.2.6 The main participants**

In each location, I had a mediator (main contact), who was usually the most important person in that setting, the person through whom I would make appointments with the group or through whom I would contact its other members. These were as follows:

In Abuja: Opuowei (Opu-o-wei)

In Ajegunle: Papa

In Bayelsa: Felicia

#### 4.2.7 The researcher's travels

My Nigerian family home is in the town of Lekki. I travelled there from London on three occasions:

**Table 3:** Trips to Nigeria to undertake interviews for the research

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Trip 1</b> from London to Lekki: out: 22 July 2013 and return: 13 August 2013 Duration: 23 days. Visits to Ajegunle | <b>Trip 2</b> from London to Lekki: out: 4 April 2014 and return: 2 May 2014 Duration: 29 days. Visits to Abuja and Bayelsa | <b>Trip 3</b> from London to Lekki: out: 02 August 2014 and return: 5 September 2014 Duration: 35 days Visits to Ajegunle |
|--|---|---|

I usually travelled during the college vacation period, during the Easter and summer breaks. I would travel to the three research locations from Lekki and return there at night if the distance permitted it.

During Trip 1 (22 July 2013 to 13 August 2013), I worked only with the Ajegunle family. I travelled to Ajegunle every other day.

During Trip 2 (4 April 2014 to 2 May 2014), I worked with the Abuja and Bayelsa families.

During Trip 3 (2 August 2014 to 5 September 2014), I again worked only with the Ajegunle family, tidying up and completing my enquiries.

#### 4.2.8 The three families: Some general observations

Through the interviews, I classified my participants as follows:

- People aged 60 years and over were fluent speakers of Ijáw.
- People aged 50 to 59 were competent speakers with a “mix and match” approach, or code-switching into Yoruba, English or even Pidgin, depending on the situation.
- People aged 40 to 50 said they understood a little Ijáw but did not speak it.
- Very few people under 40 could speak Ijáw.
- People below 30 were mostly non-speakers.

Hammersley and Traianou (2012, p.132) stress the need to protect sources of information. I have therefore used pseudonyms for all my participants – even though they told me they did

not mind my mentioning their names. To make very long names easier to remember and to pronounce, I have added hyphenated versions in brackets. The placement of the hyphens is arbitrary and is not meant to reflect Ijáw phonology or the etymology of the names; if it does so, this is accidental.

### 4.3 The Ajegunle Family

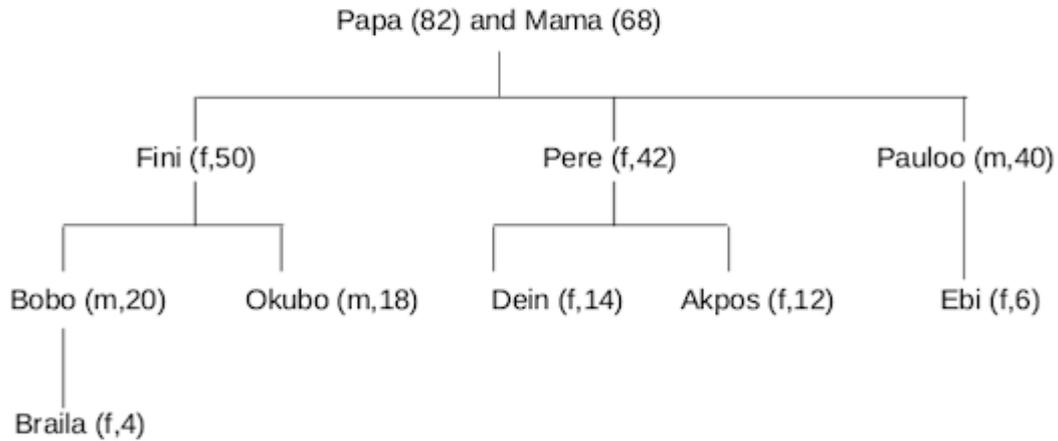
The Ajegunle family is so large that not all the children were ever present, but those who were available all stayed with me in the room at the same time. I thought that the interviews would be done on a one-to-one basis, but they all gathered together to answer my questions intermittently and informally. Since the thesis is all about them and their openness to the issue, I had to allow the participants to be themselves without trying to control them.

I kept reassuring them that this was all fine, and that the children and adults should all be part of the investigation. The children were very shy and would not talk much despite my encouragement. Every one of them told me that they could not speak Ijáw. Their parents could speak it, but there were two couples in the family where husband and wife spoke different varieties of Ijáw, namely Fini (f, 50) and her husband, and her sister Pere (f, 42) and her husband.

### The Ajegunle Family (Ebigha) 1/3

| The Ebigha family: Papa and Mama |          |     |     |   |
|----------------------------------|----------|-----|-----|---|
| Name                             | Nickname | Age | Sex | Meaning of name   |
| Odome Ebigha                     | Papa     | 82  | m   | Odome =<br>This is my love<br>Ebigha =<br>Goodness never ends |
| Mama                             | Beauty   | 68  | f   |   |
| Papa's and Mama's children       |          |     |     |   |
| Oyinfinepre<br>(Oyin-fini-epre)  | Fini     | 50  | f   | The Lord has opened<br>the door for me.                       |
| Perere                           | Pere     | 42  | f   | Rich woman  |
| Paul                             | Pauloo   | 40  | m   | Biblical name,<br>meaning 'small,<br>humble'                  |
| Fini's children                  |          |     |     |   |
| Boboye                           | Bobo     | 20  | m   | This is mine.   |
| Okubokekeme<br>(0-kubo-kekeme)   | Okubo    | 18  | m   | Wealth is man.  |

## Ajgunle Genealogy



### The Ajgunle Family (Ebigha) 2/3

| Pere's children                                |          |     |     |   |
|--|----------|-----|-----|---|
| Name   | Nickname | Age | Sex | Meaning of name   |
| Deinbofa<br>(Dein-bofa)                        | Dein     | 14  | f   | There is nobody who doesn't get tired.  |
| Akposeye<br>(Akpos-eye)                        | Akpos    | 12  | m   | What the world cherishes. (A name given specifically because, at last, they had a boy.) |
| Pauloo's children                              |          |     |     |   |
| Oyinebibobra<br>(Oyin-ebi-bobra)<br>(Ebibobra) | Ebi      | 6   | f   | This is what I have asked of the Lord.  |
| Boboye's children                              |          |     |     |   |
| Enibrailade<br>(Eni-braila-de)                 | Braila   | 4   | f   | This has reached my hands.<br>= This is mine.   |

### The Ajegunle Family (Ebigha) - Peripherals 3/3

| Name                         | Nickname | Age | Sex | Meaning of name       |
|------------------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----------------------|
| Not members of Papa's family |          |     |     |                       |
| Elder NN                     |          | 80  | m   |                       |
| Elder NN                     |          | 78  | m   |                       |
|                              | Officer  | 55  | m   |                       |
| Officer's children           |          |     |     |                       |
| Brakemi                      | Kemi     | 20  | f   | It is in God's hands. |

### The Ajegunle Generations

| Generations represented in my study |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Oldest (great-grandparents)         | Papa (82), Mama (68);<br>The Elders (80, 78)                        |
| Children's generation               | Fini (50), Pere (42), Pauloo (40);<br>Officer (55)                  |
| Grandchildren's generation          | Bobo (20), Okubo (18), Dein (14),<br>Akpos (12), Ebi (6); Kemi (20) |
| Great-grandchildren's generation    | Braila (4)  |

This section of the study involves a family that resides at Ajegunle (see Chapter 1) – at Apapa Ajegunle, not SangoToll Gate Ajegunle, and not Ikorodu Ajegunle. These Ajegunles are situated in different locations, miles from one another in Lagos State. As mentioned at the start of this thesis, Apapa Ajegunle is probably the most popular of all three, and is popularly referred to as AJ City. Ajegunle is a Yoruba word which literally means ‘fortune has landed’. One would therefore expect, especially in a country like Nigeria, which is so fond of meaningful and auspicious names, that there would be some evidence of fortune in a community that has such an enviable name.

There are many Yorubas and countless Igbos and Efiks among the people who live in Ajegunle. There are also Izóns and Ibibios, as well as a handful of Hausas and other minor tribes. The Efiks are also known as Calabars because many of them are engaged in the trade of selling fufu cassava or loiloi. Loiloi, which is made of cassava flour, is also known as “Six-to-Six” because it takes a long time to digest and can sustain people for a whole day.

Apapa Ajegunle is a microcosm of Nigeria. It is linguistically and culturally diverse. Almost every major tribe and religion in the country is present there. There are many Yorubas, countless Igbos, Efiks, Izóns and Ibibios as well as a scattering of Hausas, and a few minor tribes. They have all been living together for decades, and there are very few cases documented of any resentment or hostility. Around the year 2000, there was some intertribal conflict in the (normally peaceful) Ijów area, specifically in Ajegunle. Izón and Yoruba were killing each other as part of a fight between two militant groups, the Oduwa Peoples’ Congress and Egbsu, representing Yoruba and Izón militants, respectively. Many people ran away from their homes and became homeless. Papa (my main participant in Ajegunle) and his entire family were victims of that conflict. They were renting a house from an uncle, an Izón man whom everybody in the community knew, and the house was therefore an obvious target for attack. This violence was very important in Papa’s life, but it did not make world news, and I am therefore including here two Internet sources referring to it to show that it was real:

This conflict has been discussed in the following document: “IRB - Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada: Egbesu “Boys” or “cult” including membership requirements; whether forced recruitment is practiced and, if so, whether a person can move within Nigeria to avoid this group<sup>29</sup>

#### **4.3.1 Papa’s family: Four generations**

Papa’s family spans four generations. Most of them were there together every time I called (except the youngsters who tended to absent themselves). The family name of the Ajegunle

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29[NGA34309.E], 25. Mai 2000

[http://www.ecoi.net/local\\_link/4504/262375\\_de.htm](http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/4504/262375_de.htm) (accessed on 1 June 2017). This document also refers to the following newspaper sources: The Washington Post 11 Nov. 1998; Post Express 6 Jan. 1999; Xinhua 2 Nov. 1999; HRW May 1999.

family is Ebigha. It means “Goodness never ends”. There are great-grandparents still alive on the maternal and paternal sides.

I had planned to interview them one by one and compare their answers, but they wanted to stay in a group and discuss my questions together. I quickly realised that it would be difficult to find a space where I could interview everyone on their own. I therefore decided to ask them more general questions and let each person contribute their own perspective.

Most of the third generation in this family (the youngest, “the youngsters”) were out when I came to visit, a fact that seems to show a lack of interest in my topic, the survival of Ijáu. This meant that some of the interactions and intergenerational exchanges that I had wanted to witness and investigate did not often happen. Those members of the family who were present all wanted to chat as a group. I gave them a long rope and generally allowed them to do what they wanted, since my main purpose was to get to know their perspectives.

#### **4.3.2 Papa**

Papa is the Paterfamilias, the head and the older member of this extended family. He was born in one of the Ijáu villages in Delta State. He was the first of many children in a very large family. His father got married to at least four women, not including his slave women – women who were bought or exchanged for debts in neighbouring Urhobo or Izón villages. Papa attended only elementary and standard school, and got no higher education, probably because the family could not afford to pay for it, especially after Papa’s mother had died. Papa’s father moved to Lagos with his remaining wives and children, which was a good place to find white collar jobs. Papa grew up in Lagos. He found Mama, married her and had fourteen children with her. Papa spoke throughout the interviews in English and Ijáu. I met three of his fourteen children and spoke to some of the others on the phone. He had only one wife, which is something that was uncommon for an Izón man of his age.

In Ijáu territories when Papa was young, men could marry as many wives as they wanted. They did not have to be rich to do so because the wives would go out to work and earn money for the family, while the husband could stay at home wearing a white vest and drinking Ogororo (a popular alcoholic drink made of palm tree juice). Rivers men are famous for being stereotyped as lazy because of this. Having many wives was a status symbol. The wives were “the wealth” of the husband. The fact that Papa had only one wife was quite remarkable for an Izón. He did not blindly follow a custom that favoured him as a man, but instead showed strength of character by confining himself to one wife when he could easily

have had many more. It also says something very special about Mama Beauty that she managed hold on to this remarkable man. In Izón culture, men used women to show how wealthy they were, by the unspoken boast that they could afford to feed them. Papa did not follow this custom and neither did his children. They were all monogamous. Papa was educated, so normally we used English, although sometimes he turned to Ijáw for emphasis or to clarify certain issues.

Papa gave me access to himself and to his family, and introduced me to some elders from his church who were translating the Bible into Ijáw. They found my project exciting, were very warm and welcoming, and regretted that they could not offer me drinks or help with funds to support my research. Papa also introduced me to the Izón Lagos Social Club based in Ajegunle. They usually held their meetings on the church premises.

Papa was educated to standard six. When he was young, only boys received an education. Girls stayed at home or went to the market with their mothers. When the girls were old enough to get married, they were married off early. Women normally had no say in marriage discussions within their families. Papa's father was born in the village of Kpakiamá and attended both primary school and standard school there. Later Papa's father moved to Lagos with his family because the Izón men were traditionally good sailors and took jobs related to sailing. This is how Papa came to live in Lagos. He held an administrative job at Apapa Maritime Wharf for 35 years and eventually retired. However, he had to feed his large family and therefore took a job as a security guard, a job he kept until recently when he became too weak for it.

#### **4.3.3 Beauty**

Beauty is Papa's wife and the "Materfamilias" of the Ajegunle family. We shall refer to her as Mama. She spoke in English and Ijáw, but preferred English. She used Ijáw for emphasis or to explain why the younger generations were not speaking Ijáw. Mama Beauty not only looked after the family at home like any housewife, but she also eventually became the breadwinner for her large family. She acquired a machine for grinding pepper and worked as a market trader selling her ground pepper. The whole family suffered from poverty. There were so many mouths to feed because Papa and Mama had to look after not only their own children but also some of their many grandchildren. One of the in-laws (Fini's husband) and one of the daughters died, and all her children were now living with Papa, all in one room.

Mama Beauty expressed keen interest in ensuring that the language situation in the home improved.

**4.3.4 Oyinfiniepre** (Oyin-fini-epre) (nicknamed Fini) is Papa's daughter. Her name means 'The Lord has opened the door for me.' She uses Ijw only when she is upset. She has six children who have all lived in Papa's compound since her husband died.

**4.3.5 Gloria** is another of Papa's daughters who lives with him. She was pregnant when I visited them for the last time. She did not participate in the interviews and does not therefore appear in my family charts.

**4.3.6 Paul** (nicknamed Pauloo) has a name from the Christian tradition, quite different from the Nigerian names, which are loaded with precise and profound significance. He is married and has three children. He lives in the same compound as Papa, where he has a separate room for himself and his small family. However, each time I visited, he was in Papa's room. This meant that I never had the chance to see him in his own room. He seemed comfortable talking to me in the presence of his siblings and other family members.

**4.3.7 Okubokekeme** (O-kubo-kekeme) (nicknamed Okubo) is Fini's son. He had some profound thoughts about Ijw. He had just sat his West African Examination Council (WAEC) exam and was waiting for his results. Passing this exam entitles people aged 16 and over to study at university. Okubo's educational background meant that he had a reasonable command of English, which he used from time to time. He also used Pidgin to express certain ideas, since he was not fluent in Ijw and was more fluent in Pidgin than in English. Papa was competent in English, but during my interview he used Pidgin instead of Ijw. The children present during my interview were not happy about Papa's use of Pidgin. They and their children, all of whom live with Papa in Ajegunle, complained that they had not been taught to Ijw and its use in Papa's home was therefore not preserved and not passed on to them. They even gave a concrete example of what Papa could have done; he could have taught them simple useful phrases such as "mu beni koonbo" (go fetch water) and made them repeat it after him. Papa had not done this.

**4.3.8 Boboye** (Bobo-ye) (nicknamed Bobo) is one of Papa's grandchildren. He attends secondary school and was keen to improve his command of Ijw. Deinbofa (nicknamed Dein) is another child who participated in the group interviews; she also attends secondary school. Akposeye (Akpos-eye) (meaning 'What the world cherishes') (nicknamed Akpos) – aged 12 – attends primary school and is another of Papa's grandchildren. Akposeye was given this

name because he was born after his sister, and his parents from the beginning badly wanted a boy, as is the custom.

**4.3.9 Ebibobra** (Ebi-bobra) (nicknamed Ebi) and Enibrailade (Eni-braila-de) (nicknamed Braila) (meaning ‘This has reached my hands’) were Papa’s great-grandchildren.

**4.3.10 Okubo** Okubokekeme (O-kubo-kekeme) (‘Wealth is man’), nicknamed Okubo, had just completed his senior secondary school education and was waiting for his Senior Secondary WAEC exam results. This is the Nigerian equivalent of the GCSEs. The WAEC is the West African Examination Council. He started the interview off in English, but I told him to feel free to speak the language that he was most comfortable in using, so he switched to Pidgin but added English whenever he felt like it.

**4.3.11 Ebi** Oyinebibobra (Oyin-ebi-bobra) (f,6), nickname Ebi, is Pauloo’s daughter and Papa’s great-grandchild. Her name means “This is what I have asked of the Lord”. She was six years old when I visited, and she was very shy. When asked if she could speak Ijw, she said “No” and ran away, but she came back in almost immediately.

**4.3.12 Braila** Her official name is Enibrailade (Eni-braila-de) (meaning ‘This has reached my hands’ = ‘This is mine’). Braila is her nickname. She is four years old and is Boboye’s daughter. Boboye is Papa’s grandson. His father is Papa’s son Fini, which makes Braila Papa’s great-granddaughter. Boboye smiled with excitement when I asked him if he understood Ijw. He said “No” and rolled his head from side to side to emphasise his response. My research in Ajegunle was based mainly on Papa, his offspring and four other people on the periphery. These four were two elders engaged in translating the Bible into Ijw, a man nicknamed “Officer” and his daughter Brakemi, nicknamed Kemi. Brakemi means ‘It is in God’s hands.’

#### **4.3.13 Researcher’s visits to Ajegunle**

I arrived in Ajegunle every day often as early as 8.00 a.m. I had to walk through lots of different streets to find my destination. I kept asking people whether there were any Izn people living in that area (that was my way of finding Papa’s family; obviously Izns were a minority there). I was shown a muddy alleyway that looked more like a swamp. I had to step carefully from stone to stone to avoid the puddles.

I had T-shirts, denim skirts and jeans with either an Ijw slogan (‘Siesie Ijw fieee’ = ‘Please speak Ijw’) or an English one (‘Please speak English’). The English version attracted the

younger people, whereas the Ijáw one got the attention of the older people. Some of them did not like my use of the word “Ijáw” for our language, about which there are common misconceptions and disagreements. In this thesis, I have opted for the name Ijáw because people greet each other as “Ah Izón” (as explained in earlier chapters). I know that some people will disagree with me. The slogans on my clothing caused people in the street to stare at me with amazement.



**Figure 15:** T-shirt slogans

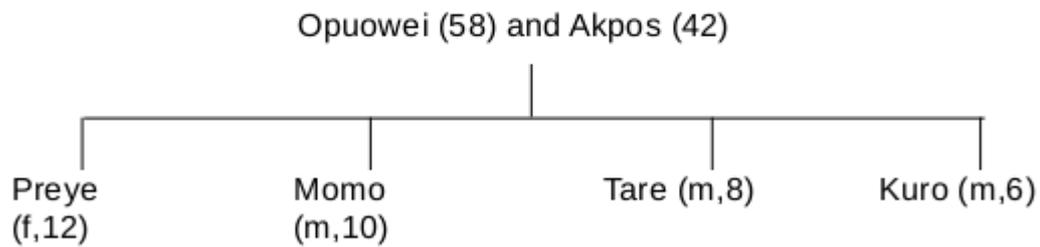
At Papa’s house, to break the ice, I brought along some snacks and canned drinks so that we could have breakfast together. People were excited, and it was all consumed in no time at all.

### **The Abuja Family (Funkebi)**

| The Funkebi family: Opuowei and Akpos |           |     |     |  |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|--|
| Name                                  | Nickname  | Age | Sex | Meaning of name                                      |
| Opuowemi<br>Funkebi                   | Opuowei   | 58  | m   | Funkebi = Education is wealth.<br>Opuowei = Rich man |
| Akpoezuukumo                          | Akpos     | 42  | f   | Akpoezuukumo = Don't hurry in life.                  |
| Opuowei's and Akpos' children         |           |     |     |  |
| Oyinpreye                             | Preye     | 12  | f   | This is from God.<br>Or: This is the Lord's doing    |
| Emomotimi                             | Momo      | 10  | m   | May God remain with me.                              |
| Oyintare                              | Tare      | 8   | m   | God's love   |
| Oyinkuro                              | Kuro      | 6   | m   | God's power  |
| Not Members of Opuowei's Family       |           |     |     |  |
| Pamela                                | Aunty Pam | 36  | f   |  |
| Pastor                                | Pastor    | 50  | m   |  |

#### 4.4 The Abuja Family

### Abuja Genealogy



#### The Abuja Generations (Funkebi)

| Generations of the Abuja family and peripheral participants |   |
|---|---|
| Parents' generation   | Opuowei (m, 58)<br>Pastor (m, 50)<br>Akpos (f, 42)<br>Pam (f, 36) |
| Children's generation                                       | Preye (f, 12)<br>Momo (m, 10)<br>Tare (m, 8)<br>Kuro (m, 6)       |

In Abuja, I worked with the Funkebi (Fun-kebi) family. Funkebi is the family name.

The head of the family is the father, Opuowei (Opu-o-wei), 58.

They have a daughter of 12, Oyinpreye (Oyin-preye) (nicknamed Preye), who attends secondary school.

Their second son is Emomotimi (E-momo-timi), 10, nicknamed Momo.

Their third son is Oyintare (Oyin-tare), 9, nicknamed Tare.

Their fourth son is Oyinkuro (Oyin-kuro), 6, nicknamed Kuro.

Then there is “Aunty Pam”, 36, who is Mother Akpo’s younger sister.

And finally, a visiting relative aged 50, whom I called Pastor.

The Funkebis (Fun-kebi) live in Abuja with their four children. They and their close friends could be said to span three generations. The father is in his mid-50s, the mother in her early 40s, Pastor in his early 50s and one maternal aunt in her mid-30s, while the children range in age from 5 to 13.

**4.4.1 Opuowei (Opu-o-wei)** is the head of the Funkebi family. The children and everybody in the household called him Daddy. He grew up in the village but that did not stop him from trying to better himself. He never allowed his background to limit his dreams and ambitions and used a paddle canoe to get to school barefoot in a uniform that was never ironed. When preparing for his exams, he studied till late into the night by candle light or by the light of a paraffin lantern. His hard work paid off, and he excelled in his studies. His community resided among other major tribes and spoke a minority language somewhere in Bendel State – now known as Edo State. He moved to Northern Nigeria for his university studies, where he had to learn Hausa, the major language in that area. This was necessary for his very survival, because the locals insisted that new arrivals who wanted to settle or study at university there learnt and spoke their language. For Opuowei it was like emigrating to a foreign country. He met his future wife at university there, and they got married at Bayelsa and then moved to Lagos. His interview sessions were quite lengthy. He used his life stories to explain why he thought something needed to be done to change ‘our’ mentality about Ijw. He is a Chartered Accountant.

**4.4.2 Akpos (Akpo-esu-kumo).** Mother of the family, she is an education graduate and a businesswoman. She seems very busy and always has her hands full. She contributed to every conversation, in the kitchen or the living room or the bedroom. Whenever I was talking to any member of the family, she would contribute her opinions. Akpoesukumo understands Ijw and speaks it fluently with her husband but not with the children.

**4.4.3 Preye (Pre-ye).** Preye is Twelve years old and attends a private secondary school in Abuja. She studies hard and seemed shy and quiet although I did speak with her during my stay with them. She looks mature for her age and spoke intelligently like an adult. Preye assisted in the household chores including cooking when meals were prepared.

**4.4.4 Emomotimi (E-momo-timi).** Momo is Ten years old. He is the first son of the family and did not speak much. However, he observed how they used Ijw in the home and what they used it for. Momo was still in primary school and preparing for his entrance into secondary school when I visited their home. I asked him if he understood or could speak

Ijáw. He smiled and said “No.” However, his mother insisted that he understood everything although he might not be able to respond in Ijáw.

**4.4.5 Oyintare (Oyin-tare).** Tare is nine years old. He rarely spoke but smiled all through my stay with them in the home. He was the fashion boy of the family. Tare was very conscious of his attire and what he put on, as his mother observed. He had his hair cut in a certain style that he chose, not anybody else. He attends a private primary school.

**4.4.6 Oyinkuro (Oyin-kuro).** Kuro is six years old and is the baby of house. He stays close to his parents if they are at home. Kuro was the one I observed with the father. He understood everything the father said but never said a word in return for all the errands he ran.

**4.4.7 Pam** is 36 years old, and she is Mother Akpo’s younger cousin who was visiting from Delta State where she worked in one of the government ministries. Pam usually visits her aunty for holiday breaks or whenever the aunty needs her help to babysit the children when she was away on business trips abroad. Pam said that she had visited the UK, Canada and the US, among other places. She spoke very good English with an eloquence that reflected her exposure to the Western world.

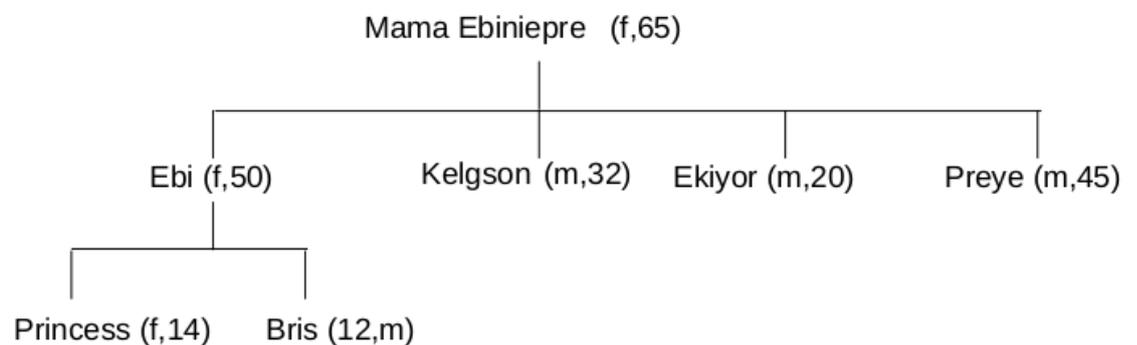
**4.4.8 Pastor** was 50 years old and was staying for a short visit from Bayelsa. He spoke with great enthusiasm about how he learnt Ijáw while living in Lagos with his parents. He is a businessman with three children. He was a proud speaker of Ijáw and never held back from contributing to discussions while he was there. Pastor spoke about his experiences with the language as a father and a native speaker.

## 4.5 The Bayelsa Family

### The Bayelsa Family (Ofonobeingha)

| The Ofonobeingha family:<br>Ebiniepre Ofonobeingha, Head of family |                |     |     |                                  |
|--|----------------|-----|-----|----------------------------------|
| Name   | Nickname       | Age | Sex | Meaning of name                  |
| Ebiniepre Ofonobeingha<br>(Ebi-ni-epre<br>O-fono-be-ingha)         | Mama Ebiniepre | 65  | f   | This is my own goodness or gift. |
| Mama Ebiniepre's children  |                |     |     |                                  |
| Amaebi<br>(Ama-ebi)  | Ebi            | 50  | f   | Good town                        |
| Depreye<br>(De-preye)  | Preye          | 45  | m   | God's perfect gift               |
| Kelgson  | Keys           | 32  | m   |                                  |
| Ekiyorkeeyinrin<br>(Eki-yorkee-yinrin)                             | Ekiyor         | 20  | m   | Wisdom is power                  |
| Amaebi's children  |                |     |     |                                  |
|  | Princess       | 14  | f   |                                  |
| Briseegha  | Bris           | 12  | m   | Perseverance, or:<br>Never annoy |
| Not Members of Mama Ebiniepre's Family                             |                |     |     |                                  |
| Felicia  | Mama Felicia   | 70  | f   |                                  |

### Bayelsa Genealogy



## The Bayelsa Generations (Ofonobeingha)

| Generations of the Bayelsa family and peripheral participants |   |
|---|---|
| Grandparents' generation                                      | Mama Felicia (f,70)<br>Mama Ebiniepre (f,65)    |
| Parents' generation   | Ebi (f,50)<br>Preye (m,45)<br>Kelgson (m,32)    |
| Children's generation   | Ekiyor (m,20)<br>Princess (f,14)<br>Bris (m,12) |

My participants in Bayelsa were:

Mama Ebiniepreye Ofonobeingha (Ebi-ni-epreye) (O-fono-be-ingha), 65 years. Ofonobeingha means “One who cannot leap over a chicken”.

Amaebi (Ama-ebi), 50 years, (f)

Depreye Derrick, 45 years, (m)

Kelgson Keys, 32 years (m)

Ekiyorkeeyinrin (Eki-yorkee-yinrin) 20 years (m)

Princess, 14 years (f)

Briseega, 12 years (m)

Mama Felicia, 70 years (f)

Bayelsa proved to be the most difficult location for me to find a family prepared to work with me. I was close to giving up but was eventually introduced to one willing family. In Bayelsa I could work with three generations. I could interview the mother, Ebiniepreye (Ebi-ni-epreye), who was in her mid-60s. The head of the family (a man) was not available at the time of my visit but I heard he was in his 70s. Their four children (named above) are aged between 20 and 50. Amaebi (Ama-ebi) had a daughter, Princess, aged 14. She said she wanted to speak like Kim Kardashian – testimony to the attractions of (American) English when spoken by prestigious people. Mama Ebiniepreye (Ebi-ni-epreye) had lived all her life in Bayelsa State but sometimes visited Lagos to see her relatives. Mama observed that younger people always laugh, “for reasons best known to them”, when they try to speak Ijáw. My two “Mamas” in Bayelsa were happy to give me their attention, but they preferred to speak English during the interview. They both said that they were not fluent speakers of Ijáw.

**4.5.1 Ebiniepreye** (Ebi-ni-epreye) was the main participant in my interviews with this family. Her name means “This is my own goodness/gift”. She is a market trader who

normally lives at Yenaogoa, the capital of Bayelsa state, although she often visits Lagos to see relatives and buy goods for her customers. Her household consists of eleven people, of which only three can speak Ijw. Mama Ebiniepreye spoke in Ijw and told me that of the eleven people living in her house, only three could speak it. This was a shame, she said, and blamed teachers and parents. But despite feeling the way she did, even she had to pause occasionally to try and find the correct word to express exactly what it was that she wanted to convey. [In her defence, I should say that even native speakers of English, or any other language, surrounded by fellow native speakers sometimes struggle to find the right word, and often find the wrong one.]

**4.5.2 Kelgson** (nicknamed: Keys) Keys is a political science graduate. He speaks English fluently but can still communicate in Ijw. He mentioned that UNESCO lists Ijw “as one of the languages that are going into extinction” and he feels that the government should invest in the language to preserve it from that fate. Kelgson’s elder sister Amaebi is a primary school teacher. She feels Ijw should be included in the curriculum, but that only they will teach or speak Ijw with the school children.

**4.5.3 Amaebi**, nicknamed Ebi, is a primary school teacher, and her interview was particularly fascinating because I visited her in her school premises, which was very noisy with the sound of the generator making our discussion more difficult. But my interview with her went well, and she was happy to give me some of her precious time.

**4.5.4 Depreye (De-preye) Derrick.** Depreye is 45 years old and lives in Yenagboa with his beautiful wife, who runs a salon business. He seemed a happy man but never mentioned children throughout our interview sessions. He is a musician and sings Gospel songs praising God. He spoke well of his wife, telling me that she was a great support in his life.

**4.5.5 Ekiyorkeeyinrin (Eki-yorkee-yinrin)** is 20 years and lives with his mother at home. He studies at the Niger Delta University, to which he commutes daily from home. He said that accommodation there was too expensive. He seemed keen to speak Ijw but said that he was not fluent. He spoke in English and he said that he has friends from Izn.

**4.5.6 Princess.** She is 14 years old and attends secondary school in Yenagboa. She said that she was not from Bayelsa State, and that her family had to move here from Benue. Princess understood Ijw and said that it was her mother who influenced her learning of the language. She tried speaking with a British accent. She and her friends tell jokes in Ijw.

**4.5.7 Briseega** (Bri-seega). Briseega is 12 years old attends a private secondary school. He said that his friends at school are trying to speak English because they are locals. He enjoys being multilingual, although unfortunately his family only speak English. Bris was not shy for a person of his age.

**4.5.8 Felicia.** She was 70 years old, and she spoke in Ijaw. She was a friend of Mama Felicia, and she lives in Yenagboa with her family. She was keen to speak to me when I approached her for an interview.

#### **4.6 Research Design**

The research design explains what I wanted to do, which was to discover the current situation with the Ijaw language. One aspect of the research questions why the Ijaw language is in decline. Another aspect sought to discover why parents were not passing Ijaw to their children. These questions would explain the current situation of the Ijaw language within this community.

David De Vaus, in *Research Design in Social Research* (retrieved from the internet 10 Feb 2017) explains that:

before a builder or architect can develop a work plan or order materials they must first establish the type at building required, its uses and the needs of the occupants. The work plan flows from this. Similarly, in social research the issues of sampling, method of data collection (questionnaire, observation, document analysis; logistical), design of questions is all subsidiary to the matter of ‘What evidence do I need to collect?’ “(logical) while the tools for collecting the data can be ascribed as (interviews) logical.

In a nutshell:

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>logical:     What do I want to do?</b><br/><b>logistical:  How do I do it?</b></p> |
|--|

In my context, this meant that when designing research, I needed to ask what type of evidence is needed to answer the question (or test the theory) in a convincing way? In the case of this thesis, the question asked is *why is Ijaw declining?* This was a complex question.

I had to follow many instinctive avenues of exploration while analysing it, and I uncovered several sub-themes. I also realised that I needed to test my research through a pilot study before becoming involved in research in Nigeria. For the pilot study, I chose a family residing in the UK to test and compare the behaviour patterns exhibited by each participant before carrying out the full research project. I could then continue with the main project:

**Pilot study:** UK family (Interviews and questionnaires)

**Main study:** Ajegunle family, Abuja family, Bayelsa State family

I refer to my families by their location rather than by their names, since that makes them easier to remember and keep separate. I have explained the context of each family above and will give more details on how the families were selected and the obstacles I had to overcome to gain access to them at the end of this chapter. Initially it seemed very difficult to find participants for this project since I had not been to Nigeria and had not met most of the people I was considering for a long time, and I was not sure how to go about taking the research to the next stage. I spoke to some of my nieces, uncles, siblings and friends to discover more about the status of Ijw within their homes and how they used the language socially in their day-to-day lives. They all told me that Ijw needed more attention and that the government should try to embed it into the school curriculum. Some told me they felt sorry for the younger generation because the parents were not speaking Ijw with them.

This made me think about whether to confine my study to parents and young children, or whether to include grandparents as well. This in turn made me curious about the intergenerational transmission of Ijw. Why were parents no longer passing it on to the younger generations? I could have observed or worked with just one single family, but after visiting the family to which my main participant belonged, I was offered (through a chain of recommendations and referrals) a choice of further participants in Abuja and Bayelsa State who had different views on why Ijw seemed to be declining and falling from use. At first, I wanted to use a mixed methods research design employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyse the data. However, the results from the pilot study showed me that my research would be more meaningful if I only used qualitative methodologies. This was because I found that the research was leading me into areas which went beyond my original intentions and I wanted the research to have enough elasticity to allow me to follow those leads. As such, a rigorous quantitative approach would not be suitable, and even using a mixed methods approach would tie me down to an analytical process, which is something I

wanted to avoid as I would sooner my work grew organically to explore any areas concerning the decline of Ijw I had not hitherto foreseen.

Since my project had an educational element (how to pass Ijw on to children and how to preserve it for future generations), I decided to approach schools in Nigeria. They would hopefully consent to work with me to provide a sample that was large enough to be valid. I intended to obtain information (through interviews and questionnaires) from teachers, students and parents, or at least from one or two of these groups. I wanted to approach primary and secondary schools in towns and villages. I could, of course, not send the questionnaires directly to the pupils or the teachers because I did not have their addresses, so I needed the headteachers as intermediaries to pass the questionnaires on to teachers and pupils. For this to happen, I had to convince the headteachers that this was an important and worthwhile project. Writing letters and emails hardly ever works in such situations; people tend to ignore them, throw them away or delete them. I therefore had to talk to the headteachers and to try to pass my enthusiasm on to them. I was in London at the time so I spent a great deal of time and money on international telephone calls. I spoke with enthusiasm and enjoyed the resulting conversations because I loved talking about Ijw, but in the end I achieved no results. Headteachers made positive noises, promised to ensure that the forms were filled in and returned to me, but very little happened. I had to chase them every day and was eventually forced to abandon this line of research.

Once I had found families willing to participate in the research, I found when I arrived in Nigeria that my interview sessions were mostly collective because the families in Abuja and Lagos stayed together when I visited them. This also happened in Ajegunle. I found that group interviews worked well because I was investigating people belonging to the same culture, whose experiences of language use were likely to be similar – or perhaps even more importantly – connected. I had not seen many of my participants in a very long time, so everyone wanted to get a glimpse of me. I had to reassure them that I was still the same person and that travelling widely and studying abroad had not turned me into a stranger or given me any kind of spurious superiority complex. I used group interviews because members of the same family often had similar goals and similar views as to why Ijw was not thriving within their community or their homes. My practice differed between the different families. The interviews in Abuja, Ajegunle and Lagos were all conducted in the presence of other members of the family, including children. In Bayelsa, I also managed to interview the participants every day on their own.

This co-operative engagement with my participants was mostly centred on mutual self-disclosure and was designed to produce “deep disclosures”. This meant that my interviewees laid bare their “deepest selves” on issues such as the contradictions and conflicts of using Ijaw in their homes and in wider society and the obstacles they encountered as they grew up and became parents.

There was no ideal way, and no planned way, for my interviewees to start their disclosures. They all started differently, eventually exploring the deeper reasons why they thought Ijaw might be declining. I tended to empathise with them because what they say also tallied with my own experiences of Ijaw.

#### **4.6.1 Research Methods**

Data collection was particularly cumbersome because it was done in three locations, Lagos Ajegunle, Bayelsa and Abuja, which are located some distance from each other. I conducted many preliminary interviews and selected as potential participants those family members who could make contributions compatible with, and potentially useful for, my research aims.

I shall now explain in detail how I collected the ethnographic data during my visits to Nigeria. I used:

- Interviews
- Questionnaire [see Appendix 8]
- Participant observation [carried out throughout my visits]
- Life stories [generated through the interview sessions]
- Photographs and video recordings [a flip camera was used for recordings].

My two main sources of data were group interviews and life stories, complemented by other sources.

In ethnographic interviews, researchers should establish “respectful, ongoing relationships with their interviewees” (Heyl, 2001, p.369) including establishing sufficient rapport for a genuine exchange of views and enough time and openness in the interviews for the interviewees to purposefully explore the meanings they ascribe to events in their worlds with the researcher. Being able to appreciate your participants and respect their views by showing affection without bias is necessary for them to exhibit an honest disposition.

Observation was carried out daily throughout my stay, since part of my research entailed observing behavioural patterns across the generations of participants to compliment the triangulation process. Observation usually occurs naturally, which were recorded on the flip camera as it happens [like Opuowei and his son] [Papa and his grand daughter], unlike interviews which we prepare for. Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p.138) argue that “most of this observation is routine, largely unconscious and unsystematic”. Observation supported the interest at the heart of my project, which was to check for the lack of usage of Ijáv within settings. For example, when some parents interacted with their children, I was able to observe the children’s understanding of Ijáv, which was not planned or intended.

During the interviews, my participants told me their life stories (usually within a family setting) while I listened carefully to the stories and paid careful attention to the way they used language. It was my task not only to watch and listen but also to interpret their perspectives, since “we cannot avoid interpretations the researcher is the agent of new interpretations and knowledge” (Stake, 1995, p.19). The researcher always influences the findings to a certain extent, either through their own positionality, the methods chosen, or the subsequent analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.3).

Exactly how to proceed will vary from one researcher to the next. While there are general principles to keep in mind, and which are pointed out in the literature, there is no rigid or standardised procedure for ethnographic research. Researchers have different personalities (Hall, 2004), and the approach used should suit the researcher just as much as it should the participant.

I was investigating a subject that was entirely new to me. Therefore, I was a learner, but by no means one who needed to be guided step by step (spoon-fed) by a teacher. I was a learner on a quest, an independent learner, a definition which sets me aside from other learners. Different “learning styles” suit different learners, but “true learners bring many individual characteristics to the learning process which will affect both the way they learn and the outcome of that process” (Williams and Burden, 1997, p.88). At the end of the process there will be not only a thesis and (hopefully) a doctoral degree, but during that process the researcher will become a different person, affected or changed by his or her deep study of the subject. In my case, I have emerged from the research process with altered perspectives about language use, about people, and about the world. The process of writing the thesis is also cathartic and helps capture these changes and embed them into my own thinking processes.

My study focused on speaking. Ethnographers often neglect the way people speak. Hymes (1974, p.33) points out that existing ethnographies have shown us that communities differ significantly in ways of speaking, in patterns of repertoire and switching, and in the roles and meanings of speech. Language is vital to the functioning of any community. We want to know how people speak. Do they always communicate using their preferred language or do they code-switch during or between discussions? When I started my thesis, I had a big question in mind, and it was only later that I discovered that this question was inseparably linked with everyday life. The insight came when I visited the homes of my participants and began to share what they were facing and empathise with them (Conteh et al., 2005, p.xxi).

#### 4.6.2 Interviews

In Table 10 below, the participants are presented as a group. The thirty-one participants in the study were based in three settings from where the data were collected for my research. The table shows details of all three families and external participants and their educational and occupational backgrounds: namely, the Ajegunle family (fifteen members), the Abuja family (eight members) and the Bayelsa family (eight members).

The participants were interviewed in each of the settings five times, and I stayed with the participants in Abuja and Bayelsa. The Ajegunle participants were interviewed over a three-week period while I lived in Lagos with them, but I was unable to stay with them for logistical reasons. I carried out observations throughout my stay in Nigeria. A video recorder was used in everyday settings, with most of the data saved on the recorder. On some days, the young teenagers at Ajegunle were given the opportunity to handle the video recorder.

External visitors were interviewed whenever the opportunity arose, but these data were saved on the recorder and not transcribed. I recorded visitors wherever possible to compare views and experiences of what they felt was happening to the Ijaw language.

#### 4.6.3 Interview schedules

**Table 9:** Dates and duration of interviews

| Families                 | Interview durations    | Families | Interview durations         | Families | Interview durations | Families | Interview durations         |
|--------------------------|------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Ajegunle Papa and family | August 2014<br>[4:24h] | Ajegunle | 5 <sup>th</sup> August 2014 | Abuja    | April 2014          | Bayelsa  | 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2014 |

|         |                       |              |         |        |         |           |         |
|---------|-----------------------|--------------|---------|--------|---------|-----------|---------|
|         |                       |              |         |        |         |           |         |
| Ajgunle | 25 <sup>th</sup> 2013 | Ajgunle      | [2:30h] | Abuja  | [1:54h] | Ebiniepre | [1:40h] |
| Papa    | [2:45h]               | First Elder  | [1:59h] | Opuwei | [0:58h] | Felicia   | [1:10h] |
| Beauty  | [0:48h]               |              | [1:49h] | Pastor | [1:10h] | Amaebi    | [2:40h] |
| Paul    | [1.30h]               | Second Elder | [0:32]  | Pam    | [0:20]  | Depreye   | [0:52]  |
| Fini    | [0.52h]               | Officer      |         | Preye  | [0:23]  | Keys      | [0:48]  |
| Perere  | [1.23h]               | Kemi         |         | Momo   | [0:30]  | Ekiyor    | [0:45]  |
| Okubo   | [1.50h]               |              |         | Tare   | [0:10]  | Princess  | [0:32]  |
| Bobo    | [0.15]                |              |         | Kuro   |         | Bris      | [0:27]  |
| Dein    | [0.22]                |              |         |        |         |           |         |
| Akpos   | [0:27]                |              |         |        |         |           |         |
| Ebi     | [0:10]                |              |         |        |         |           |         |
| Braila  | [0:07]                |              |         |        |         |           |         |

Data collection was rather cumbersome because it was done in three locations. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.89) suggest that interviews are used by researchers to “access the truth beyond the conversation”, and as far as the chosen method was concerned, it has been pointed out that it is possible to conduct interviews for an analysis of the spoken language (Krug and Schluter, 2013, p.69). Interviews are probably the most commonly used method in social research (Seale, 1998, p.202). A great advantage of interviews is that they take place face to face and differ from questionnaires, on which people often just tick what they assume you want to hear. Moreover, the interviewer can also observe what is happening in the chosen environment. Milroy and Gordon (2003, pp.57-58) emphasise that interviews are less structured and therefore flexible rather than formal. According to Creswell (2009, p.146, p. 175) face-to-face interviews allow for more flexibility, a deeper insight into a person’s attitudes and control over the reliability of statements, and above all provide the researcher with real and ideally relaxed speech. Sociolinguists point out that interviews should be relaxed, and for that reason a familiar setting can be an advantage (Tagliamonte, 2006, p.45; Sunderland, 2010, pp.9-28). Sometimes my participants were so relaxed that they got carried away with what they were discussing, forgot about my presence, and discussed sensitive issues among themselves that they would normally not have mentioned in front of me.

I always contacted the participants before visiting their homes. I was no longer as nervous as I had been during the pilot study because I knew and had become used to the correct procedures for conducting interviews. There are many different forms of interview, but I chose semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which tend to be very interactive. Kvale (1996, p.4) imagines interviews as a process of “wandering together with” the interviewee. The interviewer is a travelling companion of the interviewees and tries to elicit their “stories of the lived world”. Interviews allow participants to relate with the researcher in a pattern that carries them through their discussions towards a better understanding. Kvale’s view of the interview allows the exchange of information be almost incidental, not specifically encouraged, but simply *happening* (my emphasis). If you start off with open questions, interviewees sometimes open even more and volunteer extra information. This use of semi-structured interviewing enabled me to gather contrasting and complementing perspectives on the same theme or issue. I enjoyed a co-operative relationship with my participants that was centred on mutual self-disclosure that encouraged deep disclosures. Sometimes I asked questions like: “How did you use Ijáv?”, or “How did your parents teach you to speak Ijáv?” Most of my participants started with stories that I never thought they would have shared with me or with other people. These stories illustrated their explanation of how “once upon a time” they spoke Ijáv fluently, how it came about that they forgot their language, and why they believed that forgetting the language was their own fault.

I very much empathised with them as they told their stories (see interview excerpts). When asked about something, my participants tended to go into much more detail than was necessary or started telling stories that might not normally be for public consumption. These stories may not have been central to my research, but they greatly added to my understanding and supported the use of the interview technique.

My interviews were in-depth but semi-structured. This differs from other forms of interview because of the greater involvement of the interviewer. Johnson (2002, p.109) recommends that interviews should be reciprocal, allowing both the interviewer and the “subject” to contribute information. Thus, the interview (typically an exchange of questions and answers, with distinct roles for the “interrogator” and “respondent”) moves somewhat closer to what happens in a typical conversation (where all parties may ask questions and give answers). This use of interviews enabled me to gather contrasting and complementing perspectives on the same theme or issue. My co-operative relationship with my participants was centred on mutual self-disclosure that encouraged deeper disclosures. During my interviews, my

participants told me their life stories (usually in a family setting) while I carefully listened to their stories and the way they used language. It was my task not only to watch and listen but also to interpret their perspectives, since “we cannot avoid... interpretations... the researcher is the agent of new interpretations and knowledge” (Stake, 1995, p.19). The researchers will influence the world of knowledge from their findings. According to Francis (1993, p.70), the aim of the interview is “to have the interviewee thematise the phenomenon of interest and make their thoughts explicit”. However, in my view this may put too great a burden on some of my families, since:

These issues led to controversy in all the families I studied and resulted in heated discussions, differences of opinion and arguments pertaining to the status and decline of Ijáv and the fluency of speaking it. The following extract from a novel demonstrates the attribution of the blame for the decline in Ijáv well:

Blaming the parents, especially the mother, for not transmitting the language. Not for the first time in human history, the mother, poor thing, is made a scapegoat, e.g. “And at once in her heart she acquitted her friend of all blame in the matter, whatever it might be, and condemned her mother unheard.”

- Anthony Trollope: *Doctor Thorne*)

Apparently, from the statement, it is obvious that people are not ready to take up responsibility for anything that is not going well in our favour. For the interview sessions, I developed a loose guide (see Appendix 6) which contained general questions designed to lead into the conversation about the decline of Ijáv and the failure of parents to transmit the language to their children. There were also follow-up questions intended to elicit specific information from the participants (Appendix interview schedule). This guide was hardly ever used since all participants seemed to understand very quickly what facts and opinions I was interested in during the interviews. There are many books on small-talk for business people on the market now which discuss in very practical ways how to get people to talk, such as at networking events, for example Debra Fine: “The Fine Art of Small Talk”<sup>30</sup>

Open questions may lead people to give much more information than they otherwise would, and academics can learn a great deal from business trainers. The use of qualitative interviewing enabled me to gather contrasting and complementing perspectives on the same

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30 <http://msport04.free.fr/Small%20Talk.pdf>

theme or issue. I referred to the questions in my loose interview guide only when I noticed that a participant had not said anything of value or had not offered enough detail about the topic under discussion. It was not necessary to stick closely to the guide, since all the participants had been well briefed about the purpose of my research. This meant that they could start their stories from whatever points they liked. They talked about the role of Ijáv in their own lives in the past and in the present. During the discussions we could clear up any misunderstandings immediately because I was present. I could question them to get closer to the truth on any interesting avenues of conversation.

Miller and Glassner (2004, p.127) warn that “the language of interviewing fractures the stories being told, and then the process of the research commits further fractures as well”. My guide and my interviewing technique tried where possible to avoid such fractures but did not stop people from narrating meaningful life experiences, which supported the central point of my research – namely that Ijáv is dying and will eventually disappear altogether if something is not done to halt its decline.

This co-operative engagement with my participants was centred mostly on mutual self-disclosure and encouraged deep disclosures. This means that interviewees laid bare their inner thoughts by discussing the contradictions and conflicts of using Ijáv in their homes and in wider society, the obstacles they had encountered when they were growing up, and the obstacles they now faced as parents.

There was no ideal way, and no planned way, for participants to start their disclosures. They all started differently to go into the deeper reasons about why they thought Ijáv might be declining. I tended to empathise with them because what they said also tallied with my own experiences of Ijáv. Johnson (2002, p.109) discusses this reciprocity that can occur in interviews.

Sometimes ethnographers conduct interviews in which more than one other person is present. The group interview approach is used to gather thick, rich and in-depth information directly from the participants in a study. Atkinson et al (2001, p.369) recommend “semi-structured interviews ... with key informants from a particular social milieu or with people from a variety of settings and backgrounds”. Some of their participants have had similar experiences concerning language use. This mirrors the lives of my participants, since some of them migrated from their villages to the city to find work and improve their lifestyles. Many of them have had similar experiences with the declining use of Ijáv.

Newby (2010, p.349) uses the term “collective interviews” when more than one person is present during the interview process. Frey and Fontana (1991, pp.175-185) point out that it is useful to interview people together if the chosen topic benefits from being discussed in an informal group context and if the people taking part have a similar interest at heart. They highlight the fact that group interviews can elicit data in a structured way with the use of a topical question that generates factual data, or the interview conversation can be structured with more flexibility so that it produces data that are subjective as well as qualitative.

Collective interviews also allow for the efficient utilisation of resources and contribute useful insights that can help interpret a social or behavioural factor. Lee (1993, p.136) advises that if possible couples should be interviewed separately, but in my case joint interviews were necessary most of the time, particularly as some of the participants lived in quite small flats and I found it embarrassing to ask one partner to wait in another room – usually the bedroom – while I interviewed the other. This reflected the cultural practices typical of my setting.

My interview sessions were mostly collective because the families in Abuja and Lagos remained together when I visited them. This also happened in Ajegunle. I found that group interviews worked well because I was investigating people from the same culture and had similar experiences of language use. Group interviews also sparked discussions (and as mentioned previously the occasional disagreement) regarding the use of Ijw which offered extra information on different perspectives. I gained a great deal from using group interviews because members of the same family have contrasting views as to why Ijw is not thriving within their community or their homes.

#### **4.6.4 Observation**

During my stays in Nigeria, I visited the homes of my participants at sometimes frequent intervals to study the language policy of each family, such as how they used Ijw with their children.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, pp.16-17; 2004) participant observation comprises taking part in the participants’ social world, irrespective of the role one takes, and analysing the insights gained from this participation. Regardless of the method employed, it is not fundamentally very different from other forms of practical everyday activity, although it is of course closer in character to some than to others. As participants in the social world we are still able, at least in anticipation or retrospect, to observe our activities from an external perspective, as objects in the world. As researchers, we are involved in the everyday

situations we look at and listen to; we participate in what is happening in the environment we are researching. While observing the participants, I tried to understand what was going on and had to decide how to react to certain issues. Fox (1974, p.230) states that there is a process by which a participant observer gradually makes sense of what he sees, hears and becomes a part of it, and in a similar way I hoped that through patient observation I could gradually learn to understand the principles governing my participants' social interaction. My participants spoke more in English or Pidgin than in Ijaw, and that is what I recorded, since my purpose was not so much to test their mastery of Ijaw but to study their opinions about the language. I would let them use whatever language they wanted or was easiest for them, and which would therefore give me most information. By making recordings, rather than just listening or taking notes, I could ensure that I did not miss or forget anything.

Observations were performed to check language attitudes and practices within these homes daily, focusing on how the families interacted, the family language policies they practised and their usage of Ijaw, and whether this was in line with what they had shared during in the interviews or if it diverged from their accounts. As well as interviews I made daily observations, and I always initiated conversations about the Ijaw language, in which many of the participants looked forward to participating. Occasionally, if I observed them speaking English or Pidgin instead of Ijaw, I asked them why they were doing so, but their response was usually to smile and explain that they themselves did not understand why they were doing it either. When they had visitors, I observed that with some they interacted in Ijaw but in other cases they interacted in English. It was only in Abuja that I witnessed people speaking Yoruba. Ijaw was not dominant in any of the three settings, as participants rarely spoke it. When I asked the parents their thoughts about this, they noted that it was spoken but not as much as English or Pidgin. They said that they would try to use Ijaw more.

#### **4.6.5 Life histories: a “third dimension” to description**

I decided to enquire into the life histories of my participants because this technique usefully complemented my observation and interview techniques. It gave my research a “three-dimensional” historical perspective rather than confining it to a flat, “two-dimensional” image of the present. Atkinson (2002, p.121) supports such an approach when he observes that stories we tell of our lives carry ageless, universal themes or motifs, and always represent variations of one of the thousands of folk tales, myths or legends that have spoken to us for generations of our inner truths. Stories told from generation to generation connect us to our roots and

carry enduring values as well as lessons about life (ibid). Life stories support younger generations to continue with the treasured traditions and beliefs that are passed to them by the adults.

Obviously, the older participants have more to tell because they have lived longer lives, and they often live more in the past and in their memories than in their present. I left it to each participant to decide when to talk about his or her past, of missed opportunities to learn Ijáv or transmit it to the next generation, or of any successes in this respect. Everybody was able to speak about the present. The older participants obviously had more historical information (and occasionally regrets) to contribute than the younger ones. From my generational tables, one can guess what information can be expected to come from whom: life histories and worries about the future from the oldest, hopes for the future from the teenagers, blissful enjoyment of the present from the youngest.

During the interviews, some participants told intriguing stories about how Ijáv had changed and how these experiences had affected their lives. The only way the older people could discuss the nature of the evolving language was to start from their early years, “to begin at the beginning”, like the First Welsh Voice in *Under Milk Wood* (Dylan Thomas) or like *Night Rain*<sup>31</sup> (John Pepper Clark). They knew I intended to visit them. They had the urge, the compulsion almost, to tell their stories, the stories of their childhood, of growing up, of using Ijáv at home and at school. Their older women were not educated, since in those days’ women had to stay at home and look after the household and the children. Amidst all these reminiscences, without much prompting and guidance from me, the elders – Papa and Opuwei (Opu-o-wei) with his Pastor visitor – would start talking about incidents in their lives that related to Ijáv. They might bring up these incidents in the middle of something else, quite abruptly and quite informally: “Okay, let me tell you more about what I feel, or think is happening to the use of Ijáv now.” In spite, or perhaps because of the affectionate memories of Ijáv to which they could relate, they were pointing accusing fingers at themselves for failing to teach Ijáv to the younger generation.

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What time of night it is  
I do not know  
Except that like some fish  
Doped out of the deep  
I have bobbed up bellywise  
From stream of sleep  
And no cocks crow.

#### 4.6.6 Photography and digital video recordings

A flip camera was used throughout my stay in all settings. A flip camera takes pictures and records simultaneously as required. Photos were taken before and during a sumptuous dinner in Ajegunle by me and by participants using my camera. In addition to the voice and video recordings of my participants, I have also provided photographs to depict culture in this thesis to make my data as rich, deep and informative as possible.

If researchers have done a good job collecting their data, then:

“it deserves, with characters of brass,  
A fortified residence 'gainst the tooth of time  
And razure of oblivion.”  
(Shakespeare: *Measure for Measure*, Act V, Scene 1)

In modern English, the data deserve to be written in characters of brass and housed in a fortified building where rats and mice cannot nibble at them and they cannot be destroyed by rust, and where they cannot be “erased” by being forgotten.

Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) point out how important it is that the primary information (the raw data) is preserved before it is processed further. The comment was made over 20 years ago, and there have been many advances in the field of recording technology since then that I feel it necessary to enlarge a little upon what they say, to put their remarks into a modern perspective, and to examine the principles underlying them.

For each medium or technology, we are interested in at least three aspects:

- Ease: How easy is it to create the record
- Reality: How close is the record to reality (e.g., how much detail can it catch)
- Durability: How durable is the record (how well can it resist deterioration or destruction; how long will it remain accessible)

There was a time when researchers were unable to use data collection equipment in the field. Recording equipment did, of course, exist. David Attenborough used it famously for making his natural history films (a kind of “animal ethnography”), but it was bulky and heavy; expensive transportation and maintenance teams were needed to move, install and maintain it, and it was not practicable in terms of cost or convenience for academics. The trend towards miniaturisation and lower prices achieved through mass production and technological

innovation has now made such equipment available to academics. We no longer depend on taking notes and can make recordings of still and moving pictures and of high-quality sound.

The T-shirts bearing the inscription *izón fie* were visual materials that were used to gain attention; while walking in the community, people came up to me and asked, “You speak Ijáu, so why are you not dark skinned?” I responded that the message I was conveying is that we should all be speaking our indigenous languages, not just the Izóns. Such materials “broke the ice” and supported other forms of recording and storing data before they were taken back to the UK to be analysed. These data are the words of the participants that were recorded in full as and when they were spoken. The tendency to forget events is therefore reduced because we have a backup that is authentic and can therefore be trusted as being valid and reliable. This is one of many advantages of mechanical recording over writing and merely observing research participants (Duranti, 1997, p.126).

Hammersley (2007, p.690) also stresses that reliable ethnographic records should be kept, or researchers will be in danger of falling prey to speculation as field notes alone have less authority than electronic recordings and transcripts based on them. We can treat recordings of sound and of vision together to speak collectively about “mechanical recordings”. The techniques of classical cinema films (moving images with a sound track) will not be used by academics, and I therefore do not need to discuss their pros and cons. Mechanical recordings (sound and moving image) score highly in terms of a close representation of reality. Sound without vision is useful, but vision without sound is comparatively uninformative. Sound with vision (modern video recordings) is best, if well made, because it can record body language, setting and background as well as speech.

The recording equipment we have nowadays is superb, but it requires electricity for operation or for the recharging of its batteries. When conducting the interviews, I was badly affected by frequent power cuts. My flip camera would go off because the battery had gone flat and there was no power to charge it.

After a while, the privately-owned generators would start. They made a tremendous noise. Sometimes it was so loud that the participants and I could not hear one another. All over the city all one could hear was generators rattling from all directions as if they were having a competition to see which could make the biggest racket. In such a case, even the recording would have been useless, and only notetaking would rescue the situation.

The amount of noise and its effect depended on the location, on the type and age of the generator, and on its distance from the interview. The families in Ajegunle and Bayelsa had very noisy generators, but the Abuja family had a quieter model. The power cuts were very unpredictable. They might happen in the middle of an extremely important story, or chain of thought or argument, and by the time you were ready to resume, the mood or the thought would have evaporated. When a power cut occurred, the generator would come on after a while but not always automatically, so there would be a break in the conversation even if recording could resume.

The video recordings showed the emotions displayed during the sessions. I always encouraged the participants to be open by showing, quite purposefully, that they were not the only ones affected by the loss of Ijw. I made them aware that many other people had the same problem, and that it was a general problem of lesser languages which my work was trying to in part trying to address, even though it might take a long time. The video recorder was therefore taken directly into the field, and the recordings could then be transcribed. This allowed me to hear what the participants had said verbatim, and I could then analyse, interpret and describe their stories reliably by checking gestures and body language. Video recording is therefore a useful research tool.

#### **4.7 The many meanings of the same four words: Transcribing and translating**

The simple greeting “Ghaemi?” (Are you all right?) can be said in many ways, each of which expresses a variety of meanings. It can be said gently, or with urgency, or expressing extreme concern, or impatiently, or angrily or glibly without any real concern. In English, similarly, it has a variety of meanings “Are you all right?” could mean “Have you gone mad?”, expressing outrage or surprise at an utterly impracticable suggestion. Context and intonation, gestures and expressions are necessary to interpret the emotional implications of those four words. Recordings can provide much of these. Markle et al. (2011, p.6) observed that:

Emotion compounded with human behaviour is more readily communicated when the original source is video data. The transcription, while accurately reporting the words spoken, fails to capture the individual and collective actions and emotions that provide richness to an event that has taken place. The data might be looked at from several angles and several times to create meanings or other issues that might arise that will be valid. Video recordings will augment the data collected from interviews in contributing to the holistic triangulation. Visual data seems to supersede other forms of data collection because of its authenticity.

Markle's remarks might imply that many researchers still use writing and note-taking more than visual recordings and ought to expand their ethnographic toolkit now that video-recording has become a viable and affordable technique for obtaining information. "The creative and judicious use of technology [could] greatly increase the quality of field observations and the utility of the observational record to others" (Patton, 2002, p.308), without being obtrusive.

However, to enable the best possible analysis of the interviews, I had to get them down on paper and make them intelligible, which is to say that the video and audio recordings had to be transcribed and then partly translated and annotated. I kept these two stages of transformation separate to ensure that my own words and ideas should not "contaminate" those of the participants. My readers also required that the recordings are transcribed and then translated into English, while retaining as much of the flavour of the original as possible: that is retaining words that cannot be translated or have a special flavour whilst ensuring that the resulting texts are clear and explicit.

I transcribed the recordings using pencil and paper before typing them out, listening to each recording several times then pausing to write down what I had heard, going back to the recording and listening again to check what I had written and change it where necessary. Sometimes I did this again and again before I obtained the right text that summarised what the participants had said. I had to write down the words that had been spoken (mostly in Ijáv, Pidgin and English) as accurately as I could, while contending with the usual problems of determining exactly what the participant was saying (and was not saying) in the presence of background noise (from generators), bad articulation (mumbling), broken sentences, wrong or ambiguous pronunciation when speaking English, and the problems caused by the absence of a standardised Ijáv spelling system. Once I had obtained a written record of what the participants had said, I translated those parts that required translating for the ordinary English-speaking reader, namely the Ijáv words and the Pidgin sentences. Finally, to make the recordings intelligible to the ordinary reader, I had to annotate some of the things that were said, even if they had been delivered in English, in cases where knowledge of the cultural background of the Ijáv community or of specific family background was required. This work was extremely time-consuming, but it was necessary before data analysis could even begin.

Transcription might well be the most time-consuming task of data analysis. A student using qualitative methods observes that “[t]he whole process of doing the transcription is lonely and tiring,” and “the transcription process is intensive and tough” (Roulston, DeMarrais and Lewis, 2003, p.657). One researcher described it as a “chore” that can take up to six hours for every recorded hour (Agar, 1996, p.153). Evers (2011) listed four different types of transcription and remarked that the task could take between four and sixty hours for every recorded hour of data depending on the kind of transcription required. Matheson (2007) laments over “how slowly transcription technology was improving” (p.547), especially given how “tedious” it was (p.549).

However, despite being an annoying chore, transcription has beneficial side effects. It makes researchers more thorough and observant, allowing them to work more effectively in combination with the use of video-recordings which, in themselves, are all-observant. According to Rapley (2007, p.50), the actual process of making detailed transcripts enables researchers to become familiar with what they are observing, and one should listen to and watch the recording again and again so that the interesting and often subtle ways that people interact become more noticeable through this process. There are the taken-for-granted features of people’s talk and interaction that without recordings you would routinely fail to notice, fail to remember, or be unable to record in enough detail by taking hand-written notes. It is imperative that researchers remain impassive and do not interject as they observe participants during their recordings.

#### **4.7.1 Absence of Standard Alphabet and orthography for Ijáv**

Ijáv has no standard alphabet and no orthography (standard spelling system). The IPA would do (because it is a widely-agreed standard) but it is, of course, far too cumbersome and contains unnecessary detail (such as in having to distinguish allophones). A writing system cannot be invented on the hoof. It requires not only an alphabet – for which the Latin alphabet with variants and diacritics might do – but also conventions of spelling to suit the morphology of the language. While English and French orthography look haphazard, the spelling rules of Italian, Spanish and German show how much thought and linguistic expertise has gone into them. Somebody with the task of transcribing Ijáv recordings cannot be expected to create such a system overnight.

Some people write Ijáv using the Latin alphabet (which is fair enough, as many other languages do the same) adding diacritical marks when necessary, but the meaning of each

diacritic in Ijáw is not standardised, which makes them useless as a guide to pronunciation and therefore to meaning. A repertoire of signs can only function in terms of communication if the meaning of the signs is agreed between the transmitter and the receiver. But in Ijáw everybody writes what he feels like writing. For example, when writing the Ijáw word for Hello, some people will write Tèèbrá, while others write the word with different diacritics or without using diacritics at all. Whilst the meaning may in this case remain obvious, there is no standard written system.

#### **4.7.2 Translation problems**

Sometimes the transcriptions of what the participants said had to be translated. The following rules applied:

1. When the participants uttered a complete sentence in intelligible English, no translation was necessary.
2. When they mixed English words with non-English words in the same sentence, I had to translate the whole sentence into English.
3. When they spoke Pidgin, I had to translate into Standard English.
4. When the whole sentence contained only non-English words, I had to translate it.

All these cases can be covered by the following rule: When a sentence contained any non-English words, including Pidgin, the whole sentence had to be translated. If it was entirely in English, it was not translated. To fit the definition of translating (as opposed to “interpreting”), the input and the output should be in written form. This requires that the source language and the target language have a writing system, namely an alphabet and spelling conventions (orthography). Building on this are the resources of the translator (other than memory and his language skills) – namely, speaking and writing conventions (grammar) and dictionaries (unilingual) of the target language, which offer definitions and distinguish between different registers of speech (formal, informal, colloquial, slang). Even better would be the availability of bilingual dictionaries covering the source language and the target language in one volume, but such a thing does not exist between English and Ijáw.

If bilingual dictionaries covering source language and target language are not available, then in cases of doubt the translator may have to use one – or several – turntable languages, translating from source language into a turntable language and from the turntable language into the target language, or to choose a concrete example, from Oꝛo into English and from English into Ijáw. In this case, the “Chinese whispers” phenomenon can easily occur, with

some deviation occurring at each transition, leading to an utterly absurd mistranslation. Many of these resources are available for major European languages and for major world languages, such as English, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese, but this is not the case for indigenous African languages, especially the minor ones.

The words of one language never exactly match the words of another (Malinowski, 1935, vol. 2:11 cited in Duranti, 1997), or to put it differently there is no one-to-one-relationship between the words of one language and those of another. This means that the translator of, say, a transcript can often not be sure of the exact meaning of the words and sentences she is translating. The source sentence may be ambiguous, or incomplete in its meaning, or completely incomprehensible even if the translator knows all the words of the source language and the corresponding (but never matching) words of the target language. The interviewer can in some cases interrupt the participant and ask for a clarification, whereas the translator cannot. This makes translating very difficult, and the result is never perfectly reliable. Even if the translator fully understands the meaning of a sentence in the source language, the target language may not have a matching word. Therefore, we have loan words (such as “schadenfreude”; malicious joy) in so many languages, and why code-switching is so common in many countries.

I needed clarity because I did not want to distort the meaning of what I had heard. A translator’s responsibility is great. My interviewees often switched languages. Some participants began a sentence haltingly in English and continued it fluently in Pidgin. Papa, my main participant in the Ajegunle family, talked mostly in Ijáw to emphasise his change of perspective.

There are not enough translators to mediate between the numerous indigenous languages in countries like Nigeria, and those translators who might translate, say, Ijáw into English may not be able to cope with the many dialects of Ijáw (which are not always mutually intelligible), and there are no dictionaries to aid them. I remember vividly how difficult it was to translate the Ijáw of one of my main participants in Bayelsa. I had to read the original sentences several times, jot down a draft translation, correct it repeatedly changing the words to avoid ambiguities and to ensure that any reader of my translation would understand exactly what I had understood and not take an entirely different meaning. I understood how Martin Luther (1483-1546) felt when he was translating the Bible into German and wrote in his “Open Letter about Translating” (Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen, 1530):

*“Ich hab mich des beflissen im Dolmetschen, daß ich rein und klar Deutsch geben möchte. Und ist uns sehr oft begegnet, daß wir vierzehn Tage, drei, vier Wochen haben ein einziges Wort gesucht und gefragt, haben’s dennoch zuweilen nicht gefunden.”*  
(While translating, I tried very hard to produce plain and clear German, and we often spent a fortnight, three or four weeks searching for just one word and asking about it, and at times even then we didn’t find it not found it).

#### **4.8. Ethical Issues**

Before embarking on my project, I had to obtain approval from the Ethics Committee of my university to conduct my research. Ethical issues must not be neglected in any research which may affect people and their lives, and people are always affected, even when the project seems to be concerned only with the material world (such as the Los Alamos Project, which led to the development of the nuclear bomb, or the creation of maps of a valley which may eventually lead to the creation of a reservoir submerging villages). In my study, it is very much people who are affected, since I was trying to uncover their life stories, the dynamics that existed within their families and their profound feelings about their language. I was therefore anxious not to do any harm, and in fact to do as much good as possible during the research and in its future use.

I followed the agreed ethical conventions of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), such as informed consent, right to privacy, confidentiality and data protection (Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin, 1997, p.5; Fontana and Frey, 1999; Newby, 2010). To ensure that my participants were comfortable, I showed them empathy when they were telling their stories. I was determined to be trustworthy and open in all my dealings with my participants and to follow the guidelines and principles of the committees and organisations concerned with research ethics, such as BERA – which states for example that researchers must not use coercion or duress of any form to persuade participants to re-engage with their work (BERA, 2011, p.5).

##### **4.8.1 Developing empathy and trust for participants**

Should researchers show empathy? Should they or comment or just listen? When dealing with complex individuals and situations, it is important to remain flexible (Silverman, 2001, p.26). Do I need to show empathy with the speakers for whatever situation they now find themselves in? Should I comment on what they are saying? They are meant to express their views freely and use whatever means they want to tell their stories during the interview sessions. I allowed my participants to talk as a group with each other since that was what they

preferred, and I tried to intervene as little as possible. My participants were emotionally involved with my project from the start. During and after data collection, I reflected on the participants, who were so open and generous when sharing very personal and significant memories with me. They were eager to discuss a problem that had worried them for a long time. I gave them a chance to release their worries and frustrations concerning the decline of Ijáw. What prompted them to give me so much of their time and their trust? When observing the way in which they spoke about their experiences and feelings about Ijáw, my own emotions were engaged – especially when they regretted their inability to pass Ijáw on to their children. My approach to the interviews was very flexible, and the participants had as much leeway as they needed in terms of when and how they spoke, what they talked about, and what language they used.

Here is an example: I asked a man in Ijáw: “Tekedounu amuni Ijáw fiee ana awoobo peregha?” (Why is it that parents no longer speak Ijáw with their children?) He replied in English: “Madam, this issue of not speaking Ijáw is a very big problem, and I blame my wife for it because I try to teach the children, but she is not helping the matter”. My visits were usually informal, which puts everyone present at ease. During the process of gathering data, my participants regularly asked for clarification on which language I would prefer them to respond in. But I allowed them to determine the pace of the session. I told them: “This is about you, not about me. Use whatever language you are comfortable with. I am only here to observe and record how you use Ijáw in your home.” Familiarity may breed contempt, but it can also breed trust. Bosk (1979, p.9) stresses that being allowed to be an observer is a privilege – a gift given to the researcher by the participants and by the “gate keeper”, the person who helped the researcher gain access.

I enjoyed the privilege of sharing breakfast, lunch and dinner with my Bayelsa family, chatting with them and observing them at the same time. I observed family life in the most relaxed and natural way imaginable. The grandchildren, Princess (f, 14) and Bris (m, 12), wanted to handle my flip video recorder. Bris wanted to help me operate it, and I had a very long interview with him. That offered me a great opportunity to see what was happening with Ijáw in the family. I could empathise with them because I was entangled in the same problem: everyone regrets that Ijáw is used less and less, but nobody can articulate a reason why it is not more popular. However, the participant will be implicated in existing social practices and expectations in a far more rigid manner than the researcher. The research activity should therefore be hedged by pre-existing social routines and realities. It will prove

hard for the researcher to arrange his or her actions to fully optimise data collection possibilities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.94).

#### **4.9 Thematic Analysis and Coding**

Motto: Data without generalization is just a gossip.  
(Pirsig, 1991:55, in Chambers, 2003: xix).

In this section, I discuss the nature of ethnographic data analysis, and talk about how thematic analysis relates to this present study. The ethnographer's task is two-fold: to obtain the data and then to analyse them. Both activities are of equal importance, as "Analysis in ethnography is as much a test of the ethnographer as it is of data" (Fetterman, 1998, p.92). The narratives come from the participants, but the ethnographer should understand them, and understanding entails interpretation. How one understands and interprets data, which aspects one regards as significant and interesting, and which as trivial, accidental or irrelevant depends on the ethnographer's purpose. Part of this interpretation takes place as the data are being collected. To some extent, my interpretative work was therefore embedded in the way I collected the data. There does not need to be any formal separation of "stages" of data collection as opposed to analysis, and the former does not need to fully precede the latter. While I was collecting the data, I simultaneously and carefully noted down recurring events. This is how Rapley (2007, p.50) describes it, observing that transcripts are by their very nature translations – they are always partial and selective textual representations. Transcripts are the main or even sole source of data for many research studies, and interpretation begins in the transcription process, offering implications for the final research findings and conclusions.

The themes and recurring events were coded to make it easier for me to search for these as they emerged during the discussions and in the transcripts. I used coding to identify similarities, discrepancies, patterns and sequences in the life stories and interviews. My approach to data analysis was thematic. Thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). Data-driven themes that developed manually were analysed by open coding. There were no presuppositions, but certain themes were established by teasing out ideas and concepts from the discussions of the participants (Gibbs, 2007).

Themes were chosen not only because of their commonality between participants, but because they addressed the main research questions. Coding refers to the discussions within

the transcripts written in the words of the participants. I used an inductive approach to do my thematic analysis: coding and the development of themes were determined by the content of the data as they developed in the interviews with each of the participants. I employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis:

1. I familiarised myself with the data by manually transcribing the data several times. I read and re-read the data and noted down initial ideas.
2. I generated initial (provisional) codes, systematically highlighting outstanding ideas in each of the excerpts from the data across the entire dataset and collated the data grouped under each code. I attached codes to the narrations to check for similarities, patterns and sequences.
3. I searched for themes, combining the codes into possible themes (chunks); I gathered all data that belonged to each likely theme.
4. I reviewed the themes to establish whether they answered the main research questions and sub-questions.
5. I defined and named the themes – I continued to analyse and polish each specific theme, and the entire story which the analysis told generated clearer descriptions and names for each theme.
6. I formulated my findings, considering this process as my opportunity to present the analysis. I obviously selected meaningful, captivating excerpts as examples that answered the research questions. I backed these up with relevant literature to produce an academically acceptable standard of analysis and theories.

Codes usually form part of the sequences of themes that emerge from the data analysis.

Codes are words or phrases that serve as markers for sections of the data analysed. I divided the interview data using codes. During this process, the research questions were going through my mind as I strove to answer them. I started looking for patterns in the interview data that were relevant or could answer specific research questions (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). I started tagging the interview data with codes as I looked at what each participant has said about the issues relevant to Ijáv language use and decline. The codes I came up with are summarised in Table 10

#### **4.9.1 Data Codes**

**Table 10:** Emerging Codes

|                  |
|------------------|
| <b>Attitudes</b> |
| <b>Change</b>    |

**Code-switching, translanguaging**

**Culture**

**Culture**

**Documentation**

**Education**

**Emotions**

**English**

**Globalisation**

**Identity**

**Inferiority**

**Lack of usage**

**Language revitalisation**

**Language shift**

**Laughter**

**Parental transmission**

**Pidgin**

**Status/prestige**

I found a recurrence of certain themes from the interview responses, which shed more light on the research questions. A theme is an implicit topic that organises a group of repeated ideas (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, p.35). This suggests that a theme structures the researcher's ideas into a logical manner – in this case, the table describing the codes [Table 10]. The clustering of codes helped identify emerging themes. As I continued with crossing and analysing, other salient codes emerged, such as emotions, change and translanguaging (see Chapter 3). I coded the sentences that recurred within the texts, and the emerging themes were identified to show how they connected to specific codes [Table 10]. The codes developed slowly as my thesis proceeded and were repeatedly adjusted depending on the answers I received from my participants. I began the data analysis by looking at patterns in the transcripts. The example below includes data from one participant: Papa.

## 4.9.2 Data Sample

### Excerpt 1 from Chapter 5 [see 4.2.9]

| Ijáv   | English   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Researcher:</b> Tekdouno Oomene baa Oweei Izón ba fiee dougha ooo?</p> <p><b>Papa:</b> <i>Kereemi, Owoe Izón meeme oyadunmino o fgha keemi. Owo keemesese gboloemi. Meemi Oweese Izón doulo doulo ke fiee meeni. Owoee awobo ebibrake naamemi. Emene blame mee akaadee including my wife. Meeme wee bratougha, Izón fiee meene. Is just deinmene because Awoobo tuulunuo douo agha douonu.</i></p> <p><i>Wee fiee mene but Oweoi awoobo deeree ke deeree mene oo kun oyadunagha but awobo douoolo duoolo naamene. Oweo Izón waare ke duobo mmene. Oweeierebo ke miemene Izón meene ba fiee.</i></p> <p><i>So, Erebo ke Izón meene kon awoobo peeree laaemie anakedounu peena otuu beelemee kon eerebo peeremi. Meeme owoerebo kee waaree gbaalemi doonu bgha beesebra fghaa.</i></p> <p>Researcher: Do you feel that there is a problem with Ijáv?</p> <p>Researcher: What is the family's language policy?</p> <p>Which language did your parents speak with you?</p> <p>Researcher: Why are other tribes more interested in their languages?</p> | <p>Why is it that other tribes are more interested in their language and we seem not to be?</p> <p><i>Papa: Yes, ooo Ijáv is 'suffering' [emotions] and something needs to be done. This is a cause for concern. We speak less Ijáv than English. [language shift/English] The little children are good at understanding language easily, but I blame us, my wife and myself [emotions]. But we are not giving up, we are going to start doing something about it. It's just that at times you don't feel encouraged at all, you tend to be tired because your effort is not being acknowledged by the children [emotions]. We try but they always laugh, [laughter] and it is not taken seriously. They understand little phrases. The Language starts in the home. It is the fault of the women because the white man called it 'mother tongue,' so the responsibility is more on the women to teach the children Ijáv. [parental transmission]</i></p> <p><i>Unlike previous times, women of today are bread winners just like men, so opportunities are relatively slim [change/globalisation]. The language has no problem, emmm [with a pause] we are the cause of its lack of usage. [lack of usage] Owobrakeemi (it is in our own hands). Speaking English is like a thing of pride, Ego or something [emotions/language/English]. They said the language is too strong... ooo... to understand [language shift]. Everything was formed during my childhood; both my father and my mother spoke Ijáv. They did so without embarrassment, even in the presence of strangers' ... wooooo[emotions].</i></p> <p><i>Regretfully... Eww, emmmm ... though, the environment in which our children now find themselves for the greater part of their time, at school has had an impact, because they speak English [emotions/English]. Children talk with their parents only in the mornings</i></p> |

*and the evenings, speaking Pidgin.*

*My family moved to Lagos in the 60s, then we only spoke Ijw. It was the language at home. But, now people are mixing Ijw with Pidgin. The language is deteriorating. ... Eeeee mmmm ... [emotions]. My own eldest daughter and son understand Ijw but do not speak it with their own children, because they believe that they are no longer fluent ... oooo na whaaaa ... and don't usually speak it as they would have with their own children oooo. I am not trying to use this as a reason to excuse our not speaking the language in my house with all the children because it is our duty... oooo ... what our own parents did to us that is by passing the Ijw to the next generation which we are now failing to do [parental transmission]. It is our fault and nobody else's, ... sha oooo oo na we ooo.... Nevertheless, there are still some children who understand their Mother Tongue as well and speak it fluently, but they are few and far between [blame].*

*However, it seems that people are recognising the fact that the language is gradually dying [emotions]. We learnt it especially from our mothers because they were usually at home with us more than our fathers. It is first and foremost the mother who passes on the language, and a great deal depends on her because she spends more time with the children. [mother tongue] It makes me wonder if it is right to put the blame on our children not speaking their Mother Tongue. We can't blame the government or the society where we are living at the moment for not encouraging our children to speak Ijw [blame]. The Yorubas and Igbos speak their language with their children from very young age which helps them to interact even among strangers. We as parents need to have a strong desire to pass the language on [parental transmission]. It is a thing of interest and we should blame ourselves for the decline of the language, not because we have contact with other languages [blame].*

The following three themes emerged from the investigation:

- (a) The participants' emotional attachment to Ijw, which is analysed through discourses of love and pride for Ijw versus discourses of pain for its loss.
- (b) the participants' beliefs about Ijw and the relationship between Ijw and their other languages, which is analysed through the reported lack of use and visibility of Ijw in public and domestic environments, respectively, as well as the perceived reasons for the shift of Ijw to the use of Pidgin and English.
- (c) the participants' moral stance regarding the lack of transmission of Ijw, which is analysed through the attribution of responsibility and blame to a range of social actors.

#### **4.9.3 Use of Bronfenbrenner's Model**

Bronfenbrenner's theory comprises four components: process, person, context and time (Wachs and Evans, 2010). I used this theory in my research to identify individuals as well as environmental influences on their language development. The family language policy represents the micro-context because this is where my participants are meant to use the language every day.

I studied Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model (1979; 1986; 1989) to better understand the multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral nature of society that the participants live in and how this relates to Ijw. The bio-ecological model is bi-directional and can represent interaction between the four systems on the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-levels, which are synergistic (collaborative) in nature (Krishnan, 2010, p.3). How this synergy runs across the systems is explained below using the multi-layered platform, including the sub-systems that represent the multiple layers of emerging themes.

- The **MACRO SYSTEM** is an outer layer which shows how the use of language has changed (evolved) over time, including changing language policies within the broader society; the economic, political and educational forces involved. The model deals with the role of English as the dominant language and its status in education and migration.
- The **EXO-SYSTEM** (the outside system). This represents the education policies which the parents or children have no control over. They are forced to adapt to whatever the system dictates on education and language use [see Section 2.10].
- The institutional contexts of the government and the schools form part of the meso-system, because they are important in terms of teaching and learning

languages and for deciding which language should be the language of instruction in schools.

- The MICRO-SYSTEM is the final layer and covers the language policy within families concerning the use of Ijw, Pidgin and English. This is where my participants are meant to use Ijw every day. In the hierarchy of languages, Ijw was spoken least. The top dog was English, followed by Yoruba or Pidgin, and lastly Ijw [see language pyramid Section 2.8, Figure 15].

The theory enabled me to use the themes to create a sequence of stories to show the critical moments of the life stories of each participant and explain why Ijw might be declining in use. These factors and structures will be used as analytical tools in the analysis chapter. When analysing the data, my guiding principle was to follow the ideas and perspectives of my participants as they emerged, rather than my own, like a miner might follow a vein of gold.

My study was aimed at answering two major questions (main questions) and three minor questions (sub-questions). The main questions are:

1. Is Ijw declining, and if so why?
2. Why is Ijw not being passed down through generations?

The minor questions are:

1. What is the reported language use in the homes?
2. How do the participants value Ijw?
3. What new forms of Ijw language, culture and identity are emerging?

#### **4.10 Ensuring Validity**

We can distinguish between internal and external validity. Internal validity concerns the measures I took to ensure that I avoided mistakes while doing my research and obtained results from which general conclusions can be drawn, which apply not only to individuals but also to specific incidents.

External validity concerns the measures I had to take to ensure that others can believe my results (Kirk and Miller, 1989)

To ensure validity, my interviews were voice-recorded, and the voice recordings helped ensure that that nothing was missed during observation. The recordings were transcribed, and the transcriptions helped with both internal and external validity. They enabled me – and

others – to ponder at leisure what was said, and they made it possible to check the accuracy of the transcriptions whenever required. I carefully documented my procedures, attempting to reduce errors and biases. I also kept clear and detailed records which would enable other researchers to follow the same procedures and to obtain, if not the same (since this is impossible), then at least similar results (Yin, 2003, p.37). I started each session with a descriptive observation (Robson, 1996, p.200), in which I observed the situation objectively to create a basic narrative account of the space, setting and participants. I then focused on observation, ensuring that what the parents said about the children and their use of Ijaw was reflected in the short space of time I was there. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.290) stress that an inquiry should make certain that its findings are worth paying attention to and that nothing should be taken for granted. That is a separate call for validity and for work that can be useful for further research or as a basis for practical measures.

#### **4.11 Summary**

This chapter was devoted to an explanation of my research methodology. I described how my interest in my topic developed and how I became interested in the question of how the decline of Ijaw could be reversed. I travelled to Nigeria three times to collect data by interviewing my participants. My interviewees came from three families and three locations: Ajeunle, Abuja and Bayelsa. I have summarised the personal details of all the participants. I was aware of the benefits and risks of being an insider, coming from the same community as my participants. I found my participants helpful, welcoming and keen to help with my project.

In this chapter, I also discussed the ethical issues of my research. The next chapter offers the first section of data analysis in the thesis.

# Chapter 5

## Language use, Beliefs and Emotions towards Ijw

My ability to speak Ijw was hampered by my parents' preference of talking with my siblings and me in Igbo or in English. I believe there has been a shift which has largely affected the language because of globalisation or imbibing the Western traditional culture. Over the years my use of Ijw has gradually decreased; it is no longer customary for me to speak the language. The United Nations undertook some research into languages going into extinction and Ijw was one of the languages they identified. I can speak Ijw to an extent, but I am not fluent in speaking the language. Marriage is not a factor. When two people come together in the name of marriage as an opportunity for the children to speak both languages, to me this is a positive, not a negative. The Nigerian government should cultivate the culture of introducing the language into our schooling systems. If Nigerian citizens can imbibe the culture of speaking the language with their children, then that is also likely to help. (Keys, a male participant: see Appendix Excerpt 10).

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the stories of my participants, which were collected during interviews conducted in Nigeria at three different settings, namely Lagos, in Ajegunle, Abuja and Bayelsa States.

In this chapter I sought to address the two main questions. These are:

1. Is Ijw declining and if so why?
2. Why is Ijw not being passed down through the generations?

I also aimed to address two of the minor questions:

1. What is the reported language use in the homes?
2. How do the participants value Ijw?

For analytical purposes, the participants are grouped into three generations: Older, Middle and Younger. The interviews were analysed to understand the participants' attitudes, beliefs and emotions concerning the use of Ijw over time and across generations.

There are three key themes that were communicated across the three generations. The first is the emotional attachment of love and pride versus pain for the loss of the language. This explains how the participants' attitudes, belief practices and passion for Ijáw were observed in relation to their experiences as narrated. The second is that of the language shift from Ijáw to Standard or Pidgin English or Yoruba, as exemplified by participants not speaking Ijãw or replacing it with Pidgin, or those who are able to speak English because of their class. The third theme is blame, in which there appears to be a recurring need to apportion blame to someone for the lack of language use. The older and middle generations deliberated their roles in teaching the younger generation the language.

In the ensuing sections, first, I present some biographical information about each participant and the chosen data excerpts. Then, I proceed to the data analysis and discussion according to the three themes. It is important to note that the framework of social constructivism and sociolinguistics (Childs, Good and Mitchell, 2014) has been used to analyse the data from the transcripts as attitudes, beliefs and emotions are processes that are socially constructed. The data from this thesis span language variation, language identity and ideology [see Section 3.7 p.73], multilingualism, language contact, language planning and maintenance as the participants believe that something needs to be done to change people's attitudes towards their language. Prior studies have demonstrated that attitudes play a role in both the reception and reproduction of language practices. [See Jorgensen and Quist (2010) for Danish attitudes to immigrant languages; Bourhis et al, (2007) for attitudes towards Welsh; Jeon (2013) for attitudes about Korean dialects; Fought (2002) for Californian English; Mann (2000) for attitudes about Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin, and Draper (2010) for Lao attitudes in Thailand.] Languages are socially learned and therefore reflect larger community orientations and predilections. Attitudes are the responses of people based on language practice, which are likely reflected as a factor of imitation. This could reflect cultural practices or beliefs that people manifest or project because of gender or those which can otherwise be socially constructed (or nurtured through interacting with the social environment). Such practices may be caused by family language policies which are operated in terms of practices (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013; Spolsky, 2012) policies (what they do with language), language management (what efforts they make to maintain language) (Spolsky, 2004; 2009; 2012) or religious practices and congregants (Byrnes, 1999; Chew, 2002; Omoniyi, 2010; Spolsky 2003). This study argues that language practices are socially, and socio-culturally constructed, and that this all takes place within the society or within

communities. Essentially, as the study explores people's attitudes, emotions and belief practices about language, the feeling of emotional language attachment can be said to have two dimensions: *loss* versus *pride*. This was portrayed when the participants talked about their concerns or worries about language decline. Meanwhile, emotional love and pride reflect their affection towards the language as they identify with Ijw as part of their cultural identity.

## **5.2 The Older Generation**

In this section, I present the participants' excerpts within the older generation. I transcribed five interviews with a sample group ranging in ages from 65 to 82. These interviews were conducted within two of the previously listed contexts, Ajegunle and Bayelsa. Abuja was not included because there were no individuals within the designated age range available when I visited the locale.

The purpose of this section is to illustrate and describe the experiences and thoughts of my participants in a format which my audience can understand. This is a crucial consideration, since my participants are from a different culture to that of most of my readers. As such I have made the sentences – which are narrated in Ijw and Pidgin – as explicit as possible to my readers by translating every word literally. The section starts with Papa, who is the oldest of all participants and who facilitated my meeting the other participants in his setting.

### **5.2.1 Papa**

Papa was 82 years old when I visited Ajegunle; he was also involved in my interviews with the other participants in this setting (see Chapter 4). I interviewed him five times, including twice on my first and second trips, and once on my third trip. Taking my research questions into consideration, in this chapter I use the transcript from the interviews conducted on the second trip. Papa explicitly touched on the three themes of the thesis to avoid repetition. Apparently, Papa saw that I was not fully satisfied with his responses, so he offered me the chance to interview two further Elders. I welcomed this idea as it would give me an insight into a wider breadth of experiences. During my visits to Ajegunle, Papa's experiences outlined the three themes mentioned above. Papa's passion for the language was evident; he

shared many anecdotes to show his attitudes, beliefs, and emotions towards Ijw as a language.

Papa’s interview introduces all three recurring themes captured by the members of the older generation. In the process of analysing the stories, I use the third person (their or them).

This extract is taken from dialogue with Papa during the second interview, in which he spoke both Ijw and English.

### Excerpt 1

| Ijw   | English   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Researcher:</b> Tekdouno Oomene baa Oweei Izn ba fiee dougha ooo?</p> <p><b>Papa:</b> <i>Kereemi, Owoe Izn meeme oyadunmino o fgha keemi. Owo keemesese gboloemi. Meemi Oweese Izn doulo doulo ke fiee meeni. Owoee awoobo ebibrake naamemi. Emene blame mee akaadee including my wife. Meeme wee bratougha, Izn fiee meene. Is just deinmene because Awoobo tuulunuo douo agha douonu.</i></p> <p><i>Wee fiee mene but Oweoi awoobo deeree ke deeree mene oo kun oyadunagha but awoobo douoolo duooolo naamene. Oweo Izn waare ke duoobo mmene. Oweeierebo ke miemene Izn meenee ba fieee.</i></p> <p><i>So, Erebo ke Izn meene kon awoobo peeree laaemie anakedounu peena otuu beelemee kon eerebo peeremi. Meeme owoeerebo kee waaree gbaalemi doonu bgha beeseebra fghaa.</i></p> | <p>Why is it that other tribes are more interested in their language and we seem not to be?</p> <p><b>Papa:</b> <i>Yes, ooo Ijw is ‘suffering.’ Something needs to be done. This is a cause for concern. We speak less Ijw than English. The little children are good at understanding. Language easily, but I blame us, my wife and myself. But, we are not giving up, we are going to start doing something about it. It’s just that at times you don’t feel encouraged at all, you tend to be tired because your effort is not being acknowledged by the children. We try, but they always laugh, and they don’t take it seriously. They understand little phrases. The language starts in the home. It is the fault of the women because the white man called it ‘mother tongue’. so, the responsibility is more on the women to teach the children Ijw.</i></p> <p><i>Unlike previous times, women of today are bread winners just like men, so opportunities</i></p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Researcher:</b> Do you feel that there is a problem with Ijáw?</p> <p><b>Researcher:</b> What is the family's language policy?</p> <p>Which language did your parents speak with you?</p> <p><b>Researcher:</b> Why are other tribes more interested in their languages?</p> | <p><i>are relatively slim.</i></p> <p><i>The language has no problem... emmm. [with a pause] we are the cause of its lack of usage. Owobrakeemi [it is in our own hands].</i></p> <p><i>Speaking English is a thing of pride, Ego or something. They said the Language is too strong ...ooo... to understand. Everything was formed during my childhood; both my father and my mother spoke Ijáw. They did so without embarrassment, even in the presence of strangers ... wooooo. Regretfully... Eww... emmmm ... though, the environment in which our children now find themselves for the greater part of their time, at school, has had an impact, because they speak English. Children talk with their parents only in the mornings and the evenings, speaking Pidgin. My family moved to Lagos in the 60s, and we only spoke Ijáw. It was the language at home. But, now people are mixing Ijáw with Pidgin. The language is deteriorating... Eeeee ...mmmm. My own eldest daughter and son understand Ijáw but do not speak it with their own children because they believe that they are no longer fluent ...oooo na whaooo... and don't usually speak it as they would have with their own children... oooo... I am not trying to use this as a reason to excuse our not speaking the language in my house with all the children because it is our duty ... oooo .... what our own parents did to us by passing</i></p> |
|--|--|

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p><i>Ijáw to the next generation which we are now failing to do. It is our fault and nobody else's ..., sha oooo oo na we ooo ... Nevertheless, there are still some children who understand their Mother Tongue well and speak it fluently, but they are so few and far between. However, it seems that people are recognising the fact that the language is gradually dying. We learnt it – especially from our mothers because they were usually at home with us more than our fathers. It is first and foremost the mother who passes it on the language, and a great deal depends on her because she spends more time with the children. It makes me wonder if it is right to put the blame on our children for not speaking their Mother Tongue. We can't blame the government or society, because the place we're living in at the moment does not encourage our children to speak Ijáw. The Yorubas and Igbos speak their language with their children from a very young age, which helps them to interact even with strangers. We as parents need to have a stronger desire to pass the language on. It is a thing of interest and we should blame ourselves for the decline of the language, not just because we have contact with other languages.</i></p> |
|--|--|

### **5.2.2 First Elder**

The 'First Elder' is a term used to differentiate between both Elders. I did not use specific names for these two Elders. This is shown in the table in the methodology (Chapter 4). I met

the First Elder before I met the Second Elder through Papa. I interviewed them because I wanted to find out if there were similarities and differences between their views and Papa's own recollections and perspectives. This First Elder attended the same church as Papa, a church known in the area as the 'Izón Church'. As a local church, I assume that many members of the congregation were Izón natives or residents. Papa took me to the church after my second session along with his own family. This was in the late afternoon at about 4pm; we had a long walk from Papa's house to the church. I was very intrigued by the passion and enthusiasm shown for the language by Papa, who walked rather briskly in a manner that did not reflect his age. We walked for about 30 minutes before arriving at the church, which was in Sanusi Street in Ajegunle, a popular area where many native Izóns live. The church was not far away from the main market, which was known as Boundary Market, located close to Apapa and the Marina Bridge.

Papa introduced me to the first Elder and explained that I was there to gain an insight into what his views or perceptions were about the Ijáw language. This included finding out how he had used it previously and how he is using it now. The First Elder expressed his excitement at meeting a young person who was so passionate about Ijáw and intended to create an awareness of the importance of speaking a mother tongue.

The First Elder told me he had been married to an Izón woman for 30 years, but she had passed away. The Elder said that his wife was not as educated as he was, and she did not speak Ijáw with his children; they all spoke Pidgin or even learnt Yoruba. This seems to be a common trend in all three of my settings – Ajegunle, Abuja and Bayelsa – especially amongst the older and middle generations.

He said that he was an ex-army officer, and that he'd grown up in a village before moving to Lagos. He grew up speaking Kolokuma, which was another variety of Ijáw spoken by Izóns in the state capital Bayelsa. The First Elder was from the Mein clan, and he spoke another variety of Ijáw (see Section 3.4.7). Kolokuma was a language which was used in both education and the media, so it received considerably more recognition compared to other dialects that were spoken in the Western Izón regions. The First Elder was dressed in the traditional Rivers State outfit that men usually wear to mark special occasions, with a 'Boula' hat to complete the ensemble. He welcomed me and offered me a seat opposite him. There was a table which had on it his notes for the Bible interpretations that the Elders were compiling. The Elder apologised about the mess and asked me to accept him the way I met

him, which was obviously meant metaphorically. He felt that I should have been catered for more appropriately, but I assured him that I was fine and that I had been given food, drinks and snacks at Papa’s house. When I had sat down, the First Elder asked me “My daughter, what can I do for you?”

**Excerpt 2**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Researcher:</b> <i>Takee dounu amene Ijw fiee ana awobo pere aaa?</i></p> <p>Why is it that parent don’t speak Ijw to your children?</p> <p>Please feel free and comfortable to speak in whatever language that best suits you sir.</p> <p>Why are parents not transmitting the language with their children?</p> | <p><b>First Elder:</b> <i>So, what can I do for you my daughter oooo?</i></p> <p><i>How do you want it ... boooo ... my daughter?</i></p> <p><i>Papas and Mamas, we don’t have respect or love for our language.</i></p> <p><i>We, Papas and Mamas instead we speak another language like Pidgin. At times in Lagos, you might be the only person in the compound that can speak Ijw. The women we married are not educated as such. The mothers want to learn English from the children, so that when you Papa goes to work they will be speaking English with the children until man got back before they switch to Ijw. You humbled yourself and feel that the language is dying but our professors, which are meant to be teaching it are not interested in projects like this. They don’t take it seriously at all. As for us, we elderly ones, we are very concerned which is why it is annoying us for not priding the language enough.</i></p> |
|---|--|

**5.2.3 Second Elder**

The Second Elder is an ex-military man, who was dressed in a white vest upon my arrival. When I got out of the taxi, he greeted me with a warm smile. Papa then came in to formally

introduce me to the Second Elder. It was an intriguing moment, as the Second Elder was amazed that I was embarking on such a project. The Second Elder spoke about the partnership with the Bible Society, which was in the process of translating the Bible into Kolokuma Ijáw. This church uses Ijáw for worship and preaching the word in the family service. However, the Second Elder said that the youth department no longer uses Ijáw when teaching the children. The Second Elder was not able to explain why this sudden decline in usage has taken place. He told me that it wasn't a conscious phenomenon, but more of an observation in hindsight. The Second Elder discussed the unwillingness displayed by members of the community to take it upon themselves to resolve this issue. However, he mentioned that the church elders are seriously considering reintroducing Ijáw teachings to revitalise the language.

The Second Elder sounded disgruntled when discussing the funding partners of the church, because they rarely received money from the Bible Society or the government. Although he mentioned that the Bible Society made some contributions towards upkeep, it was not received as regularly as it should have been. He told me that it was a difficult situation to cope with, considering his belief that a positive outcome to this project would be hugely beneficial to the Izón people. The Second Elder apologised for not offering me a drink; then he proceeded to ask how he could be of service. I give him a summary of my thesis and ask him to discuss his experience and use of Ijáw openly. He let out a long sigh, which clearly reflected his concern and frustration about the state of the language. After a brief pause, the interview session commenced.

The Second Elder provided many narratives, which is why the questions by the researcher are fewer compared to those in the extracts of other participants; which makes his excerpt even shorter.

### Excerpt 3

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Researcher:</b> Do you think Ijáw is going into extinction, sir?</p> | <p><i><b>Second Elder:</b> Yes, ... ooo booo ... it is. Let us be frank to ourselves. Ijáw language is going away. In our time, you could hardly find anybody speaking English. But, now even our old women try their best to speak this broken English. Even those that came from the village cannot speak the language. I</i></p> |
|--|---|

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p><i>am one of those that is contributing to the language dying. We don't give importance to the language. We don't realise that the language is very interesting. We don't have secrets in my house, we speak English in the presence of our visitors, which is not good at all; it is so bad and shameful.</i></p> <p><i>We need researching and documentation of the language which is what we are lacking, unlike Yoruba. Lack of books, teachers, those in the villages don't want to use or speak it. Especially, in the villages people don't want to be using it all. We are suffering in that aspect which means the language is dying. We can enact law that we should continue to speak Ijw. Anybody that can't speak it should be punished.</i></p> |
|--|---|

In the next section, I analyse the stories of participants from another setting, namely Bayelsa State, representing the Ofonibeingha family (see Family Table in Section 4.5).

#### **5.2.4 Ebinipreye**

Ebinipreye was introduced to me by my sister, who lives in Yenagboa. I told my sister that I would prefer to interview an older woman who could speak fluent Ijw if possible. I got to Ebinipreye's house quite late at night, but she gracefully afforded me some of her time. I greeted Ebinipreye in Ijw 'Okundee' and she responded 'seree ooo' (I knelt as she stood up, which is part of the etiquette, see Chapter 1.2). She offered me a meal, but I asked for a glass of water instead because I had eaten a lot during the day. After exchanging pleasantries, I told Ebinipreye my mission. She commended me for my vision before asking me how we should start the discussion. Ebinipreye mentioned that she usually visits relatives in Lagos whenever time permits. She said that it was sad to see how young children laugh at her whenever she spoke Ijw to them, which clearly showed their ignorance towards the language. Ebinipreye spoke in Ijw and her dialogue was transcribed into English as shown in the excerpt below.

#### Excerpt 4

| Ijw   | English   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Researcher</b></p> <p><i>Taekee douonu owo yin otubo baa ezon fie owo awobo pereegha?</i></p> <p><i>Owo wri ezon amu fiee aah</i></p> <p><i>Ani warie ede ebe kamu fiee mini?</i></p> <p><i>Beke ka mu fiee mini, even ezon emi fiee daba agha kemesese eederinmeni and beke kee kon edounmini</i></p> <p><i>Meme apootu mebra ke bulosere temimeni?</i></p> <p><i>Boluosere, membra faa, mene tery outu bo meme owo ama lade dounu ke owe bele gwagwa ke pagha dee yooo</i></p> <p><i>Egini ootu bo mee ama lade douno Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa otubo. Memen mee gwagwa dounu meteri otuubo owe erebo nanameni.</i></p> <p><i>Owee awabo memee beke otubo bra kee meinmene. Egeni otuu boo woo ama boodee dounu. Ana kee douonu ezon emu ba fiee aa o Eende na outu ke ezon fiee meni ane ware?</i></p> <p><i>Ooo</i></p> <p><i>Eni ware taara out kee ezon fiee mi. Owo ware otubo oyinkenifeni kee emi.</i></p> | <p>Why is it that parents no longer speak Ijw with their children?</p> <p>In my house, we don't speak Ijw ... ooo [interjection]. Even when you speak the children always laugh at you which was so sad hooooo [utterance].</p> <p>Which language do you speak in your house?</p> <p>In my house, they don't speak Ijw even when you speak it. They might use English to answer you if they want to. My children laugh when you speak Ijw with them ... bhooo! [exclamation]</p> <p>Has it always been like this?</p> <p>Previously, it wasn't like this. We used to speak it better than we do now. It is because we now have people from other tribes and communities. The migrants or visitors are the cause of the problem; people from different tribes in our community, Kaiyaama, kolokumo, Opokuma, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. At the moment, we have a mixture, and these outsiders are even bearing our names. Our children are like English people now. Visitors have arrived in our community that is the reason why we are no longer speaking Ijw.</p> <p>How many people in house speak Ijw?</p> <p>In my house, only three people speak Ijw.</p> |

|  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
|  | There are eleven in the house. |
|--|--------------------------------|

### 5.2.5 Felicia

Felicia is an unusual name for an Ijw woman. But as I have previously observed, some Ijw-speakers change their names into English to suit themselves or allow for easier pronunciation. She is a relative of Ebinepreye, who also resides in Yenagboa. I met her at a wedding during my visit to Yenagboa. When I told her about my project, she was very enthusiastic about getting involved. She even went as far as to enquire about my availability to schedule an interview, rather than waiting for me to ask to interview her. I suggested that we talk immediately after the wedding, if she could grant me an audience. On my arrival, she was dressed in a casual gown, which is known in Nigeria as a *Boubou* (see Appendix 5). The *Boubou* is a flowing long gown; which women wear if they want to feel comfortable, which is a cultural norm. When I got into Felicia’s house, we exchanged pleasantries; I greeted her in the usual custom by kneeling and saying “*okouedee*” and she responded “*seerie*” (see Section 1.2). She offered me *Pulu fie* with starch, a sumptuous meal that I accepted with pleasure. This was a traditional Izn dish that could be eaten at any time of the day. It was made with fresh ‘Cat fish’, prawns, crayfish, starch and palm oil, with water. Water was used to wash one’s hands before eating the dish because the starch was sticky, and my hands needed to be moist. Figure 20 illustrates the dish that I was served at Felicia’s house. I took the picture before eating the delicious meal. In Nigeria the custom is to eat a savoury meal before puddings, which are usually fruits.



**Figure 16:** A traditional Izn dish, *Pulu fie* with starch

After I had eaten, I asked Felicia how many people lived in the household, and she told me that eleven people lived there, but only three of them could speak Ijw. This excerpt below details Felicia’s stories considering the same three themes as the above participants.

## Excerpt 5

| Ijw  | English  |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Takee dounu Amani Izn fiee anna awobo pere ghaaa?</i></p> <p><i>Izn meeme English ka pade, owekemese bekebeke kee fie meenie oooo</i></p> <p><i>Owe wari omeni oyinkenifini, memese taru outu ke Izn fiee mini gba paa ooo.</i></p> <p><i>Onme Izn fiee aapredaba, gha beke ke odunmini. Bouoloseeri Izn ke omeniseefiee meni Aanakedouni Izn feemini, owekemese baa Izn eeee.</i></p> <p><i>Aninu ootu beinserebein bekebeke ke fiemie, anakedounu owekemesse mein beekebeek ke fiee meni oooo Owefunwari, boloseri Izn ke kon kemeotu tulumini, meinmese beekebeek ke owekemesese fieemi oooo sebhomo.</i></p> <p><i>Owekesese Izn kon owe awobo tolumu. Anake owo yinbo fere. Owo wari ke bulo Izn kon awabo tulu deke. Owo fiee meni Izn kemesese ye boboye ke fiee meni ankpo Izn bebe feemini. Memese Izn gwagwa keme buloseri Izn kemeotu nafiee gha. Izn ba ebelaghaa aaaaoooo. Beekebeek ke mese fiee mu n ooooo.</i></p> <p><i>Owefunwari kebu Izn tolumi kon owo awobopere. Emene eni opuyin ke Izn kon</i></p> | <p>...all speaking which is so bad ...oooo...</p> <p>[exclamation]. It is our duty to teach our children Ijw, it should first start from our homes ... oooo.</p> <p>This is our Ijw that we are speaking. We have varieties, we all have our own dialects which is a contributing factor as well. At the moment, Ijw has so much mix and match, which is why it is dying so fast. Previously we all use to speak Ijw better than we do now. Because of these mixtures people no longer understand or speaking Ijw like before. Ijw is no longer as palatable as it used to be to the ears, no longer interesting ... aaabooh [interpolation].</p> <p>It is no longer the way they used to speak it. We used to speak in Ijw without English in those days, which made Ijw really interesting and truly sound good to the ears. But no longer interesting ... ooooo [interjection] Everybody now speaks English! English! ... ooooo [outpouring].</p> <p>Let our schools ensure that they take it upon themselves to teach our children Ijw. Likewise, we should all try to teach our children Ijw ... oooo. I was taught by my grandmother ... oooo [exclamation].</p> |

### 5.3 The Middle Generation

In this section, I present the stories starting with the Ajegunle setting: those of Paul and Perere, both Papa’s children, and Officer. In the Abuja context, I present the stories of Opuowei, and from the Bayelsa context, I present the discussions with Key and Ekiyorkeeyinrin. The reasoning behind asking for these stories from the middle generation is to find out how the lack of intergenerational transmission of the language has affected this generation.

#### 5.3.1 Paul

Paul was in Papa’s room when I arrived. He helped me with the camera and seemed excited to see me after so many years. He spoke in Pidgin with little bits of Standard English in between. Paul is Papa’s eighth child. He lives in the same house as Papa and has four children. Paul spoke predominantly in Pidgin.

The themes discussed in this excerpt are emotional attachment for pain of language loss, language shift and blame for its loss.

#### Excerpt 6

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Researcher:</b> Why una no dey speak Ijáw?<br/>Why is it that young people don’t speak Ijáw?</p> <p><b>Researcher:</b> so, who you dey blame for lack of speaking Ijáw</p> | <p><i><b>Paul:</b> Na so we meet amm ooo [This is how we met it.] Papa did not encourage us at all in learning Ijáw because we usually speak broken (Pidgin).</i></p> <p><i>Yoruba children dem Papa dey speak their language with them at home (Pidgin)</i></p> <p><i>[Yoruba children their parents speak their language with them at home, not English.]</i></p> <p><i>Papa no dey encourage us at all in speaking</i></p> |
|--|---|

*Ijáw, when we speak broken (Pidgin), you are meant to speak Ijáw. But, I was not taught; I do not understand ... oooo. I like Ijáw very much, but my neighbours speak a different dialect from mine. But I am from Delta Ijáw. I can speak my mother's own very well ... ooo, which is Kolokuma.*

*You are now blaming us the children, but you never spoke Ijáw with us. we no dey go village, how I go learn Ijáw – [if I don't visit the village how am I going to learn Ijáw? I think when I visit the village I might learn the language better].*

Interruption from sister and Papa, they both said that in the village they spoke Pidgin, not Ijáw. Pidgin is spoken more than Ijáw. The sister then added that she speaks Ijáw only when she is angry.

*Our parents dem no care. Let the government make it a lesson for every state, if you no I hear Ijáw that's mean you no be Ijáw. Look at us our music the Yoruba people like am I [that they like it]. Dem dey ask me why we no dey treat our language with respect at all.*

*[they asked me why we don't have respect for our language?] They said that they will start Ijáw School for learning the language or make it compulsory lesson or subject in our schools. I never speak any other language; it pains my heart that I can't speak Ijáw well.*

*I am always very annoyed whenever I think*



|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p><i>speaking Ijáw, which means that the language is still inside of me.</i></p> |
|--|---|

### 5.3.3 Officer

Officer grew up in the village with his parents. He had an educated father who was a headmaster. In those days being a headmaster was deemed to be a very reputable position. However, his mother was an illiterate, as the idea of educating women was not very popular at the time. Nevertheless, he mentions that during his childhood days in the village they spoke Pidgin and Standard English at home, but not Ijáw. Despite that, he has made the effort to learn the language by interacting with competent speakers to change the culture of lack of usage. They tried to start a school, but it never materialised because there were no volunteers able to teach the language. Officer's family displays so much emotional attachment towards Ijáw with their enthusiasm and their love, and they are ashamed about the loss of the language. However, they seem not to use Ijáw at home.

Officer's family were waiting patiently for me and were pleased to see me when I arrived, which was welcoming. They asked me how I wanted to conduct the interview, so I initially adopted a passive approach to allow the process to flow naturally. We all ate starch and Banga soup before the proper interview. At the start of the interview I formally introduced myself to the family, told them about my project and explained how it had all started in London. At the dinner table, Officer said that he had a friend who told him they spoke Pidgin instead of Ijáw at the government house, which was part of the language shift. These discussions took place before the interview started in the presence of three of the children, a family friend's daughter, and both parents.

The three themes in this interview included loss of attachment, which is declining along with the teaching and learning of Ijáw, intergenerational transmission of the language and code-switching. These are all themes of blame.

## Excerpt 8

**Researcher:** Please tell me about your early years, how you used Ijáw and your present practice?

**Officer:** *My early primary school was in Warri. But that time there was this problem of perception... Emmmm... But, most of the people that I lived with were Izón people. Their perception was that most people from Izón are second class citizens. Like a bushman, they were not civilised to the realities of life, that was the perception of people towards Izóns.*

*There were all sorts of jokes like 'I zump into the liver to Kass zome fisses' meaning I jumped into the river to catch some fich' or zuku suku me I die'. It was so funny and upsetting. In those days people tended to laugh when we spoke.*

*Secondary school was at Bomadi. We had Ijáw speaking people from all over, and the perception was that when you speak Ijáw, people perceived you as been a backward person [being inferior]. It is not like now that Jonathan the president is speaking 'Yust' instead of 'Just' and nobody is saying anything about it. Then, when an Izón person spoke, people tend to laugh at them because of that they all have to speaking Pidgin instead of Ijáw especially as we grew up in the Ijáw speaking area.*

Who is to blame?

*Speaking Ijáw to children is the role of parents So if the parents can encourage their children, there will be improvement. Owe ware keme sese Ijáw fie [we should all please*

Do you believe that the language is dying?

*... speak Ijw in our homes!]. It is us, the parents. Our parents taught us, but we are unable to teach our own children or pass the language to their generation. There is no conscious effort in amending this problem. There should be conscious effort for our children to learn the language.*

*“Owe wari kemesese sese Ijw fiee” In our homes we should all please speak Ijw. There was a man, ...hmmm... a woman has a role to play in language learning. This is because he had all his children in the United States of America, all the man’s children speak Ijw fluently because the mother and father insisted that they all must speak Ijw within the home. Not speaking Ijw affects family ties, you want to say certain things when others are there, but you won’t be able to speak. But they might decide to code-switch. We should encourage our children to be speaking Ijw, we should use it as a bridge, not a fence. At the moment, we are using it as a fence. One problem is interest, and the little amount that one understands, when you don’t speak it or communicate in Ijw to your husband and children, it goes away. If you stop speaking the language it disappears if one is grounded in the language it won’t be there.*

*It is declining so fast. Some two or three years ago, I visited Yenagoa? Then I asked further why they can’t speak Ijw; I was told that even in the village they don’t speak, and I*

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p><i>asked why, and they all agreed that the language is declining. I saw another friend of mine from Yoruba, and he said that it is not only Ijw that is experiencing this problem, Yorubas are no longer speaking them language with the younger generations. But to my own understanding Ijw is the worst of all the tribes. He said that although the children understand Yoruba, but it is very watered-down. Like in the Northern part of Nigeria, most of the indigenous languages are dying away because all of them are communicating in Hausa.</i></p> <p><i>So, this is a general problem it is not just peculiar to Ijw alone.</i></p> |
|--|--|

### 5.3.4 Opuowei

Opuowei was the main participant in the Abuja setting. He is a married man with four children, the eldest of whom is a girl, followed by three boys. The children seemed to understand a little Ijw but were shy in speaking it. Opuowei is an accountant, while his wife is an executive who did not take part in an individual interview but was always interjecting with additional information when the other participants were discussing things. This couple represented the ideal social class – each distinguishable from the other but on a par with Officer. I greeted Opuowei in Ijw, but he responded in English. Opuowei got back from work and went straight into his room, where he remained for a while. I was initially somewhat confused by this, but his wife told me that part of his daily routine was to exercise, then have a shower. He took a while to resurface. Eventually, while the visitors who had been interviewed were talking, Opuowei returned wearing a blue and white T-shirt and shorts, showing off his athletic physique. It was obvious that he was a military man. His interview began soon after. During the interview, he told his son to fetch his black office shoes, speaking in Ijw. Opuowei revealed that he was doing this to show that his children could understand but not speak Ijw. He said ‘*mu agbuka konbo*’, which literally meant ‘*to get my*

*shoes* ' and the son went and came back with the shoes in his hands. Then he went on to say that if the boy's mother were to adopt a similar approach then that would have helped, but she usually spoke in Standard English, rather than Ijáw, with the children. In this home, the dominant language was Standard English.

As the interview began, I explored the research questions after exchanging traditional pleasantries, although Opuwei chose to reply in English. The themes discussed in this excerpt are pain for the loss of the language and language shift.

### Excerpt 9

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Researcher:</b> Okoide sir – I am kneeling sir<br/><i>emioooo sir – I am fine sir</i><br/><i>Teke dounu amene Ijáw fiee anawobo preee?</i><br/>Why is it that you as parents do not speak Ijáw with your children?</p> | <p><b>Opuwei:</b> <i>eee madam how are you na?</i><br/><i>That's a very big question. For those of us who were born in the village that is not news to us. We had that 'inferiority complex' when we spoke Ijáw outside our territory. I felt bad that Ijáw was not popular enough within the three regions in in the colonial era - the Northern region which had its base in Kaduna, the Eastern region which had its base in Enugu and the Western region that had its base at Ibadan. Izóns were in two regions and their alliance was towards the East. Izóns in the Western region were known as Western Izóns. There was no unifying factor, until when the government created Bendel State, but even that did not help matters. If an Ekiti man speaks, an Egba man will not understand. Kaba people they all have their own dialect. But they are unified by the Yoruba, even though they all have their own individual dialects. They have a Yoruba word for almost everything. They</i></p> |
|--|--|

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Do you think Ijw is declining?</p> | <p><i>created it for their own use.</i></p> <p><i>Ijw dialects are not the same thing. The names are either in Kalabari or Orika. Ijw is dying is all because of these divisions. Will Delta State that has so many dialects already allow Ijw to be taught in our schools? Ijw youths' council wanted funding and went to the then governor and he told them that he does not have money to give to only one tribe. There is no particular language that the Izns are speaking. The Yorubas have different dialects but the general Yoruba unifies them, even though they all have their own individual dialects. They got education early; we did not. Ours might have happened in the 50s.</i></p> <p><i>You were speaking Yoruba with my wife, which was not right. I do not like it when we choose to speak Yoruba or English over Ijw. Will a Yoruba man or woman abandon his or her own language for Ijw? Obviously no ...ooooooooo... it cannot happen? Naasoooo</i></p> |
|--|---|

## 5.4 The Youngest Generation

In this section, I present the stories from the Ajegunle setting, including those of Paul, Perere, both Papa's children, and Officer. In the Abuja context, I present the stories of Opuowei, while Pam's interview is examined in the following chapter. Finally, from the Bayelsa context, I present the discussions with Keys, Depreye and Ekiyorkeeyinrin.

### 5.4.1 Keys

Kelgson – shortened to Keys – is from Bayelsa, in the Sagbama local government area (local government areas are roughly equivalent to a local government authority in Britain, such as



|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p><i>civilisation or globalisation. But let us not forget our origin. We need to remember where we come from. Language itself is diverse and culture is a part of the community. Because until you remember where you come from, you won't appreciate where you come from. Our roots are vital. You know so many of us – the majority of us – get into our homes and don't speak. It is there that we should understand or speak the language. It boils down to our parents or families. If a parent doesn't know how to speak the language, the children, won't either. So many communicate in English. We rarely see parents speaking the language more than politicians and less fishermen</i></p> |
|--|--|

Keys speaks on the theme of language shift with a sub-theme of gender roles, which are changing because of development and globalisation. Gender differences were elaborated in Chapter 1 and the literature review in Chapter 3.

#### **5.4.2 Ekiyorkeeyinrin**

Ekiyorkeeyinrin was born in Ajegunle. Both of his parents are Izón, but they belong to different clans. He attended primary and secondary school in Lagos then moved to Yenagboa for further education. He is a Political Science graduate from Niger Delta University at Yenagboa. The meaning of his name connotes that one should use wisdom to tackle daily life on this earth, although he regularly shortens it as Ekiyor. He was very excited about being interviewed by me, and even interviewed some his friends who are Izón on my behalf. Unfortunately, the sound output was not so clear, so I was not able to use the recordings for this interview.

The three themes in this excerpt have already been touched upon by previous participants. The first refers to the emotional attachment of pain and loss, the second looks at the shift from Ijáw to English or Pidgin and the third is the issue of blame.

## Excerpt 11

| Researcher  | Ekiyor  |
|---|---|
| Please tell me about yourself                                       | <p><i>My name is Ekiyor; I am 30 years old, I was born in Lagos grew up in Ajegunle. In Ajegunle I only spoke Pidgin with some basic Yoruba and English. My parents did not speak Ijw with me, but my grandmother used to speak it and I used to respond in Pidgin then. I went to primary and secondary schools in Lagos. I later moved to Bayelsa State where I did my higher education.</i></p> |
| Is Ijw important to you and why?                                   | <p><i>I blame the parents for not speaking Ijw with their children. Ijw is important because it is the core of our culture. Without the language we are nothing; it is our identity.</i></p>  |
| What languages do you speak besides English?                        | <p><i>I would say that I speak Pidgin, English and a little bit of Yoruba. But with regards to Yoruba and Ijw I am not fluent. At the moment, I speak a little bit of Ijw. In Nigeria now, I think Ijw is one of the languages that are going into extinction.</i></p>   |
| What languages did you speak from ages:2-10 where were they spoken? | <p><i>When I was growing up at Ajegunle, I spoke Pidgin. From 10-20 I spoke English and Yoruba, from the age of 20 to the present, I live in Bayelsa and I speak English, Pidgin and less of Ijw.</i></p>  |
| Do you think the language is dying?                                 | <p><i>Yes, it is dying. With regard to whether the language is declining, it is dying really, really dying fast ... oooo. To be precise, the language is dead.</i></p>  |

How can Ijw be revitalised?

*We should revitalise Ijw by pumping money into the project, it will help to bring up the language. I means cash money. The language can be revitalised by learning how to speak it. It is really dying fast. Ijw is moving far, far backwards! We can incorporate the language into our curriculum from primary to secondary level. The government should also include Ijw as a course in the Niger Delta State University to enable people to learn it. We should emulate the Yorubas, do what they are doing in terms of language revitalisation. We should try as much as we can to bring this language into the education policy of Nigeria once again. The government needs to encourage researchers to investigate ways of documenting the Ijw language. It is sad, like I said earlier; in my house we do not speak it. I learnt it from afar [other people]. Parents should make sure that their children learn to speak it at home, by so doing the children will understand it and try speaking it.*

What language do you use to communicate at home?

*In my home, we communicate in English – not that my father can't speak Ijw, but he normally doesn't speak or use it. The kind of discussion we normally have is on politics and parents and child issues [routine family discussions], like how was your day?*

*I honestly think that without the language we are nothing. It is who we are.*

*Our parents don't teach how to speak the*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How do you perceive or identify with the Ijáv language? | <i>language. Actually, I am begging our parents to communicate with us with Ijáv. Just as the saying goes: Train a child that's the way he/she will grow. ... Our parents should help us to learn the language because we are in the 'Jet age'. So as to make our children learn how to speak it, we should decide to speak Ijáv with them.</i> |
| How can we make our children speak it?                  |   |

### 5.4.3 Deinbofa

Deinbofa (nicknamed as Dein) is in secondary school, but when I called to interview her she was on her school holidays. She is like every teenage girl; she wants to be someone who can understand Standard English during conversation. She was very shy during the interview, but I was able to ask her some questions. I told her to speak freely in a natural way. She grew up with Papa, even though her parents were still alive, and went to primary and secondary school in the Ajegunle community. She was dressed smartly and was not sure about how to respond to my questions, but I reassured her. Dein kept smiling all through our discussion.

The main theme in this excerpt is language shift.

#### Excerpt 12

| Researcher   | Dein  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Researcher:</b> Can you speak little Ijáv?</p> <p>Can you make a sentence in Ijáv?</p> | <p><b>Dein:</b> <i>Dem no teach me Ijáv. [They did not teach me Ijáv]. My dad no teaches me that's why I no dey speak am for house. [my Dad did not teach us, that's why I don't speak it at home].</i></p> <p><i>Yes, go fetch water for me – Mu beni akubo – [Go and bring water] Go throw bin away – [Take the bin out] – Mu eloiloi tangein</i></p> |

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| How can we improve? | <i>We should listen to Papa when he is speaking and not laugh at him. Another way to help the language is repetition, we should always ask our Papa to repeat the message, so we can understand it better.</i> |
|---------------------|--|

In the first and second paragraphs, Dein spoke in Pidgin

#### 5.4.4 Boboye

Boboye (Bobo) is Papa’s granddaughter; she started living with Papa after the death of her father. Bobo mentions that this transition in her life was not easy for her because she enjoyed where they were living before she moved to Ajegunle, but whenever her thoughts go back to her past she feels sad that her dad is no longer with them. This disruption in her family made many things in life very difficult for them. They had to move into Papa’s house which was already overcrowded, but there was nothing he could do other than to accept them into his home. She mentions that this dilemma in her life also contributed to her having a child outside wedlock, which she is not proud of. Bobo is an adorable and calm young woman who seeks to improve her life in the future.

The main themes in this excerpt are those of emotional loss and pride and language shift, with the sub-theme of lack of use of Ijw. Boboye recognises her grandmother’s role in teaching her Ijw and how it helped her to understand the language partially, even though she is not fluent.

#### Excerpt 13

| <b>Researcher</b>               | <b>Boboye</b>  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Do you speak Ijw?              | <i>Once in a while, I no too dey good with Ijw language. [Once in a while, I am not very fluent with speaking Ijw]</i> |
| Can you say some words in Ijw? |  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Do you have friends that speak Ijw?</p>   | <p><i>Like little things like Bo (come) Tubo (child)</i></p> <p><i>I no get friends wey dey speak Ijw. Dem be Ikwere people dey where we live.</i></p> <p><i>[I don't have friends that speak Ijw there are only Ikwere people]</i></p> <p><i>My grandmother dey speak ham for me. I understand her, but I can't speak. Yeah it is ...emm... [smiling]. I know that it is important but one day I will go to the village to learn it. The language fit die [the language might die] but we have to go to the village to spend some time because only there we can learn to speak Ijw</i></p> |
| <p>How are you going to change it?</p> <p>Do you think the language is important?</p> | <p><i>By force...em... [laughs]... Yes, it is important, because if you understand English, you still need to speak your language, because it is important. Mothers should try to speak Ijw to their children. Parents have a very big role to play in terms of language acquisition. In my house, we speak Pidgin and English, but my granny speaks Ijw.</i></p>   |
| <p>Are you proud of the language?</p>   | <p><i>I am very proud of Ijw because it is our identity. If you no fit speak the language, the small wey you hear; you should try to speak it. [although you might not be fluent, but one should try to speak the little that you understand]</i></p> <p><i>We should always make an effort. The accent and name can make people know where you come from like Ama, [woman], Kaasee</i></p>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <i>[chair]. I am Delta Ijáv even though I don't speak it that is where I come from. I am making effort in learning how to speak Ijáv.</i> |
|--|---|

The theme in this excerpt is similar to that in Excerpt 13, which reflects the theme of language shift and lack of usage.

#### 5.4.5 Bris

Bris is the grandson of Ebinepreye and brother to Princess, whose mother is not a native Izón. The socio-economic background of this family is upper class, and this status has helped them because the mother could hire a tutor who came to their home to teach the children Ijáv. Bris is in Junior Secondary School (JSS 1) and has friends locally who are interested in learning English. He mentions that he usually teases them whenever they try their skills in English. His family background does not seem to affect his identity because he speaks against monolingualism, which his family practices.

The main themes in this excerpt are emotional attachment to language, language loss and shift and how language is related to ethnicity and place identities.

#### Excerpt 14

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Researcher:</b> What is your name and where are you from? | <i><b>Bris:</b> I am Ijáv from Sagbama Local Government District. [ethnicity+ place identity</i>                     |
| Do you have friends that speak Ijáv?                         | <i>Yes, I have friends from Izón. But some of them don't know how to speak English. They are learning it slowly.</i> |
| Can you say some words in Ijáv?                              | <i>Mu beni beri [Go and have a bath]</i>   |
| Who taught you?  | <i>My mum hired a tutor who taught us Ijáv since she wa not from Izón. But it was basic Ijáv.</i>                    |
|  | <i>My parents don't speak Ijáv or any other language apart from English which is</i>                                 |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Do your parents speak Ijáw?   | <i>boringly boring!!</i>   |
| If they start speaking Ijáw will you like it?                               | <i>I will feel okay because I don't know how to speak Ijáw.</i>  |
| What about in the presence of a stranger?                                   | <i>No, I won't be happy that will be embarrassing.</i>   |
| What is the name of the governor?   | <i>Serike Dickson.</i>   |
| So, have you visited your parents' villages, and do you speak Ijáw at home? | <i>Three times when I was five years old during my grandmother's burial. We don't communicate in Ijáw in my house.</i> |

#### 5.4.6 Princess

Princess is Amaebi's daughter, and she lives in Yenagboa Bayelsa State. Her family is upper class, with both parents educated to degree level. She spoke in Standard English along with her brother Bris. She was in the equivalent of Year 10 in the British system. She said that they lived in the Northern part of Nigeria, but the regular unrest made her father decide to move to the capital state of Bayelsa. She seemed very eloquent in her spoken English. She knew what she wanted in life. She appreciated Western culture and acknowledged the British accent, which she was trying to learn, and she articulated this during the interview session. She seemed shy but confident in asserting herself.

#### Excerpt 15

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Researcher:</b> What is your name and where are you from? | <b>Princess:</b> <i>I am from Bayelsa State in Sagbama Local Government Area.</i>   |
|  | <i>I am in 11<sup>th</sup> grade SS2 [Senior Secondary School; in Nigeria, we have junior secondary and senior secondary schools. Junior starts from year 7 – 9, while senior is from year 10 upwards]. I was not born in Bayelsa State. I got here when I was three years old.</i> |
| Do you have friends that can speak Ijáw?                     | <i>I have friends from this state. On a scale of 1- 10; not fluently. I am 10.</i>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Do you put on Izón clothes?</p>     | <p><i>Yes, we have traditional head gear, tie wrapper and blouses that men wear called 'Etuboh'.</i></p>   |
| <p>Do you think Ijáv is declining?</p> | <p><i>Personally, I think so because Ijáv is going into extinction. It is only the old people that speak it. I like watching Kim Kardashian, I try and mimic her so as to speak like them.</i></p> <p><i>The young ones speak only when they want to joke. Inter-tribal marriage is also a problem. Although, my mum is not from Izón but my father who speaks Ijáv is not always at home.</i></p>   |
| <p>Do they teach you in Ijáv?</p>      | <p><i>I try to 'form' a British accent. My mum is not from Bayelsa but from Benue State and she can't speak Ijáv nor understand it. My mother took a tutor to teach us Ijáv, but, eventually the tutor stopped, we don't understand it, but our mother does, because of the little ones she understands that everyone wants to speak Ijáv with her.</i></p> <p><i>Even those in my class that can speak the language use insult words instead of speaking the real language. My siblings know nothing about the language. I have never visited my father's village. Although I wear the head gear [gale] and put on the native dress. I think parents are too busy nowadays. Nobody wants to speak Ijáv.</i></p> |

## 5.5 Data Analysis and Discussion across Generations

This chapter discussed the individual experiences of participants as revealed in their interviews, which took place in three different settings: Ajegunle, Abuja and Bayelsa state. In answering the research questions, they shared anecdotes and stories from their childhood to the present day. As their narratives are personal to them, there was a range of perspectives offered regarding the declining use of Ijáv.

The ensuing section is arranged according to these themes to discuss similarities and differences within and across generations.

Papa is the main participant and oldest respondent in the Ajegunle setting. Without him, access would have been tougher, but he eased matters since he was on the ground.

*'Regretfully; the language is gradually dying'; 'the language has no problem'; 'calls for concern'. 'It's just that at times you don't feel encouraged at all, you tend to be tired because your effort is not being acknowledged by the children'. 'They did so without embarrassment even in the presence of strangers.' 'Yes, ooo Ijw is suffering; something needs to be done'. 'This calls for concern.'*

In Excerpt 1 [Chapter 4.9.2] Papa spoke about emotional attachment to Ijw in Paragraph 3, which started 'Regretfully...'. Emotions are reflected in languages and the expression he used above, thereby showing how he felt. Papa's choice of words to describe his feelings towards the language suffering represents a poignant way of revealing his emotions. He further explained how when they [parents] spoke Ijw the children laughed, but this should not deter them from speaking Ijw. Papa's disposition in this statement depicts his emotions and affection towards the language. Papa spoke about the children laughing, which shows that he spoke Ijw freely even in the presence of those who are not familiar to him. Papa finds it off-putting that children should laugh at him when he spoke Ijw. However, if the situation was the family practice this might not be the case, and the children might be laughing because it was not the norm.

In corroboration of this statement concerning the children laughing at Papa when speaking Ijw, Magwa (2015, p.5) states that the general attitude of people towards their indigenous languages is worrying. It is worrying to see that they are emotive about how weak the language usage is, but they still do not attempt to speak the language as they ought to. However, Papa said that there was nothing wrong with the language, but what was worrying was the children's attitude towards the language in response to the worries. Diallo (2009) suggests that people make certain language choices when they are angry, using certain words that might be perceived as rude or arrogant, as was the case with Fini, Papa's daughter, who mentioned that she spoke Ijw when she was angry, although she does not speak Ijw normally. Diallo (2009) refers to English as an 'invader of communities', engendering positive or negative emotions from people when they are faced with a choice between languages in a variety of situations or are learning a language (Dyers, 1998, p.27). Individuals are free to make choices in language learning environments. Papa argued that Ijw meeting other languages is not the problem; it is the attitudes towards Ijw that are affecting the intergenerational transmission of the language. Attitudes reflect personal beliefs, but the interviews showed that there were patterns of attitudes throughout the community towards its

language. Fabunmi and Salawu (2015, p.392) in their study *Is Yorùbá an Endangered Language?* state that “Yorùbá language ... however has not been without its dark corners”, thus indicating that even the dominant languages in Nigeria are facing the threat of decline if nothing is done to improve the situation for them. The paper then highlights some preventive measures that have been put in place so that the Yoruba language can overcome the danger of losing its setting in today’s globalised world.

The next participant is the First Elder [see Excerpt 2: 5.4.2]. The First Elder is an external participant in the Ajegunle family,

*‘Papas and Mamas, we ourselves don’t have respect or love for our language’.  
‘Ijáw language is going away’. ‘We don’t love the language’.*

The First Elder, like Papa, said that the language is suffering but made the above statement which reflects his emotional investment in the language and suggests that parents seemed to have attitude problems towards Ijáw, which is revealed through the limited use of the language. The First Elder took his emotions to another level by involving ethnicity – which connotes togetherness, therefore potentially signifying that the issue of transmitting the language ‘across the board’ is everyone’s responsibility. The difference between the First Elder and Papa was that he spoke generally about the Izón while Papa’s concern was expressed in relation to his family.

The next participant is the Second Elder, another external participant who was interviewed in the church [see Excerpt 3].

*‘Yes, it is, let us be frank to ourselves. Ijáw is going away; the language is dying.’  
‘I am one of those that is contributing to the language dying.’ ‘We don’t give importance to the language. We don’t realise that the language is very interesting.’ ‘It is so bad and shameful.’ ‘We are suffering ... the language is dying.’*

The Second Elder expressed his emotional response to the language loss as reflected in the above statements. He believes the language will slip out of their reach if nothing is done to rectify attitudes towards it. Why is the language perceived as dying or going away by both Elders and Papa? This supports the First Elder’s comment, *‘we are not priding the language enough’* in Excerpt 2. Like Papa’s narration in Excerpt 1; *‘We as parents need to have the strong desire to pass the language, it is a thing of interest, why don’t they have an interest in the language?’* The Second Elder seems to agree with Papa and the First Elder regarding the decline of Ijáw. The Second Elder uses the linguistic pronoun ‘our’ to connote the older generation. Additionally, he believes that Ijáw is going into extinction – which is my opinion

in this thesis; that something should be done by the Izón and the government. He adds that Ijáv is headed towards extinction, which is in stark contrast to his experience growing up, when people scarcely spoke English and often spoke Ijáv.

The Second Elder said that the older generation are concerned, and they are questioning how it is that the language is not being passed to the children. His concept of ‘suffering’ could be interrelated with the pain for the decline of Ijáv; as mentioned by the First Elder, ‘*as far as we elderly ones we are very concerned*’. They worry that during their early years the language used to be more vibrant both at home and at school. Similarly, Papa said ‘*Ijáv is suffering*’. Why is the language suffering this much at the hands of its owners? This supports the First Elder’s comment on the oldest generation’s position on the current state of the language that ‘*it is annoying to us for not taking enough pride in the language*. Pride can resonate with affection; clearly the oldest generation believe that they have not given Ijáv enough recognition as expected of the speakers.

Ebinepreye (older generation) [Section 5.3.4]; supported Mama Felicia views as the external participant contribution in the Bayelsa setting.

*‘Owo wri ezon amu fiee aah, even ezon emi fiee daba agha kemesese eederinmeni!’* [In my house, we don’t speak Ijáv ooo. the children always laugh at you which was so sad!]

Ebinepreye reflected on her feelings towards Ijáv because she did not understand why her children laughed when she spoke to them in Ijáv. Her parents are not fluent speakers, and it was not the norm to speak Ijáv in the home. So, when the parents tried it, they were not sure if it sounded correct. This meant that they spoke less Ijáv in her home. This reflects an attitude issue towards Ijáv. Ebiniepreye believed that the situation could have been better handled, but the children laughing could be indicative of the fact that the parents were not taking the teaching of Ijáv seriously, and only used it for emphasis (such as when they were annoyed). But they are asking people to speak it or help them learn it. As far as the children are concerned, they cannot see the logic behind it, and that is why they laughed. In support of Ebinepreye’s statement, Papa said in Excerpt 1: ‘*We tried but you all always laugh, not taking it seriously*’. But is this an adequate attempt to teach and pass on the language? Or do people understand the situation but have no idea how to go about making any effective changes? Papa believes that if the children would focus on learning the language then the situation for Ijáv might improve. This could mean that Papa and his wife spoke less Ijáv with the children, resulting in the children understanding a few words but not being able to

speak it fluently. However, Ebinepreye spoke about her children laughing as a recurring reaction, which hurt her feelings. Many of the parents seem to reiterate this reaction by the children, but what are the elders doing about it? The children probably feel that understanding or speaking the language adds no value to their identities, and that there is no benefit to them in speaking Ijáw.

Felicia (older generation) was the main contact in the Bayelsa setting [Sections 5.4.5; 4.2.11]

*'Ijáw used to be interesting and truly sound good to the ears. 'It is no longer the way they used to speak it'. 'Ijáw has so much mix and match or mixture, which is why it is dying so fast.' 'It is dying so fast.' I'jáw is no longer as palatable as it used to be in the ears, no longer interesting.'*

Felicia felt pain for loss of Ijáw as she recounted the reasons why she thought Ijáw seemed to be dying. In paragraph 3, Felicia articulates her love and pride for Ijáw. In her opinion, speaking Ijáw used to bring joy to people, but it is no longer that way. This could be linked with Papa saying that the language is 'suffering'. The First Elder spoke about not taking pride in the language, while the Second Elder spoke about his concern for the language.

Paul is a member of the Ajegunle family (middle generation) [Section 4.3.6; 5.5.1 Excerpt 6]:

*'Na so we meet amm ooo' [this is how we met it]. 'Our parents dem no care' [Our parents don't care]. 'I am always so annoyed whenever I think about Ijáw' 'It is a shame that we are not using the language'.*

Paul expressed strong emotions about the loss of Ijáw. However, Paul's story has similarities and differences with the older generation as far as emotions towards Ijáw are concerned. Paul shares these feelings, which indicates that his family language policy or practice is to speak Pidgin but not Ijáw at home. Meanwhile Paul's sister said that Ijáw was only usually spoken when she (Fini) was 'angry'. This was her own way of expressing emotions towards (and in) Ijáw. Paul reiterated that his parents did not encourage the children to speak Ijáw and said that his background might also have affected his not speaking Ijáw because his parents were not speaking Ijáw regularly with the children.

Perere (middle generation) said: *'My children when you teach them, they just laugh.'* This repeated argument about children laughing when parents or grandparents speak in Ijáw reveals a great deal about prevailing attitudes towards Ijáw. Meanwhile, Officer was an external participant in the Ajegunle setting [Section 5.5.3; Excerpt 8]. According to him, *'Not speaking Ijáw affects family ties. There is no conscious effort in amending this problem. There should be conscious effort for our children to learn the language.'* Officer feels a

sense of emotional loss for Ijáw, especially regarding family language policy practices which affect family bonds or close ties. Cultural practices are reflected in behaviours towards the language and how they interact within social domains (Lytra, 2016). Adejisola (2010, p.56) argues that “attitude is one of the psychological dispositions of man... The significance of attitudes to survival or decay, love or hatred, the prominence or marginalisation of languages cannot be overstressed”. Attitude takes in the wide range of emotions, which in turn reflect on behaviour and the way we perceive language. In this case, it represents how the Izón – who are already suffering as a minority – must contend with the attitudes of the speakers towards the language. In another study Sall (2009) argues that, in Senegal, interlinguistic relationships inform us about the opinions of speakers regarding their language(s), as well as language policies and language planning initiatives.

Overall, the middle generation spoke about emotional attachments of love and pride versus loss and shame dimensions. The main emotions for this group were pride, shame, suffering and loss. Officer spoke about emotions that the speakers of a language feel, as this portrays their attitudes towards their language. Paul observed the interrelationship between language and emotions, which made people react to certain actions or responses that are not verbal but reflect their own choice of words or non-verbal expressions.

The second theme, as far as participants’ beliefs about Ijáw and its relationship with their other languages is concerned, is that the reported lack of use and visibility of Ijáw in public and domestic environments reflects the perceived reasons for the shift from Ijáw to the use of Pidgin and English. According to Papa:

*‘Language starts at home. Speaking English is like a thing of pride, ego or something. They said the language is too strong to understand.’ ‘It will help to retain and improve the kingdom’. ‘Owobrakeemi’ [It is in our own hands]. ‘It is the women fault because the white man called it the “mother tongue” so the women are meant to teach children the language’.*

Papa seemed to convey contradictory messages. He asserted that the women should take up this duty as teachers of the language. Similarly, the older generation seemed to translate the term “mother tongue” literally to imply that language teaching and learning was the duty of mothers. But since neither of the parents in Papa’s household spoke Ijáw with the children or stayed home, the children did not gain enough exposure to the language to become competent speakers. Contact with other languages through migration has also influenced the Ijáw language and its dialects. Language contact occurs because of cultural contact (Essien, 2006; Udofot, 2011).

Paul considered that his parents were taught in Ijw and never in English, so the question of status arises. Were the parents thinking about status? As the First Elder said, the mothers were learning English. It appears from Paul’s responses that he is upset with his parents for not passing on the mother tongue to his generation (Paragraph 4). His parents did not transmit Ijw to their children, but Paul would have expected them to behave like dominant tribes [see Section 3.3 and Figure 15]. The parents not speaking the language could be linked to the experiences of some of the participants who spoke about their ordeal in secondary school, which suggested ‘inferiority based on accent’ had been ascribed to the Izn group and its language.

Although the children seemed to understand Ijw, they made no attempt to speak it, perhaps due to the perceived status of the language when compared with English or Yoruba (Adegbija, 2004). This begs the question as to why the participants preferred Pidgin or English. They probably chose Pidgin because it is a language they are more familiar with in the community, and in which they can converse better with other people within their locality (a low status area). This means that the loss of Ijw is a cultural phenomenon and that the older generation were speaking metaphorically – possibly because the children were living in a location where Yoruba and Pidgin were the dominant languages. As such, I wondered whether this was the cause of the decline (Ogunmodimu, 2015). This will be explained further in the next section. In answering this question, the analysis will move on to the issue of shift and how that answers the research concerns related to the specific shift in the Ijw language. According to Papa, the children laughed when he spoke in Ijw, which suggests that they preferred English or Pidgin since they might not believe that Ijw is economically viable in the modern world. Considering the status of English, their perception might not be far from the truth. However, since a language represents a marker of identity, should it be declining or thriving? And if it is declining, is it just because the Izns are not passing on the language intergenerationally?

Papa observed that seeing the children refuse to speak Ijw made him and his wife feel remorseful for not passing on the language; what is overlooked is the fact that the language could be saved if Papa and his wife can overlook the children’s ridicule of them speaking Ijw. It seems that the lack of attachment between parents and children may possibly be a factor for the language’s decline, since gender roles are now changing just like the language is, but the older generation have yet to accept these changes within the community. Women who are meant to stay at home to teach the children their indigenous language are no longer

present at home to carry out this ‘expected’ task – although this study does not support this view because the researcher believes that both parents are equally responsible for language transmission. Corresponding to this, a study by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003, p.23) argues that gender roles are socially constructed and that there should be a division of labour that does not adhere to the traditional role of fathers as the breadwinners; in fact, the responsibility of all tasks, all responsibility and all power in the household should be shared equally, rather than one parent staying at home and the other going out to earn a living. This study suggests that mother tongue should be learnt at home but that it should be taught by both parents, not just the mothers.

A shift occurs when an ethnic group decides to speak another language rather than their own without regrets. This could be due to a range of attributes that had been given to Ijaw. In this case, the fact that English or Pidgin or Yoruba have been chosen over Ijaw addresses the question of why the Ijaw language is declining. Papa, who does not like the positionality of the language in the hands of its owners, says they are meant to be productive in it. This statement responds to the problems of shift; the dimensions to language practices are semiotic (see Section 3.10: Kim, 2017; Swain, 2017; Young, 2008) and represent the language in other ways. However, the language might not be spoken the way Papa would have liked the younger generation to speak it, even though they spoke Ijaw in the translanguaging process. Unlike the older generation’s own experience, in which they were taught and spoke in Ijaw alone without any form of English, the younger generation are forced to contend with multiple languages in their environment. Alternatively, Papa might be thinking that Ijaw is not thriving in comparison to other indigenous languages (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo). This supports Opuowei’s criticism that there was ‘no unified language’ due to the varieties of Ijaw that existed within the same geographical area. In support of language varieties, Hildebrandt, Jany, and Silva (2017, p.153) state that “languages demonstrate different degrees of viability, that there will be variation in terms of how residents view the usage and function/value of their mother tongues”. Thus, languages are ascribed status that relates to their function within the society and how people perceive their worth.

This is not the case in this study. Nigeria is linguistically diverse and recognises major languages like English, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo over the minority languages [see Section 3.3]. Papa commented on the language choices available, as the speakers of the language choose to either speak or not to speak Ijaw. Also, people see English as a more prestigious language, and they identify with it more because of its global dominance as the language of

political and economic power all over the world (Bourdieu, 1982). Why do people pride English above their native language? The term ‘strong’ could connote different things, including the fact that speaking Ijaw entails a lot of tongue twisting in its articulation. People can experience positive or negative choices “when they are faced with a choice between languages in a variety of situations or are learning a language” (Dyers, 1998, p.27). Choosing to speak English over Ijaw is the people’s own choice rather than that of their government. However, the government has an important role to play in ensuring that indigenous languages are spoken and preserved. Their lack of usage according to Papa means that if the owners of the language frown at it, how can they expect others to preserve it? This links with the concept of language maintenance, which demands a change of mentality as part of the revitalising process. Izons should embrace their language instead of succumbing to the dominance of English or Pidgin (Omoniyi, 2007). A general cultural phenomenon in Nigeria is status, and this tends to favour English over indigenous languages as people perceive it as belonging to a higher class (Section 3.3) thereby forming a hierarchy that displaces Ijaw because it is a minority language (Udofot, 2015). According to Papa:

*‘We, Papas and Mamas instead we speak another language like Pidgin’. Mothers want to learn English from the children, so that when you (Papa) go to work they will be speaking English with the children until man got back before they switch to Ijaw. It is the women’s fault because the white man called it “mother tongue” so the women are meant to teach children the language’.*

Although Papa believed that language teaching should be the mothers’ role, he later said that ‘is in our own hands’. In contrast, the First Elder believed that the responsibility for language revitalisation lies in the hands of both parents. Like Papa, the First Elder used pronouns to indicate that they are all guilty of not transmitting the language to the younger generation. The older generations made self-contradictory comments; the First Elder, for example, stated that the mother was expected to teach the children Ijaw herself, but develops her command of English by learning from her children. This links with Papa’s statement about the status and prestige that is accorded to English. The First Elder implicitly points out that learning English from the children is a status thing because the women might feel that if they understand English they will gain social status. It seems that being able to speak English is a highly-desired skill for most people and its place in society reaffirms this status. Papa talked about language, suggesting that it is the responsibility of the mothers, which was why the Western world referred to native languages as the mother tongue. Papa seemed to believe that the term signified a gendered ownership of the language. This means that Papa’s view is endorsed by

others; that a certain generic responsibility is placed on women as far as teaching the language to the younger generations is concerned. Papa has spoken on this issue [see Excerpt 1].

The First Elder also spoke about his beliefs concerning lack of usage; *'It is so bad and shameful'*, he said. This statement clearly underlines his displeasure at the present state of Ijáw. This contrasts with the Second Elder, who spoke about Ijáw in comparison with other tribes in Excerpt 3, *'We need researching and documentation of the language which is what we are lacking, unlike Yoruba. Lack of books, teachers, those in the villages don't want to use or speak it'*. The Second Elder also reiterated the government's role in the preservation of indigenous languages. He said that the Yoruba use their language and if the Izón could support their own language in a similar way then the situation might change. Papa also commented in Excerpt 1 that *'The Yorubas and Igbos speak their language'*. The major tribes in Nigeria speak their own languages, but the Izóns do not follow their example. Papa suggested that these other languages were not dying or declining at the same rate as Ijáw. In line 7, the Second Elder says that *"we don't realise that the language is very interesting"*. He seems to imply that members of the Izón tribe do not realise the worth of Ijáw, which is why they are not speaking it. The Second Elder uses first person pronouns ('our' 'we' 'us') to underline his own beliefs towards language ownership.

The lack of usage is discussed by the Second Elder:

*'I am one of those that is contributing to the language dying. We don't have secrets in my house, we speak English in the presence of our visitors which is not good at all. In our time you could hardly find anybody speaking English'*.

The Second Elder discussed the lack of usage of Ijáw in relation to the predominance of English in his household [Excerpt 3]; he spoke about how the lack of Ijáw created an uncomfortable atmosphere in his home. Like the other participants, he appears to be implying that English is a factor: People not speaking English is perceived to be due to inadequate education, to the point where people are unable to English sufficiently well enough to speak it. On the other hand, the elders are not embracing changes in trends and are not recognising the fact that language is evolving. Additionally, the Second Elder admitted that he was guilty of not ensuring the language is spoken in his household. A similar argument is advanced by Papa in Excerpt 1; *'It is our fault and nobody else's.'* Papa once again emphasises that the lack of usage of the language is down to the Izón people themselves.

Ebinipreye spoke about lack of usage [see 3.4.4]

*'In my house, they don't speak Ijáw even when you speak they might use English to answer you if they like. My children laugh when you speak Ijáw with them.'*

Ebinepreye reveals that the lack of usage was not experienced in her childhood days, which is in stark contrast to the present situation in which parents do not speaking Ijáw with their children. The oldest generation seem to have started something by not speaking the language, mixing languages, or shifting from one language to another.

Ebinepreye argues that the dominance of English seems to be one of the reasons why Ijáw is spoken less. In supporting this lack of usage, she reveals that in her home only three people [out of eleven] spoke Ijáw. Considering the number of people in her home who are unable to speak Ijáw, this is an obvious sign of decline or lack of usage. Omoniyi (2007) discusses the actions of Beninois parents who reject the institutional policy of French education in Benin and send their children across the Nigeria-Benin border between Idiroko and Igolo to acquire an English education.

Felicia [5.4.5 Section 4.2.11] says:

*'In our house, we are eleven but at the moment only three of us can speak Ijáw fluently, this is unexplainable. Even if we speak Ijáw with them, they respond in English. In those days, we always speak Izón, that's the reason why Ijáw is dying out. We no longer speak it as we used to anymore. At the moment, it's all about speaking English, English!'*

Like participants from the Older generation, Felicia refers to the dominance of English as the main reason why Ijáw is used less now (Section 3.3; Essien, 2006; Ibrahim et al., 2017, Omoniyi, 2007,). She reiterated that English is now the language of preference and observed that the dominance of English has encouraged people to take it as their mother tongue. In this case, however, Ijáw is the children's second language, while it seemed that Pidgin English was the family's first language (see Curdt-Christiansen, 2013). However, the participants – especially the younger ones – spoke in a mixture of English and Pidgin; predominantly Pidgin. Felicia noted that the children show no interest in learning Ijáw (Grenoble and Whaley, 2006). She refers to schools that are no longer using Ijáw as the language of communication, unlike in their generation, when they were taught in Ijáw. Felicia also cites grandmothers as teachers of the language, which reinforces Papa's and the Elders' earlier notions about the role of mothers in language acquisition and socialisation in Excerpt 1.

On the other hand, Felicia appeared to be talking about the influence of Ijáw dialects, which might also be a contributing factor to the decline of or transmission of Ijáw to the generation (Ogunmodimu, 2015). Ijáw varieties might also be a factor of shift amongst the Izón. Perere,

a participant from the Ajegunle family, reflected on how her husband's self-esteem was negatively affected as he spoke a variety of Ijáw that was not spoken by his parents (Portoles, 2015). His parents' reaction to him not speaking their preferred variety of Ijáw prevented him from becoming a fluent or competent speaker of the language. This reflects the importance of parental roles in language learning or transmission. Similarly, another participant in the Abuja setting argued that people speak as a matter of choice or preference (Portoles, 2015). He further stresses that Izón should have a unified language that everyone should generally accept, in the same way as the Yoruba, who are identified by a unified language (Opuewei in the middle generation Excerpt 11).

This study considers that language teaching should not be left up to the schools but should be a partnership between them and the home. Parents have an enormous role to play in the teaching of indigenous languages if they want those languages to remain vital. The oldest generation accepted that they were taught in Ijáw – which is reflected in their understanding and speaking of the language – unlike their children, who were taught in English. If they could apply the same strategy in their homes, the language will eventually find itself in a better position. Since the children were not even taught in the minority languages, they probably felt that language will add economic value to their lives. However, this might not be the case if their parents were transmitting the language to them consciously on a daily basis. Felicia also argues that when she tried to teach or speak Ijáw to her children, they seldom showed any interest, which echoed the experiences of Papa and Ebinipreye. The role of parenting evolves at every phase of development and it depends on choices and attitudes towards languages (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998). When children are young they need more nurturing, but as they start growing older, parents need to allow them to be themselves, which is one strand of this thesis. Parents must accept that language is evolving and following trends (Spolsky, 2007; 2009).

Like Felicia, who suggested that language learning should be supported by the schools, Paul urged the government to enact laws to revitalise the language. Paul explained that being able to speak Ijáw is the hallmark of a true Ijáw native, which almost suggests that if you cannot speak the language it means you are not part of the tribe (see Lytra, 2016), while the issue of respect for the language was also raised. Equally, Paul suggested a more general knowledge of Ijáw. There needs to be more awareness about the importance of indigenous languages to encourage people to speak them. The effort to learn and teach indigenous languages should be everybody's responsibility, not just the governments. However, the Izón have a greater

role to play in transmitting their language. Paul also used first person pronouns in encouraging the Izón people to express the idea that they need education on the importance of the mother tongue. Furthermore, he seemed to link language with identity (Eze, 2014; Garuba, 2001), which appears to be a new dimension. For example, in the Izón language clinic someone posted a statement regarding how the government could support the language revitalisation process:

Lagos State government is taking serious steps to preserve their indigenous language, Yoruba. Knowing that schools are the major places to encourage young people to learn to speak and write the language, they decided to make laws in that effect. And speaking Yoruba will be a prerequisite for admission into public universities. Whatever step Lagos State government and other South Western states governments are taking to preserve and promote their Yoruba language, is fine by me. In places like Warri, Urhobo and Itsekiri are being taught seriously in primary and secondary schools. In Yenagoa, there are some schools where Ijáw Language is being taught in schools. There is no real coordinated process to get it to all schools in the entire state. I don't know of Rivers State and other Ijáw speaking states.

When will our various Governments be serious with this issue so that our dying language can get to the next generation? Ijáw Language Clinic 15/2/2018 (see Appendix 6).

Paul praised the Yoruba people, saying that they appeared to treat their language with respect by using it at home and speaking English only outside their home. The fact that the Yoruba preserve their language can be explained by the status given to it by the government as one of the recognised spoken languages in the constitution – although whether it is implemented is another matter entirely. However, Fabunmi and Salawu (2005, p.391) highlight preventive measures for the Yoruba language to be able to overcome the danger of losing its place in today's flow of globalisation. It seems they are recommending procedures to remedy to the Yoruba language, while other tribes now believe that Yoruba is safe from decline. However, there are some reasons for them to believe that Yoruba might be declining in some contexts where it was thought to be thriving. Languages in Nigeria are still in danger (Blench, 2003; Fabunmi and Salawu, 2005). Ironically, people who are unable to speak fluent Ijáw or those who speak different varieties are resigned to speaking Pidgin English to communicate daily. But it seems this is not the case in the Izón regions, where they spoke Pidgin instead of Ijáw. Even the villagers who are meant to speak only in Ijáw speak in Pidgin now. The point made by Papa regarding the speaking of Pidgin over Ijáw is that '*Pidgin is spoken more than Ijáw [...] even in villages they speak Pidgin not Ijáw. Pidgin is spoken more*'. Papa reaffirms the lack of usage. Unlike Papa, Paul's failure to encourage them has also made him culpable for

some of the lack of usage. Paul emphasised that Papa has not done enough in terms of teaching them the language, but he further explains that he thinks visiting the village might trigger a change in attitudes.

The conclusion drawn from many of the discussions with the participants was that the issue of language loss affects the entire community and should be taken very seriously, as language ties in with identity. The discussions seemed to suggest that the problem did not lie with the language itself but rather with an unwillingness to learn and speak it. [Papa, First and Second Elders, see excerpts 1-3.] Crystal (1997, p.9) suggests that “the inherent characteristics of English have not greatly contributed to its status as a world language”. The data analysis showed that language communities like the Izón people are infatuated by the mentality of English as a global language, which contributes to them using Ijáv less.

The first theme of emotional attachment (love and pride versus pain for the loss of language) was expressed most strongly by the oldest generation. They believed that they were not exploiting the language the way they ought to be. The oldest and middle generations both felt annoyed at the state of the Ijáv language. Gender roles played a key part in discussions surrounding the intergenerational transmission of language. Most participants within the oldest and middle generations thought that women had a greater role to play in language transmission and socialisation. For this reason, Papa called it ‘*Mother tongue*’, reiterating the idea that language belongs to women and that it is their responsibility to act as the mediators of transmission. For the most part, the younger generation did not seem to have a gender bias when it came to attributing blame for the declining use of Ijáv.

Boboye and Brakemi expressed a strong opinion of mothers being instrumental in language socialisation in the Ajegunle family, while Princess and her brother Bris likewise emphasised the mother’s role in engaging a tutor for the teaching and learning of Ijáv. Keys said that changes in parental roles could be a factor for the declining use of Ijáv. However, people should not forget their roots because language is part of their culture.

According to Perere [see Excerpt 7]

*This is the real Ijáv woman. The people like fich. We can zump into the river to katzh zome fich, which is our logo’. I found out that I push myself in speaking Ijáv, which means that the language is still inside’*

Identity could be represented semiotically, which in this case reflects Izón pronunciation or tone of voice when spoken; individuals use their speech to identify with the language and

with other people in Nigeria who recognise where you are from when people speak. Identity is reflected in both individual and cultural practices (Lytra, 2016), but there are public perceptions of ethnic group practices in relation to language which are attached to their identity (such as food, religion and dress; see Appendix 5]. Omoniyi and Goodith (2006) observe that one of the main manifestations of identity as an emergent process is the relationship between the practices of the community and individual participation in those practices. Block (2007, p.46) discusses this relationship regarding six factors of individual and collective identity: ethnic, racial, national, gendered, social class, and linguistic. In *Constructing Languages and National Identities*, Suleiman (2003) argues that languages are constructed units of 'self-definition'. Names and ethnic labels signpost ethnic and national identities, especially in conflict situations, for which changes in naming patterns act as an 'early warning system' because they can often signal possible socio-political changes. These studies discuss identity as evolving rather than being fixed. It can therefore be individual or collective, such as Perere's recalling of the label used to identify the Izón ethnicity that represented them as a group.

Perere seemed to link language with people because the Izón are known for their sense of humour. She must have noticed that language might be suffering from usage, so by having a positive disposition she had to try as much as she could to speak the language. Perere identifies with the Izón ethnic identity, which flows out of her whenever she makes conscious effort to speak Ijáv. But one of the problems of the language is the lack of status and prestige associated with Ijáv. This is also displayed in the new trend of change, which the parents are not happy about. The children could be laughing because they feel that the parents are not fluent speakers either. They may be laughing because they don't think Ijáv will lead them anywhere in terms of life. They may want to follow the advice associated with Perere's situation, echoing the idea that going to the village might not help remedy the situation because the villagers all speak Pidgin English anyway. The dominance of English is mentioned again, after previously being touched upon by the oldest generation. Perere links her love for Ijáv by identifying herself as a typical Izón woman and speaking about the accent [Excerpt 7]: *'But, most of them are classified as second-class citizens. Ijáv should be thought of 'as a bridge not, a fence'.*

On the other hand, Officer said that other tribes also have this perception; for example, the Izón did not get involved in education early, unlike their counterparts from other ethnic groups, and this stereotyped them as uneducated people. They were basically fishermen or

farmers [see Figure 4; Appendix 5]. They started going into education in the early 1950s. However, Officer suggests that the Izón were not exposed to Western culture; they were labelled – stereotyped even – as ‘bushmen’. This identity that others conferred on them became tags for the Izóns, like the one Perere joked about in Excerpt 7 referring to one’s identity as an Ijáv. Pronunciation and accent indicate one’s background, but some people might be able to change from one accent to the other to suit certain situations (especially young children). As an example, Officer remarked about the Nigerian President’s accent, which people used to ridicule when he first took up the Presidency. However, with time people have become attuned to the President’s way of speech, and no longer laugh but embrace him and his culture practices for who he is (Dressing: see Figure 9). This indicates that people could work on their preconceptions if they chose to do so by changing their attitudes or behaviours towards their language.

Attitudes towards the Izón ethnic identity seemed to be improving in the wake of having an Izón president. Obeng and Adegbiya (1999, p.353), for example, state that:

There is a strong emotional attachment to language and ethnicity ... Each ethnic group expresses and identifies itself by the language it speaks, and its cultural paraphernalia is shaped by its language.

Identity is depicted by communities through their cultural practices and the values that they attach towards their language (Mulac et al., 2001; Sallabank, 2006). Officer and other participants discussed accent as being one of the factors that led them to suffer as a group. Noel’s (2014) discussion of how social psychological and sociolinguistic researchers might jointly advance understanding of the links between ethnicity and language, particularly through a more fully articulated analysis of the social context, is particularly pertinent. Identity is linked with the language practices that each community uses to represent themselves in social contexts [see Section 3.6, pp.72-73]. For example, the use of standard Turkish amongst the members of the Turkish-speaking community in Athens was associated first and foremost with people who ‘show off and put on airs’ (Lytra, 2010, p.75). People who want to be considered upper or middle class or those who feel they are better situated or more affluent than their peers will often put on an accent – and in more extreme cases may choose one language over another. This shows that language *is* a form of identity, as Perere appears to signify that Ijáv is inside her and that even though she normally does not speak it daily, she is still able to speak it when the need arises. In the third paragraph, Perere mentions that her children just laugh whenever she speaks Ijáv to them. The children laughing could connote different meanings relating to not observing parents speaking Ijáv or

other contextual factors, including children's own characteristics (for example, their gender and their own experiences); the parents' experiences (from their own childhood) and their circumstances; expectations learned from others, such as family, friends, and other social networks, and cultural systems. All these factors could affect the way the children react when they hear their parents speak Ijw.

Ethnicity and languages are therefore symbols of class or status. Ethnic groups portraying themselves as being better than other communities may ascribe this to their education or backgrounds. This distinction is the iconic representation of the group. The iconic emblem associated with the Izn and the use of Ijw, according to Officer, is that '*people tend to laugh at them*'. Laughter could be aimed at their level of education or the background that portrays their poverty or inferiority and links it to their ethnicity (Austin and Sallabank, 2011). Other ethnic groups looked down upon the Izn, especially for how they live their lives within their regions and for not having enough representation [Chapter 2]. These sources of inferiority help explain the shift of Officer and his family to speaking Pidgin or Standard English.

Officer agrees that Ijw 'is declining fast' because parents are not passing it to the children; this is creating an intergenerational gap which is filled by people speaking Yoruba, Pidgin or English instead of Ijw. Decline was the sub-theme of shift for the older and middle generations: Papa, the First and Second Elders, Felicia and Ebinepreye summarised the idea that the language needs revitalisation using a variety of different dimensions. Officer told me that Yorubas are suffering from similar challenges in terms of lack of usage, but Izns are worse off because the level of decline compared to Yoruba is higher. However, Officer states that it's a general problem affecting all of Nigeria's indigenous languages. The major tribes like Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa seem to be experiencing similar issues because of the impact of Standard English (Balogun, 2005; Fabunmi and Salawu, 2005). Standard English is a prestigious language, which everyone in the country wants to be seen to speak and understand fluently because of its status, and it is widely perceived to be Nigeria's most important language. Coulmas (1992 cited in Adejimiola 2010, p.57) observes that:

Language shift ... attests to the fact that some languages are not deemed valuable enough in each socio-historical setting to be transmitted to the next generation, and that others are objectively of greater economic utility.

The English language is given greater prestige largely because of the status it occupies in the constitution and wider society. This makes English the global language which is part of the

factors that affect language transmission, and in response indigenous languages are declining – although Djite (2008) asserts that the use of ex-colonial languages often results in inequality rather than in opportunity, which hardly encourages development. But in general, English is promoted over indigenous languages in African, especially in countries that use it as the medium of instruction or their official language.

Officer spoke Ijáw while reiterating his point that Izón people should speak Ijáw in their homes. However, he also pointed out parental responsibilities and blamed parents for not transmitting Ijáw to the younger generation. He was amongst the participants who stressed the importance of the generation gap and spoke on the role of gender in disseminating the language to the younger generation, noting that it should be the role of the woman to teach children the mother tongue (Excerpt 1). In contrast, the present study puts both parents on a par in terms of responsibility for language learning; in fact, it should be the responsibility of all members of the community. Officer suggests that the teaching of language will prevent it from dying out, so parents should not be a ‘fence’ against their children speaking Ijáw – instead they should be a ‘bridge’. Jongenburger and Goeman (2009, pp.31-72) state that “one’s own dialect use and attitudes about the wane of dialects may differ”. This implies that in terms of individual language or dialect usage, the way people choose to use the language and their attitudes towards it might vary according to their choice of language. Ethnic attitudes towards language decline vary according to the degree of decline, but this may imply that not speaking a language does not mean that a person cares less about it; there may be other contributing factors to its decline or shift – in this case the gap in intergenerational transmission. However, Officer argues that children practise translanguaging and that they should be encouraged to speak Ijáw, and parents should allow children to speak Ijáw in their preferred manner. Currently the practice is more like a metaphorical fence, preventing the encouragement of the children to speak Ijáw.

Opuwei spoke about the ‘inferiority complex’ which goes with the theme of shifting away from Ijáw. People feel that Ijáw has become stigmatised, which he connected with the unpopularity that the Izón tribe faced over other tribes. Ndimele (2015, p.225) argues that “we often try to become more native than our native host but hostile to our own very native identity”. Foreigners are treated with respect whereas indigenes who possess an inherited identity are not given such respect. This could imply that speakers of a native language might prefer to speak the dominant language such as English or Yoruba because of the status or prestige these languages are given hierarchically (Adegbaiji, 2004; Omoniyi, 2007; Wolf,

2001). Opuwei talks about the different regions ascribed to the Izón clans that were not given the identity that the ethnic groups deserved. Young (2008, p. 13) asserts that “one aspect of identity is membership in a community of people with whom we feel we have something in common”. Ethnic identity has different features, one of which could be a shared language that everyone who belongs to the community speaks daily. Opuwei mentions that he belonged to the Izón clan but had no identifying features to represent him because the Izón were grouped into different geopolitical zones with different dialects or accents (Section 2.1), making it very difficult for people to understand each other.

Opuwei commented that there is “*No unifying factor that is one language*’, a view shared by other participants from different generations, particularly older and middle generations respectively (Section 2.7). This might be a contributing factor for the lack of usage, since the Izón appear not to have picked a unifying language like the Yoruba. Kolokumo is mentioned, but not everyone understands it like Yoruba. Ethnic groups identify with a language (for example, Yoruba have different dialects, but they have a common spoken language, which unifies them as a group). The theme of documentation is mentioned by Opuwei, underlining its use by the Yoruba to help preserve their language. Most indigenous languages in Nigeria have heteroglossic dialect varieties. Young (2008, p.8) considers that “dialects of a language are examples of different varieties of language that make up heteroglossia, which makes dialects an expression of a regional identity”. Identity is part of a language; for instance Kolokumo is the Izón language of the media.

Opuwei did not hide his displeasure and concern when his wife and I spoke Yoruba instead of Ijáv. He openly asserted that speaking Yoruba instead of Ijáv was part of the wider problem, because he knew that we could speak Ijáv but chose not to. Opuwei might be implying that the Izóns should take up the responsibility of actively supporting Ijáv with relevant literature and with the government implementing certain laws or policies in effecting this course of action. Similarly, the Second Elder made a case for documentation noting that ‘*We can enact law*’. The enactment of law lies with the government, and laws should be obeyed by citizens. Before the interview, the First Elder talked about varieties of Ijáv in Excerpt 2. Perere, in Excerpt 7, also spoke about the varieties of Ijáv, contrasting with Opuwei’s perspective of ‘unifying language’.

Accent can be defined as differences in pronunciation between one variety of a language and another. In this case, Kolokumo and Mein While dialects are varieties of language used by a

group whose linguistic practices both reflect and are determined by shared regional, social, or cultural perspectives. Altogether, accent can help index the differences between varieties of a language, particularly in terms of pronunciation, word usage, grammar and variations spoken by the given community. This applies to all languages, not just non-standard varieties.

Kolokumo is regarded as the standard variety of Izòṅ because it is documented to a certain extent – although not completely; the process stopped when its leader, Professor Williamson, left it. A non-standard accent in the case of Ijáw would be Mein. Royneland (2009, p.16) asserts that “dialects and dialect use are generally regarded as something positive, something to be proud of”. The expected norm for a speech community is honour at being part of a community and to be proud speakers of the language. However, Opuwei explained that Ijáw, unlike Yoruba, has yet to reach a similar level of prestige because we are not proud speakers. The stigmatisation of the dialect indicates that people should not speak in regional dialects. However, all speakers of English speak in a dialect, regardless of the social status it occupies. The reason that the Yoruba have invested in their language is that, although they speak one language spread across six states, they recognise that they have different dialects. This means that there is an agreed language that all of them spoke for unity, which is not reflected in the use of Ijáw. Opuwei reiterates that ‘*Ijáw dialects are not the same thing*’ and blames the proliferation of dialects as being a contributing factor for the decline of the language. He might be implying that the Yoruba, in contrast, take a pride in their language, which is why people that meet them tend to want to speak the language or learn it. In addition, the switch to Standard English or Yoruba seems to be exacerbating the lack of usage of Ijáw. Opuwei notes that ‘we’ like to speak Yoruba and reminds me that I spoke Yoruba with his wife earlier, which he did not like. Opuwei criticises our decision to speak English instead of Ijáw and attributes this as part of the reason for its decline. He concludes that the decline in Ijáw usage is partially due to our preference for English or Yoruba over Ijáw.

Paul spoke about teaching and learning. He said that parents should speak in and encourage children to learn Ijáw. However, unlike Paul, Perere spoke about language being innate: she could speak Ijáw whenever the need arises and in whatever Ijáw variety she wanted.

Meanwhile Officer believed that parents should encourage the children – that parents should be a ‘bridge not a fence’ – whereas Opuwei talked about accent in terms of status and unifying language. Similarities in the ideas of the oldest generation were expressed in terms of emotions and shift. However, the attribution of responsibility differs. The children blamed the parents without specifying the mother for the intergenerational gap, whereas the oldest

generation blamed themselves, while mentioning that the children laughed whenever they were spoken to in Ijáw, a reaction that was common to many of my interviewees. They all believed that Ijáw was at risk and looked towards the government to enact a law to address this matter. In terms of emotions, they all identified with the language, showing concern for the generational gap and comparing Ijáw to the major tribal languages like Yoruba.

According to Keys (Excerpt 10), *'As the world is changing' ... 'our roots are vital' ... 'it boils down to our parents'*. Unlike participants who support the mother's role in teaching Ijáw, Keys spoke about socioeconomic factors. Mothers who were staying home no longer pass the language down, which is a contributing factor for the decline of Ijáw. The world is evolving because it is not fixed or static, and it should move with civilisation (Friederike and Storch, 2013). Keys suggests that development brings changes in effect, and the use of language is just one manifestation of this. Other participants spoke about parental roles, but from the dimension that the teaching and learning of languages is the responsibility of the women because they stay with the children at home longer. Keys suggests that the world is becoming a global village through the shrinking of the environment and due to the technological advances, that are making the world a smaller and more mobile unit.

Keys agrees with other participants that the Ijáw language is declining. He concedes that the number of speakers is reducing at a considerable rate, reflecting the lack of usage. He also suggests that since language is an essential part of culture, its usage might strengthen identity and help us remember where we are from and where we belong. The background of indigenous populations matters because it represents their ethnicity. Keys mentioned his roots, which seemed to signify the villages where his family came from, which should be embraced and celebrated. Keys states that parents should emphasise speaking Ijáw at home so that the children will adopt a similar approach to the language later in life. He did not state that the teaching should be the mothers' role but said that it should be performed by both parents. Keys spoke about the dominance of English dominance, particularly Pidgin English, which can be taken as a contributing factor to the lack of usage of Ijáw.

Ekiyor is a participant from Bayelsa (Excerpt 11). She commented that:

*'My parents did not speak Ijáw with me...but my grandmother used to speak it with me'. 'Just as the saying goes: Train up a child in the way he/she will grow.' 'Our parents should help us to learn the language because we are in the "jet age"'. 'language we are just like nothing, it is our identity'. 'Ijáw is moving far, far backward because of lack of usage.'*

Ekiyor spoke about lack of teaching and learning. His parents never taught him or spoke Ijaw with him, but he brought up a new dimension – namely, his grandmother’s involvement in supporting intergenerational transmission. This indicates that the grandmother performed the role expected of the parents in transmitting the language to the children. However, parental input is needed to continue with the teaching. Similarly, parental roles as defined by Keys are crucial. The responsibility for the teaching of Ijaw lies on the parents as the world changes (Kim, 2017). Ekiyor was pleading on behalf of the children’s generation that parents should pass Ijaw on to them so that it can be preserved in a changing world (Section 6.1, Friederike and Storch, 2013), which shows his understanding of the implications of globalisation (Section 3.9) and underscores the fact that he would not want such changes to prevent the continuity of Ijaw. He also mentioned that the government should support the revitalisation process by providing funding (Ogundinmu, 2015).

Ekiyor mentioned his parents’ lack of usage. He spoke about the importance of culture and identity, identifying language with culture and identity. He refers to language as the ‘core’ of his being, implying that his sense of self-worth and importance comes from being able to identify as an Ijaw man. Reume (2000, p.251) states that “most people value their language...intrinsicly, as a cultural inheritance and as a marker of identity”. Language to a group is part of its culture and ethnicity. Keys appears to be saying that people should go back to their roots, which signifies ethnic identity and in turn encompasses notions of culture. One language meets another when both are spoken in the same domain. Ekiyor understands Ijaw and Yoruba but he is not competent in either language. Dadzie (2004, p.143) supports the situation in Nigeria, and Ekiyor would be described as a “compound bilingual” who uses the two languages but is unable to function effectively in either one alone.

Like other participants, Ekiyor discussed the decline of Ijaw, agreeing that people’s attitude is not positive towards the language, and to avoid the shift to another language the process of revitalisation should incorporate Ijaw at all levels of education in Bayelsa State, including the Niger Delta State University, to enable people to learn Ijaw. Ekiyor talked about language shift from Ijaw to English and Pidgin like other participants in in the first, middle, and children’s generations.

Dein is Papa granddaughter who resides in Ajegunle setting (see Chapter 6.6.3 and Excerpt 12]. According to Dein, *‘The children ...should listen to Papa when he is speaking and not laugh.’* Dein believed that the children have a role to play as well for the decline of Ijaw.

However, if the children were not taught the language, how could they speak it? The laughter connotes that they were shy or not keen to learn Ijaw. However, Dein herself was not supported as a child. The laughter is highlighted by all generations, which appears to represent the ‘stigma’ attached to Ijaw. Dein mentioned a new dimension that none of the other participants commented upon, which is the idea of repetition; when an adult speaks Ijaw to the children, the adult (Papa) should repeat words to ensure a better understanding.

According to Boboye, Papa’s granddaughter [Chapter 5.6.4; Excerpt 13]

*‘My grandmother dey speak ham for me. I understand her, but I can’t speak. Yeah it is ... I know that it is important but one day I will go to the village to learn it. The language fit die. The language fit die but we have to go to the village to spend some time because only there we can learn to speak Ijaw’. ‘if you understand English, you still need to speak our language’. ‘I am very proud of Ijaw because it is our identity’. ‘I am a Delta Ijaw boy ... even though I don’t speak it, I am making effort in learning how to speak Ijaw’.*

Bobo is not a competent speaker but understood Ijaw [see excerpt 13, third paragraph]. The bold section in the excerpt above shows language hybridity using English and Pidgin. This reflects what the younger generation are using in interaction to show how they express their identity (see Karanja, 2010, p. 3). On the other hand, this negotiation is not fully accepted by the oldest generation because they seemed to prefer their ways of speaking Ijaw rather than a ‘mixture’ by Felicia, or like English and Pidgin by Bobo. Remarking on hybridity in speech patterns, Lutz and Kula (2008, p.18) argue that:

The present-day language situation in Zambia is not so much a product of the colonial era but is instead based on a dynamic system of multilingualism which has developed over several centuries. English is not really the problem of the younger generations, but it is the problem of contacts (see Section 3.9 on multilingualism).

Bobo acknowledged her grandmother’s input, which supported her speaking of Ijaw. Like other participants, Bobo felt that Ijaw was important. Similarly, to Paul and Keys, Bobo believed that a visit to the village might improve her Ijaw usage, motivated by her enthusiasm to learn the language (a sub-theme of shift). However, the idea of going to the village to improve one’s understanding of Ijaw does not attract her mother (Fini). She does not believe this to be a plausible option because from her experiences on her visits to the village, the villagers spoke Pidgin more often than they did Ijaw.

Boboye reiterated the importance of Ijaw but mentioned that it was advantageous to understand English as well. Speaking the English language does not make one an English person, nor does it alter the ethnicity that is your marker of identity. Boboye spoke about the

role of the mother in language acquisition, echoing the ideas of other participants from the oldest and middle generations. In his case, the mother was already supporting her children's learning of Ijw by hiring a tutor for them as a marker of the importance of language and identity. Language reflects ethnic pride. If we forget how to speak or understand it, if we don't learn it, we lose an integral part of our heritage. This idea is affirmed by Bobo; the children will not speak Ijw if they are not taught it from an earlier age. However, Bobo recognises accents and names, which also are part of one's identity, although this could depend on the background of the person because names and accents can be changed to suit the contexts. For example, as cited by Tsitsipis (1995) in terms of Arvanitika in Greece (a regional language that is dying) the author talks about how the younger generation had very little communicative competence in the language. They only retained a few words, bits of songs, but they still regarded themselves as Arvanitika speakers. This supports the case of most of the younger participants in this study.

Bris is a participant from Bayelsa [Chapter 5.6.5; Excerpt 14] '*Mu beni beri [Go and have a bath]. English [which] is boringly boring!*' Bris speaks about his roots. He spoke on the theme of ethnicity and place and used his own place of residence and his ethnic background as a form of identity. Since they live locally, his friends seemed to have a better understanding of Ijw than him, but their command of English was less strong, so he had to support them. Bearing in mind what the First Elder mentioned (see Excerpt 3) about mothers learning English from their children (ethnicity of place), Bris talked of how his parents spoke only English. Despite this, he could still form a sentence in Ijw. He mentioned that his parents do not speak Ijw, but later admitted that his mother had taught him Ijw. There was a contrast in his case but still, like other participants from the older and middle generations, he blamed mothers for not teaching children Ijw.

Bris was the only participant who stated that English was the only language that he heard both at home and at school. However, his not being a competent speaker of Ijw might be frustrating for him and could be used as way to label his feelings. English dominance, as other participants agreed, is one of the reasons for the decline or lack of usage of Ijw. Nigeria has Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa taught in schools. To support this notion, we can draw upon Adejimola (2010, p.56), who remarks that natives "should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue". The major languages should be learnt alongside the mother tongue. Diversity or multilingualism encourages the learning of more than two languages. McConnell and Thieberger (2006, p.64) classify "strong"

languages as those that are widely spoken at home by community members of all ages. Under these circumstances, English is assumed to be the language that is dominant and accepted in Bris' family, which applies in the Abuja setting as well. Canagarajah and Wurr (2011, p.2) consider that "language diversity is the norm and not the exception... multilinguals also bring certain attitudes that are helpful". Multilinguals provide advantages to communities as well as expectations which everyone should adhere to. This reiterates the importance of not sticking with one language, which Bris described above as 'boring' and opting instead for linguistic diversity (Section 3.9).

In considering the participants' discussion on shift or lack of usage of Ijw, Vigouroux and Mufwene (2008, p.22) examine whether globalisation is affecting African languages in the same ways and at the same rate in different countries, and how local experiences of language change vary from place to place. In their findings they state that 'Indigenous languages have vanished more in settlement colonies than elsewhere'. Indigenous languages are under more threat from English in countries where they were colonised by British. This certainly relates to the position and dominance of the English language in Nigeria.

Globalisation is changing language use in Nigeria because English has taken over from indigenous languages since globalisation has changed the interactions with people from Western cultures. Okwudishu (2003) refers to English as "a global common language", while Lawal (2009, p.39) views globalisation not only as the exchange of goods and services, but further explains that it has other implications, including the "predominance of Western civilisation in thought, worldview, values and attitudes to life as well as the unprecedented increase in the empowerment of Western culture". Globalisation introduces Western cultures, beliefs and ways of life, which are reflected in dress, mentality, attitudes and behaviours.

Deinbofa is a participant in the Ajegunle setting [Chapter 5.6.3, Excerpt 12]:

*'Dem no teach me Ijw. (Pidgin) [They did not teach me Ijw]. My dad no teach me that's why I no dey speak am for house.' [my Dad did not teach me, that's why I don't speak it at home]. 'Go fetch water for me – Mu beni akubo'; 'Go throw bin away – [Go throw away the refuse or take out the bin] – Mu eloilo tangein'.*

Dein blamed Papa for not encouraging them to speaking or learn Ijw Dein's response to her understanding of Ijw was observed. Although Dein mentioned that Papa did not teach her, she was able to construct a few sentences in Ijw which contrasted with her previous statement.

Princess is Felicia's granddaughter, and lives in Bayelsa setting [Chapter 5.6.6, Excerpt 15] *'My mum is not from Izón, but my father that speaks it is not always at home.'* Unlike other participants, Princess spoke about the dimension of marriage, suggesting that inter-tribal marriages were contributing to the language decline. However, Princess used her mother as a positive example because she came from another tribe whilst her father is an Ijáv man. This could be interpreted that the mother saw the importance of a language and how it defines people and culture. Someone who is not from the dominant ethnicity can appreciate the importance of indigenous languages and, if she has the resources can take it upon herself to hire a tutor to come in and teach the children Ijáv at home. This great effort from the mother has allowed the children and herself to learn Ijáv. This could be linked to what Papa and the First Elder spoke about concerning the role of women in language teaching (Excerpt 1). In support, Papa observes the importance of the term *'mother tongue'* when he argues that mothers play a vital role in teaching their children Ijáv in the homes. The absurdity of the situation was the discontinuity of retaining the teacher, which could be interpreted as a sign of disregard for the language, as initially she made efforts, but became discouraged at some point perhaps, due to people's attitudes in the surrounding environment. However, one could say that the mother is a source of language renewal.

In contrast, in the Second Elder's home, the mother learned English from the children – the roles were reversed between different generations. In a different and better educated social class, the mother already spoke English, so she had no need to acquire it from her children, and so the English educated middle generation chose to shift back to regional languages. Princess reiterated her mother's integration within the community by telling me how Ijáv people in the neighbourhood spoke Ijáv with her mum as if she were an Izón woman. This way of identifying with the tribe enthused the mother to partake in the learning. Princess told me about how her peers used Ijáv in a different way between themselves, by using *'the insulting words instead of speaking the real language'*. The children were making jokes in Ijáv, specifically using words that adults probably would not use in their day to day conversations. However, Princess, who appeared not to speak Ijáv fluently, still identified her ethnicity in a semiotic way (Eze, 2004; Young, 2008). Princess acknowledged socio-economic problems that might be contributing to the decline of Ijáv. Crystal (2000, p.81) asserts that "languages decline when...positive attitudes are missing" Attitude is an integral entity for language practices, which is applicable in this case. Still, the participants noted that the language was an important formative component of identity, and there was no problem

with the language itself. It was their dedication and commitment to learning the language that needed improvement or change.

Overall, the participants believed that the lack of usage of Ijãw was caused by parents not teaching or not involving themselves in the transmission of the language. They all identified with the language in different ways, and their contradictions in their beliefs and practices.

In the remaining section I discuss the third theme which has to do with the participants' moral stance regarding the lack of transmission of Ijãw and the attribution of responsibility and blame. According to Papa:

*'I blame us, my wife and myself' ... 'but I blame us, my wife and me'. The language is not the problem [pause] we are the cause of it.' 'It makes me wonder if it is right to put the blame on our children for not speaking'. It is our fault and nobody else's'. 'It is right to put the blame on our children or the government or society'. 'We can't blame the government or the society'. 'speaking their language with their children from a very young age helps them to interact even with strangers'.*

Blame is the process of assigning responsibility for actions or beliefs. to put this another way, it happens when instead of been concerned about a problem and searching for solutions, people tend to accuse others for shortfalls or failures. Blame is linked with gender roles in this study, as indicated in the perspectives of Papa, who views language teaching and learning as the domain of women. In addition, Papa's (often contradictory) views apportion blame to a variety of factors from individuals to the government to society. His own family language policy be a part of this responsibility, since they speak Pidgin normally in their home. Papa also seemed to blame the children's attitudes, because even when the parents tried to teach them, they tended to laugh in response (Mulac et al., 2001, Baker 2008). However, Papa identifies the shift in gender roles which has led women to become less domesticated over time as they become top earners, which could be linked to external economic factors related to globalisation.

On the theme of blame, Papa blames himself and his wife for not passing on the language as their parents did for them. However, Papa acknowledges that it is their fault that his children do not speak Ijãw. Papa also indicates that the fault does not lie with the children, the language or the government but on themselves. At some point, Papa seemed not to be sure about whose responsibility the decline in Ijãw was, but he certainly cites the generation gap, which are the concerns of this study.

Unlike Papa, the Elders blamed themselves, as they were taught Ijw by their parents but were not able to carry this practice on with own children. Papa said that there is no excuse for this lack of usage, as it is their own duty as parents to ensure that the children spoke Ijw at home. Papa, who had previously made remarks blaming mothers for not teaching the children Ijw, then questioned responsibility. Apparently, Papa seemed to blame his generation in general. They were Ijw speakers as an ethnic group, as a people, and it was their fault for not introducing Ijw early to their children in a similar fashion as the Yorubas and Igbos, whose children are introduced to language at an early age. It is believed that children rarely forget things they learn at an early age, and their understanding is quite fast compared to when they get older [see 1.5].

The Second Elder also spoke about the concept of blame, saying that “*We should enact law that says we should continue to speak Ijw, and anybody who can’t speak it should be punished.*” The Second Elder seems to have a contradictory notion to Papa, and asserts that native speakers should be blamed, including himself, if the language is not spoken and passed on. However, the Second Elder spoke about new perspectives on law and what could be done to change attitudes towards Ijw by involving the government, seeing as it as the only body that could implement laws and ensure that the laws passed would be adhered to without disobedience.

Unlike the other participants, Ebinepreye blamed the migration of people from other speech communities and their resulting contact with Ijw as a possible reason for its decline. Omoniyi (2007, p.533) cites evidence of internal migration and displacement across national boundaries to argue that policies that are implemented within and across these boundaries motivate people to move. Migration policies are not stringent enough to stop people from moving across different geographical regions, so people migrate internally across boundaries for personal or economic reasons.

Blaming the government is not the perspective taken by this study: I believe that parental role is as important as the government’s in transmitting language across generations. Felicia appeared to blame the government for not continuing with the teaching and learning of Ijw in schools. She believes that Ijw should be reintroduced into the school systems and holds the government responsible, unlike other participants such as Papa and the two Elders, who

are subtler about their perspectives. They blamed themselves and their own attitudes, saying that Izón natives lacked respect for the language. Papa refers to Ijáv as the mother tongue, which, taken literally, implies that the responsibility of language lies with the mothers. The First Elder thinks likewise, saying that mothers stay at home more with the children, so the responsibility of language socialisation falls upon them. The Second Elder blamed the government too.

Ekiyor spoke about how his grandmother taught him Ijáv, like Felicia (Excerpt 5). He progressed to the third theme – that of blame, by explaining that *‘he blamed parents for not speaking Ijáv with their children’*. Ekiyor states that Ijáv is dying out, admitting that *‘Ijáv is one of the languages that are heading for extinction’*. He may be suggesting that since the language has not been transmitted to the younger generation, the language is in decline and that action is needed for its revitalisation.

Overall, the younger generation reiterated many of the ideas already expressed by the other two generations as well as showcasing some new ones, such as the idea that *‘monolingual[ism] is boring’* and using what little Ijáv one has rather than going for full-fledged fluency in the language.

The differences between the three generations can be summarised as follows: The oldest generation believe that the language is declining, but they are not really doing much to improve the situation. The middle generation acknowledges language change to be an issue, and the children attribute it to globalisation. All three generations recognise the dominance of English and the importance of major languages like Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. The preference for Standard and Pidgin English over Ijáv was discussed by almost all the participants in relation to how the Ijáv language was being used by younger and middle generations. The middle generation concluded that they were unable to pass on the language to the younger generation as there was reluctance amongst them to learn Ijáv. This plays a contributing factor to language decline. Development was mentioned as another contributing factor regarding globalisation. As the younger generation becomes more exposed to the Western world, they seem to be adopting Standard English rather than Ijáv. One might argue that English is viewed globally as linguistic capital. According to Pennycook (2008), this is defined as “fluency in and comfort with a high-status, world-wide language which is used by groups who possess economic, social, cultural and political power and status in local and

global society”. That attitude to English seems to be why the language has high prestige and status all over the world. Guerini (2008, p.2) argues that:

English has been assigned a higher prestige and is perceived as the only language worth being literate in or even the sole language worth investing to the detriment of local languages and vernaculars.

Guerini believes that more recognition should be given to indigenous languages, a view which is in line with that of most of the participants. In supporting English, Princess observes that learning the British accent could be a factor. As Ekiyor said, Ijaw is falling a long way behind because of lack of usage, while Keys referred to it as going back to its roots.

The second theme of language shift has different dimensions. Some participants only spoke Ijaw or some English at home, while others use two or more languages, switching amongst these depending on the situation. This process has diluted the authenticity of the Ijaw language. Furthermore, the participants used plural pronouns such as ‘we, us, you, they, and our’ to connote togetherness or belonging, signifying that the change is affecting the whole community and they must work together to address it. Keys touched upon the negative impact of modernisation on Ijaw, while Ekiyor called this the ‘Jet age’, signifying the changing trends in the world and the subsequent decline of their language.

The third theme of blame was explored by all generations. The parents seemed to take responsibility for the lack of Ijaw usage. However, it became apparent that even when parents did try to teach the young children Ijaw, they would laugh and not take it seriously. It could be argued that this laughter should not hinder the parents if they are serious about passing on this integral component of the Izon identity. As Bobo reflects, young people should stop laughing when Papa spoke Ijaw with them; instead they had should try to imitate him so that they could all learn Ijaw. From another perspective, Keys placed the blame for the decline of Ijaw on modernisation and changes in society. Overall, the older generation should assert themselves very strongly in various situations retelling their stories from early childhood to the present. All participants mentioned the dominance of Standard English language above Pidgin, while some of them believed that their own attitude towards language might be the cause for its lack of usage. Others believed that the government and women are to blame as they both have key roles to play in preserving language. The teaching of language was considered the mother’s role with government support. Finally, all participants used personal pronouns as devices of ownership – ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘they’ – in their interactions, to illustrate a shared responsibility for the maintenance and teaching of the language.

To summarise, the participants all agreed that the Ijw language was in urgent need of revitalisation as it was declining at a rapid rate. There was also an added dimension of individuals switching to speaking Yoruba due to the communities they lived in. This is in line with the assertion by Akande and Salami (2010, p.70) that

Given the linguistic diversity in Nigeria, most people grow up speaking more than one indigenous language. The linguistic reality in Nigeria is such that most speakers of minor languages tend to learn one of the major languages sometimes in addition to English, especially the one that is dominant where they reside.

Nigeria’s linguistic diversity appears to be part of the reason for the decline of Ijw decline, as the presence of English and major languages such as Yoruba take precedence over it. The data from the participants’ discussions supports this conclusion. In the second data analysis chapter, I move on to focus on the cases of two of the participants/speakers who delineate new trends in Ijw language use.

# Chapter 6

## New Trends: Ijáv - a Bridge, a Fence or ‘Funkyfied’

The notion of multilingualism and the relationship between language and identity is different from the traditional one built around the idea of linguistic distinctness (Heller 2007), and in which the world is “a neat patchwork of separate [ethnic], monolingual, geographical areas almost exclusively populated by monolingual speakers” (De Schutter 2007, p.3).

### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse new trends, including the use of ‘Funkyfied’ ways of speaking Ijáv by code-switching with English, which are identifiable in the data derived from two participants in the case studies, Pam and Depreye, who are both members of the middle generation. In this study, I sought to address the following main question: Is Ijáv declining and if so why? Also, I also aimed to address a minor question: What new forms of Ijáv language, culture and identity are emerging? According to Pam and Depreye, parents not passing on the language to the younger generation has caused the latter to respond by using new trends to speak the language, which can be seen as a form of language revitalisation. The younger generation use this new trend in all contexts when the need arises, but mostly in the home environment when conversing with parents or with close relatives who can speak Ijáv. Renewal in this case emerges from Funkyfied Ijáv and represents language change. This indicates the new ways of language use that are unlike the declining forms identified by some participants. This concept portrays the evolving nature of language within the younger generation and the usage of Ijáv in communicating hybridity.

### 6.2 Themes from the Data

- 1) Ijáv language renewal (as opposed to Ijáv language shift or death) and reasons for this renewal.
- 2) Ijáv language use is changing through code-switching and the consideration of Ijáv as part of a larger meaning-making repertoire that includes wearing Ijáv clothes.

3) Emphasis on the relationship between language and identity, mentioned above in exploring language translanguaging, as part of a larger meaning-making repertoire that includes clothing and emphasis on the relationship between language and identity. This participant perspective differs greatly from those of the older generation and other members of the middle generation who discussed Ijw language shift or death in the previous chapter. The older and middle generations spoke about decline, but Pam who also belongs in the middle generation believes the opposite; she thinks that Ijw is still thriving. Pam believes Ijw is here to stay embodied by the new ways the younger generation are speaking Ijw in a ‘Funkyfied’ manner. Pam appeared to embrace this new dimension of the theme, citing the lack of usage of Ijw as a plus because the new ways in which the younger generations were expressing themselves might be interpreted as the thriving of the language.

### **6.3 Case Study 1: Pam**

Pam is a relative of the mother in the Abuja setting. She usually visits them whenever there is need for her to support the children in the mother’s absence. In this case, she has to stay with the children as we are all travelling to Yenagboa for a sister’s wedding. She was told of my intention to visit. She was very excited about the project and looked forward to our interview session. Pam has travelled widely across the globe, and she has been exposed to the Western world and Western culture, which became very clear when we had our discussion. Pam reported identifying with the language through regular visits to the village, unlike some others who have moved to the cities.

She mentioned that the Ijw traditional dance was fun. However, because of her enthusiasm for the Ijw beats, those close to her always warned her not to start dancing because if she does her dance steps on the dance floor it becomes uniquely associated with Izn music. People who had visited the West called her dance seductive because of the movements of the waist and hips (called *yansh* locally). However, according to Pam, the locals enjoy it. In addition to her enthusiasm for dancing, Pam introduced me to an Izn platform on Facebook, which includes Izn people speaking different varieties of Ijw. On this platform, deliberations usually take place on language-related issues popular among Izn people, such as proverbs, histories and translating statements to understand different clans or regional dialects. In experimenting with the above interactions, Pam opened the Ijw language group Facebook page, which I joined with the initial intention of recruiting more participants.

Pam was on a short visit from Delta State but was staying with Opuwei when I visited them at Abuja. At the time of the interview she was working as a civil servant in one of the federal

ministries. She has travelled extensively according to her discussions during the interview, which she delivered in eloquent English. The actual interview took place in her aunt's bedroom, while they were preparing to leave for a traditional wedding that I was attending with them. The aunt was present, while another relative was also in the room packing their belongings for the trip to Yenagoa, capital of Bayelsa State, on Thursday 29 April 2014. The wedding was taking place on the Saturday. Pam sat on a rug on the floor adopting a comfortable posture, full of smiles, holding an iPad and sitting close to me waiting for the interview to begin. The interview began at 11:30 am. Although they were all aware of the reasons for my visit, I gave a summary of what my thesis was about and why I was undertaking research of this nature, all of which I video recorded.

### 6.3.1 Excerpt 1

This excerpt analyses the three themes: 1) The translanguaging of the Ijw language (as opposed to language shift or death) and reasons for the emergence of Funkyified Ijw; 2) Ijw language use is changing through Funkyified translanguaging and a new vision of Ijw as part of a larger meaning-making repertoire that includes wearing Ijw clothes; and 3) Emphasis on the connection between language and identity, mentioned above in exploring language and translanguaging and language changing as part of a larger meaning-making repertoire that includes clothing and emphasis on the relationship between language and identity. The theme Pam spoke about in this excerpt is that of Ijw language renewal and its changing status through the semiotic repertoire of clothing.

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Do you think that Ijw is declining? | <i>Um to me, understanding is the first step to learning, which I think the younger people are doing. But we can't speak it the way our parents expect us to. When parents speak other languages, they still identify with Ijw no matter where their mother is from. From my own point of view Ijw is not dying. Before now, most Nigerians didn't know Ijw; I think it's getting better – when you go to the Ijw-speaking states that's what they speak. Now in Delta state when there are state events it's always Izn and Istshekiri. Izn is always popular, it's growing, and it's getting there. Before it used to be Isoko, Kwale and Okpe, but now it is Izn. One of the causes is intermarriage because Izns</i> |
| Is Ijw language thriving?           |  |
| How can we change the situation?     |  |

Does the use of different languages affect Ijáw?

*marry outside a lot. You don't expect the children to throw away their heritage. From my point of view, there is no problem with Ijáw. It's just that it is changing. It is amazing because of the president speaks Ijáw. Before now people didn't want to identify with Izóns, but now they tend to want to identify with us which was not the case before.*

*Most people in these areas need to speak a mixture of English like 'Mu table come bo' oo and [go bring the table] because that person might not understand it if you don't include the English word. Ijáw is not going anywhere; I know someone who has created a site for us. I saw a Yoruba person on the website. He was there because he said that he enjoyed the language, although he was not Ijáw. Why is it that we from the fourth largest tribe are doing something about it? We now have Ijáw states unlike before. Is it just that people don't like change? Most people understand it but pretend not to. You have people selling things in Bayelsa. You have a lot of people coming there to study and people speak Ijáw in order for them to have a professional position; you have to learn it. Some people that are there had to learn it. Ijáw is not going anywhere at all. I am sure that our president will stay for a while. We have to be proud of where we come from. Some young boys previously used to be militants, but they have changed. They went abroad to study because the president gave them bursaries to study abroad. It is just the association. Everybody is just going through the same thing, which is 'I don't know how to speak Ijáw.' But, if you can understand it, that means you can speak it ... ooh!*

*In my office we have Izón community meetings. It is not going anywhere at all.*

*The good side is always better, unlike before that you have to explain what Ijáw is like. Before that they don't understand it. If Ijáw language is dying, we won't be having people writing about it. I think we are progressing. From my point of view, there is no problem with the language and it is not going*

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p><i>anywhere at all. I hope you find positive people that think like me. The man that set up this website is just one person and imagine if there are other people out there, as well that we don't know about.</i></p> |
|--|---|

Pam believes Ijw is still thriving in Abuja and notes that it might be that it depends where you live in terms of whether Ijw is still being spoken, as it is not spoken where she lives. Pam acknowledges that the circumstances of Ijw usage might be different elsewhere within the country, but in Abuja the language is still thriving. However, from different participant perspectives, usage is linked to family practices instead of people’s attitudes or geographical locations, and this could be said to be true of Nigerian culture too (Balogun, 2013; Omoniyi, 2007). Pam believes that Ijw is not declining and provides an example of her colleague, who spoke Ijw although she was not Izn herself. The election of an Izn president also offered positive support for Ijw, making Ijw part of a larger meaning-making repertoire that included wearing Ijw clothes (MacSwan, 2017).

Pam also took to dressing in native attire, which she emphasised as part of the relationship between language and identity in terms of Izn distinctiveness. She observes that dressing is a semiotic representation of cultural practice, reflected in a case in which a person is not from the ethnic group but adopts their dress to identify with them. Usually Fridays are set aside for people to put on Izn traditional outfits to show their allegiance to the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (see Section 1.7). As far as language and dress is concerned, Young (2008, p.12) writes that:

Language is the human symbolic system par excellence and, because of its centrality in social life and the permanence of written language, it has received a great amount of attention to the detriment of other ‘non-verbal’ ... bodily gestures, facial expressions ... and clothing.

Other ways in which cultural practices could be represented are non-verbal, like dress, which is human made and like language sits in the heart of practice, both written and symbolic. In this case, Ijw dressing is the new way for language to be presented in Abuja and has become popular during the president’s tenure.

Manwa and Ndamba (2011, p.436) reflect that:

dress symbols and cues are culturally constructed; hence they reflect the culture of the specific group... Preserving the cultural fabric of the people is very important to any group and dress is a very useful tool to do that.

Symbols could take the form of practices – in this case dressing – which are socially constructed by ethnic groups to reflect their identity. Manwa and Ndamba emphasise the vitality of language in a speech community as being linked with their culture and dress, which is also a form of identity. In support, Pam says that ‘*people want to dress or put on Ijw outfit. It’s a way of how people here are **identifying** with our president*’. This might also be that since some people found it difficult to speak the language, they decided to acknowledge it through dress. Pam used clothing as another symbolic system, which people are embracing because of the President. Young (2008) argues that clothing represents a symbolic system, a meaning-making system that has received less attention in terms of language than speaking has. Pam notes that clothing is also contributing to Ijw flourishing and gaining recognition in Abuja. Ayeomoni (2011, p. 50) says that “each group in society has an identity which distinguishes them from other groups. That is, the people’s way of life, set of beliefs and customs”. Ethnicity is what differentiates each linguistic group from the others, and ethnicity includes cultural practices and values attached to them specifically. In this case, the Izn dresses [see Appendix 5] are unique to the group, but other tribes choose to emulate the Izn, while the younger generation chose to speak Ijw in a Funkyified manner to support this interaction. Pam further discusses why she feels the language alone does not express her perspective of Ijw thriving through the form of dress – and that to her, the language is not going away now. It is here to stay; she is encouraged that one of her colleagues understands Ijw beyond the basic ‘BO’ and can construct long sentences in Ijw to prove that the language is not declining. Tietze, Cohen and Musson (2003, p.8) write that “how we talk, which language we use, and how we can express ourselves is intrinsically tied in with our concepts of identity and sense of self”. Language is about how individuals use it, which varies according to ethnic groupings in Nigeria. However, individuals choose languages they identify with socially in situations where languages are not imposed on individuals externally. For example, in this case, the younger generation applied their own style to speak Ijw, identifying with the group by expressing themselves during communication with the larger community; ‘*the younger ones are mixing it. They have ‘Funkyfied’ it. They are flowing with the trend*’. They own the language their way, not as the parents expect them to do it, but their passion cannot be ignored. The young people might have seen other young people “funkyfying” their language, which is like the findings of the

study by Fabunmi and Salawu (2005) entitled *Is Yorùbá an Endangered Language?* Their study supports this thesis, showing that indigenous languages face a lack of usage especially amongst the elite. Similarly, this indicates a trend that might be continuing with Nigerian indigenous languages, if nothing is done to revitalise them.

Pam's story is more oriented towards language change, while in the second case study, Depreye's story is about new ways of language use; Pam and Depreye both express great excitement and enthusiasm towards Ijáw. This is clear in the enthusiasm with which they speak about it, and their gesticulations in emphasising their opinions on language renewal and identity. Nevertheless, each of them has a unique tone of voice – for example, Depreye sings in Ijáw. There might also be variations in what they say. In this instance, their actions, their tone of voice and their method of expression suggest language renewal, bearing in mind that their accounts have served the purpose of usage. Pam's mannerisms are quite different from those of other participants, as she speaks with a Westernised accent but demonstrates her exposure to and passion for Ijáw. Pam reiterates that Izóns are spread across six states in Nigeria and comprise the '*fourth largest tribe*' in the nation, as explained in Chapter 2. Pam's passion for Ijáw is inspired by her colleague who speaks Ijáw fluently.

The themes in this section are Ijáw language use changing through code-switching and identifying with Ijáw as a form of identity. Pam thinks that the children are interested in learning the language, but on their own terms. They use it to tell jokes in, and they have Funkyified it. Pam observes that the younger ones express a desire to learn Ijáw in their own way. Pam also mentions that children want to learn Ijáw in their own way and concludes her argument with an exclamation. In support of this discussion, Montes-Alcalá (2000, p.218) states that "code-switching is often attributed to illiteracy, lack of formal education, or lack of proficiency in one or both languages". Code-switching applies more to those that are not educated (ibid). This study opposes this perspective of code-switching. Here, both educated and illiterate people codeswitch, it seems like part of the culture in present day Nigeria. Pam observes translanguaging in the form of Funkyified Ijáw (see Section 3.12 on translanguaging) as being a new trend towards the revival of Ijáw. Chapter 5 showed how participants from the older and middle generations had different opinions as to how the language should be learnt, such as including it in the curriculum or imposing full responsibility on the mothers. Keys stated that Izón people need to visit villages (our roots) to become better grounded in the language (Chapter 5, Excerpt 12). Similarly, Paul (Chapter 5, Excerpt 6) observes that they need to go to the village to learn the language. Pam suggests

that the younger generation felt it was better to speak Ijw in some form, even if it was Funkyfried, so that they could interact with Ijw speakers (Young, 2008). As noted by Carlo et al. (in press), within “urban domains, individual language repertoires are dominated by the interplay between European ex-colonial languages, African *lingua francas* and local languages and language ideologies”. Since English is used mostly in townships like Lagos, could this be a possible reason why the younger generation chooses hybridity or translanguages with English, Ijw or Pidgin? This thesis considers that translanguaging is an urban phenomenon because it comes as result of contact with foreign languages such as English.

Littlebear (1999, p.1) emphasises the need to “just speak your language”, as speaking is a way of expressing how we feel. In this case, the younger generation are speaking Ijw in new ways. They do not care about how others feel, and they believe that they are identifying with the language. Littlebear suggests the need to communicate no matter what the circumstances are, whether speakers are fluent or not. In my study, the children are mixing Ijw with English, which Pam refers to as Funkyfried Ijw, thus making Ijw more accessible to the younger generation. So, the language might be declining in its old ways, but it is transforming into a Funkyfried version. As discussed in Section 3.10, when describing the diverse linguistic repertoires of multilinguals, a plethora of concepts emerged around the start of the twenty-first century. For instance, multilinguals are said to be involved in processes of “flexible bilingualism” (Creese and Blackledge, 2010), “polylingualism” (Jrgensen, 2008), “metrolingualism” (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010), “codemeshing” (Canagarajah, 2011a) or “translanguaging” (Garca, 2009a). Although each of these concepts has its own specificities which have led to valuable insights, translanguaging seems to have outpaced the other expressions in terms of research uptake. These concepts are attributes of the linguistic diversity that characterises Nigeria and which is extending to the younger generation as mentioned by Pam in relation to language change. The younger generation may feel that the older generation are unwilling to embrace change; however, they are willing to learn Ijw in their own way, regardless of their historic roots. However, one individual who was not from an Izn background joined in because he felt that the language was interesting to him. There was a contrast here. Pam commented, “*Usually, people say that Ijw is so hard to understand, because of that the younger ones are mixing it*”. The reason why English is included in between sentences is probably to make it easier for them and their audience when communicating. The argument here may relate to the lack of understanding from an

“outsider” who expressed interest in the language. This could be deduced as a desire or choice, which could enhance or facilitate understanding of Ijáv. Pam makes similar comments to those of Papa, implying the need to understand the tone of the language while speaking it. This could be the pitch level, which is usually high, or the phonological tongue twisting for which Ijáv appears to be well known. This study does not argue that the accent is a problem but, despite this, the challenge is created by the behaviours and attitudes toward the language. Another reason may be the comparative rapidity of the language as it is spoken. However, the younger generation seems to be enthusiastic about the language and seek to take ownership in motivating themselves in trying to understand the language with a twist of their own.

The above arguments support those of Lytra and Jørgenson (2008, p.5) who state that:

Post-modern ...language use has seen ‘languages’ and users as ‘*languagers*’ that is ‘people who use language, not a language, but features of whatever ranges of languages they are exposed to achieve their communicative purposes.

This might imply that people use whatever means they can to communicate with or be understood by their listeners. In this case, the younger generation is speaking Ijáv in a Funkyified way, in which they mix it with English for fluency. According to the quote above, this makes them the languagers because they are forming their own way of speaking and identifying with Ijáv.

The younger generation respond and adapt to social changes by finding ways of expressing themselves and their identity while retaining aspects of their culture. Pam’s ideas are in line with the observation by Young that teenagers speak differently from the older generation as they interact through their own variations, expressing themselves during communication to form their identity. Young (2008, p.8) affirms that “teenagers speak very differently from senior citizens”. This supports Pam’s statement, ‘*they have “Funkyfied” it*’. They seem to want to come across in a way they best understand. To Pam, they are trying to speak the language whilst creating an identity for themselves. This echoes Felicia’s opinion when she spoke about how Ijáv is now a mixture of English. Felicia appeared to experience feelings of pain and loss when discussing the language, whereas Pam speaks about the language as thriving, suggesting renewal and valid reasons for that renewal. Pam considers that the younger generation should be encouraged to speak Ijáv in their own style, since the parents want them to speak it. The younger generation should not be discouraged; instead they should be allowed to speak the language in their preferred fashion. As Officer reiterates in Chapter 5

Excerpt 8, *'we should use it as a bridge not a fence. Now, we are using it as a fence'*. This means that parents should allow hybridity or translanguaging to represent the fluidity of Ijáu language usage. Discussing language and culture, Ter-Minasova (2008, p.57) argues that

the most formidable obstacles on the way to intercultural communication are language and culture closely intertwined in constant interaction. The paradox is that language as well as the culture stored in it, reflected and formed by it, are at the same time a barrier, a fence, separating peoples, and a shield protecting their national identity

Language is part of culture, which is why the older generation are tied to their past ways of speaking Ijáu and are not passing it on to the younger generation. Every language and every culture guard its subjects against all the “aliens” trying to intrude into their domains. This could be why the parents do not embrace this change even though they are not trying to teach their children Ijáu. This paper deals with linguistic and cultural issues that are (perceived to be) hampering intercultural communication and are viewed as weapons used in these linguistic wars. In this case, Funkyified Ijáu is the weapon that the younger generations are using to combat the decline of the language. Officer and Pam think that the younger generation should be encouraged in their own way of using or speaking Ijáu. They believe it will motivate the children’s interest in the language. Adults should stop discouraging them from speaking or code-switching (MacSwan, 2017) by insisting upon the way ‘they’ (the older generation) learnt Ijáu. Instead, the older generation should understand that Ijáu is evolving, just as Pam notes when she says, *'Change is constant'*. Language is continuous, not static, and in responding to this Officer comments that ‘we’ should support the younger generation and not be a hindrance to their efforts. According to García, “language practices are multiple and ever adjusting to the multilingual multimodal terrain” of communicative settings and acts (García, 2009, p.53). This implies that languages could change within a society as a means of embracing the diversity in that society, which the younger generation are using to their advantage to enhance their understanding of English with Ijáu. Lee (2007, p. 29) affirms the need to create opportunities for young people to use their heritage language to engage in issues of relevance in their everyday lives, noting that “If [the Indigenous language] is to attain a status equal to English ... it needs to be related to the world of today’s teenagers”. What this statement alludes to is the importance of fashioning ways of encouraging the younger generations, which in this case would allow them to speak Funkyified Ijáu as they are currently doing, thus enhancing the spread of Ijáu among the younger generation. Although Ijáu might not have the status of English, its use might

improve within homes and society at large if the young generation is not disheartened in speaking it.

Pam comments that the parents want the younger generation to speak Ijáw: *'Children speak Ijáw with English. They have a way of Funkyfyng it; their parents' want them to understand it, which makes it easier.'* They younger generation speak English then include Ijáw, while those that could speak Yoruba mix them all during conversation. Pam seems to be implying that, since the parents wanted this young generation to understand Ijáw, the children's Funkyfynged Ijáw makes it easier for interaction to take place. The younger generation seem to be using this new phenomenon as a point of identity because that is the only way they can link with Ijáw and the speech community. Turner (2012, p.11) explains that "language is how people identify themselves. Being you is to know your language". This reiterates the identity relationship between speakers and language. A language will be better understood from the heart because it is who you are. Walpiri Patu Kurlangu Jaru (2012, p.6) emphasises that the young generation "need to feel pride in their language and culture and know that they are respected. That's the only way to start closing the gap". This remedy means that parents should encourage the intergenerational transmission of languages. The implication here is that language is part of ethnicity; parents should understand the language as part of their identity, they should show their passion for it and make sure that the community respects their way of interacting with the language, which could help with the renewal process instead of encouraging the loss of the language. By the same argument, the younger generations should be allowed to use Funkyfynged Ijáw, since this is how they want to communicate.

Pam talks about language renewal, noting that *'we were at the bottom of the ladder. [See Section 2.8, pg.45; Figure 14.] We have come up the rungs, we are no longer 'down there' anymore'*, thus indicating that the Izón were not previously recognised – perhaps because of the inferiority and lack education that used to be associated with the tribe. However, things have changed for the better. Language renewal, Pam acknowledges, pertains to the survival of that language. Pam further suggests that this may be because President Jonathan is Izón, which is influencing the way others perceive the Izón people and the Ijáw language. This could be linked with the second theme of language change, and it seems to suggest that language hierarchies may not be as rigid as they appear. The evolution of language drives a turnaround regarding the placement of the Izón within communities. Pam elaborates on the theme of the relationship between language and identity. She says that *'understanding is the first step to learning'*. Understanding any language creates a communal feeling that one

belongs to the ethnicity. In this case, she feels the younger generation are already heading in the right direction by understanding Ijaw but changing it to their own Funkyified version. To Pam, *'Ijaw is not dying'*. Instead it is thriving, which contrasts with what the other participants have said, seeing Ijaw in terms of death, suffering, dying and shame. Pam talks about parents who speak other languages, but that has not stopped the younger children from embracing Ijaw, and they still recognise it as part of their identity, while the mothers from other tribes still attach importance to Ijaw. Pam highlights language use change in the creation of new states for the Bayelsa people, noting that *'We now have Ijaw States unlike before. It is just that people don't like change. Most people understand it but pretend about it. You have people selling things in Bayelsa'*.

In the extract above, Pam is underlining the reasons for the changes that are happening within the Izon communities in which people pretend not to understand Ijaw. She talks about how Bayelsa is now a multicultural society made up of people who come from diverse backgrounds to trade or study. She thinks they should learn some Ijaw to enable them to interact within the community, particularly when trading for daily needs. Pam explained the reasons for the language renewal: *'Ijaw is not going anywhere at all. I am sure that our president will stay for a while. We have to be proud of where they are from'*. Likewise, the relationship between language and identity forms a new dimension based on pride. Pam talks about the Izons' responsibility to be proud of their heritage and background. This statement reiterates her advice that we should embrace a culture, which represents our identity. She contends that: *'Some young boys previously used to be militants, but they have changed. They went abroad to study because the president gave them bursaries to study abroad. It is just the association. Everybody is just going under the same thing, which is 'I don't know how to speak Ijaw.'* But, if you can understand it, you can speak it'.

Pam uses the example of the militant boys cited above to make the point that people and things can change. The militant boys in the Izon zones used to scare the life out of people. The then head of government Chief Olusegun Obasanjo massacred a whole village, and he had to attack the town of Odi in Bayelsa State because of the militant groups that were terrorising the Izon clans. The youths were angry with the government because of the deprivation and pollution people in the Izon regions had to face. Although the wealth of the nation comes from these states, the cash from the oil is never used to develop the regions it comes from. Pam suggests that people from such a disengaged background have now become more refined, and they can study in foreign countries to improve their prospects, which

means people could change for the better if they want to. Pam connects this personal growth with language change, observing that while some people pretend not to use Ijáw daily, they may retain a basic or elementary understanding of Ijáw. Pam points to the group of Izón people in her office to illustrate language renewal: *'In my office we have Izón community meeting. It is not going anywhere at all'*. Pam's love and pride for the language appears bottomless as she continues to unravel her network connections with Ijáw with a sense of optimism that Ijáw is evolving based on changes in the way it is used so that it becomes preserved whilst simultaneously being altered. Pam considers that Ijáw can be preserved through documentation; she feels that if people are still writing about Ijáw, the language is not dying out. The danger comes when Ijáw ceases to be written about and discussed.

Pam believes that the language renewal is increasing and that Ijáw is not in decline. In terms of contact between Ijáw and other languages, she reaffirms that Ijáw is no longer restricted to rural areas, and that people identify with it better now; and that even the close tribes are experiencing the new ethnicity. Pam thinks that intermarriage might affect Ijáw to some extent, saying that *'Izóns marry outside a lot'*. Intermarriage is when men or women marry into ethnic groups outside their own. For example, I am married to an Edo man, and it now appears that the Izón seem to experience a great deal of intermarriage. Pam refers to intermarriage as Izón men marrying women from other tribes, and this is reiterated by Officer in Chapter 6 Excerpt 8. However, Pam feels that intermarriage does not influence or affect Ijáw, and that these women from other tribes still identify with the Izón tribe, which is advantageous. Likewise, in the Bayelsa setting Princess and Bris said that despite their mother being from another tribe, she encouraged them to learn Ijáw by hiring a tutor for them. Officer also mentioned that intermarriage has contributed positively to the thriving of Ijáw in another way, as the women who marry into the Izón tribe identify with its language and ethnicity. Thus, it is not the language itself that faces the problem from this source, but rather the attitude and behaviours towards it that seems to have led to the decline.

Pam seems to believe (in line with the Elders) that it is their own attitude towards the language that needs to change by way of developing a renewed sense of pride in the language. From the language renewal point of view, Pam observes that it is 'our' identity and that we should accept and treat it with more respect (which Paul and the Elders also mention, Chapter 5). Pam addresses the issue of change again, *'It's just that it is changing'*. The language use is changing with new trends, which means there is no longer a problem with its

usage. Of note is the similarity to the choices of pronoun on the part of other participants of her linguistic choice, which involves using the word ‘us’ to represent the entire Izón group.

I have observed and experienced this mixing of English, Yoruba and Ijáw myself. Regarding this, Pam notes that ‘*most people in these areas need to speak a mixture of English like ‘Mu table kome bo’ [go and bring the table] because the person you’re speaking to might not understand it if you don’t include the English word’*. However, in some cases, the literary interpretation might not sound right. Pam refers to the language as code-switching, but code-switching is when two languages or varieties are in contention, which is not the case here because they were only changing languages between sentences. However, it does represent a clear indication that the speakers identify with the language, although they are not proficient speakers of Ijáw, and that they switch between English and Ijáw to construct sentences to make them better understood during interaction.

A study by MacSwan (2017, p.168) states that code-switching is a speech style in which bilingual’s alternate languages between or within sentences. For instance, Spanish-English bilinguals might say, *this morning mi hermano y yo fuimos a comprar some milk* [This morning my brother and I went to buy some milk], where the sentence begins in English, switches to Spanish and then moves back to English again. This practice is very common throughout the world, especially amongst members of bilingual families and communities. Code-switching assumes a language separation approach (two distinct languages, English and Ijáw). Linguaging as mentioned earlier (or what Jørgensen refers to as “polylinguaging”) implies that speakers have access to linguistic features that are associated with that we conventionally call languages and they draw upon and combine these features for meaning-making. The polylingualism norm entails that:

Language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims as best they can, regardless of how well they know the involved languages; this entails that the language users may know - and use - the fact that some of the features are perceived by some speakers as not belonging together (Jørgensen et al., 2011, p.34).

When language users form their own ways of speaking, if they are understood by their listeners they do not feel uncomfortable, and this language practice is understood in this study as translanguaging. A similar understanding of languages as sets of linguistic resources underpins the notion of “translanguaging”. García (2009, p. 140) observes that “Translanguaging is the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features

or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, to maximize communicative potential”. Translanguaging encourages the use of two or more languages in conversation. My findings on translanguaging confirm what Garcia states, which is that translanguaging represents personal choices in speaking or using language (see Section 3.10).

Nigerians naturally accommodate two languages between or during conversations because of the diversity of the country’s linguistic circumstances. Individuals who are not fluent usually alternate between the two. In this context, the younger generation that are exposed to the use of both English and Ijáw or Pidgin in a *‘Funkyfied’* manner are identifying with Ijáw.

### **6.3.2 Language Renewal and Social Media.**

Pam speaks about language maintenance and change in a new technological dimension. People are interested in both traditional and contemporary culture and are finding new ways to practise and preserve their cultural heritage. One way to do this includes the use of computerised and digital multimedia technologies. As Scott (2007, p. 138) observes: “the Ulukau website provides invaluable resources, which anyone – Native or non-Native – can access”. This suggests that technology is now available for everyone to connect to the wider world. This is what is happening in the Izón clinic in terms of revitalising the language. The group includes people from various Ijáw-speaking clans (see Appendix 8).

During my interview with Pam, she became so fascinated and thrilled by the Izón group on Facebook that we had to pause for her to show me the group site and tell me how to join the group, which I did immediately. I still follow group discussions and usually comment on conversations that I understand. This is an example of some of the interesting conversations in this digital space regarding language renewal. These are comments from different people contributing on the translation of the sentence below:

*Asoo and a ye!*

Or

*A so oo anda ye!!*

My translation goes this way:

*“O God of wrestling!”*

Or

*“O divine (power) for wrestling!”*

The post elicited the following comment:

The “so” in the statement appears to be the only knotty point. I believe that it means the same thing as the “so” in the following words/expressions:

1. Soféni/sofini = (sky-fire = lightning)
  2. Sobóbó
  3. Soma
  4. Soma-ere
  5. Abebiso
  6. Somina
  7. Amassoma (possibly) is a community in Izón clan.
  8. “So” meaning “sky”, “divine”, “heavenly” etc.
  9. Of course, not everything in the Izón language could be rendered in English. However,
  10. It doesn't preclude us from making an attempt, particularly when one has some idea of the meaning of the component parts forming a statement or an expression. Who can teach me
  12. how to speak the Izón dialect? I need help!!!
  13. language. o we chat on WhatsApp? <this individual wanted to learn Ijáv and had to seek help from the group and some replied to help but that they should use WhatsApp chat>
- (Comments made 27 February 2017).

In lines 9-10, the speaker may be implying that Ijáv lacks documentation because not everything in Ijáv can be represented using the alphabet. He further explains that this lack of documentation should not hinder ‘us’ (the Izón people) from learning or speaking Ijáv. The above comments were made on the Ijáv Language Clinic site on Facebook by members with the sole purpose of improving, learning and preserving Ijáv. In this case, language accessibility via social media can be a useful resource for the preservation of speech; this could represent Ijáv cultural practices, to which the Ijáv Language Clinic is already contributing and exhibiting (see Appendices 1-3; Section 3.9).

#### **6.4. Case Study 2: Depreye**

Depreye is a young man representing the middle generation who lives in Yenagoa with his wife. He was extremely pleased to meet me and expressed his excitement throughout the interview session. He was born and brought up in Lagos, where he learned to speak Ijáv, which made it more interesting because he was brought up in the city, yet he could speak Ijáv fluently. He has a wife who he called Beauty, and he told me that she encourages him to speak Ijáv regularly in the house. He did not mention children, so I did not ask him about this. I was being careful not to touch upon any potentially sensitive issues because I felt he would happily have introduced his children or spoken about them if they had been around. I am always mindful of what I share or discuss with my participants so as not to intrude upon their privacy, because I try to empathise with all of them.

The themes discussed in this excerpt are those of renewal and change of Ijáw. This concern firstly Ijáw renewal (as opposed to language shift or death) and reasons for this renewal and secondly Ijáw language change in terms of regarding Ijáw as part of a larger meaning-making repertoire which includes music.

#### 6.4.1 Excerpt 2

| Depreye  | English  |
|--|--|
| <i>Eni mieye bo mo o nana oweooo eye bi moooo</i>  | I am happy that I can speak Ijáw and I got married to an Izón woman, which makes it interesting. I am a musician, I love singing in Ijáw and I am excited that I can speak Ijáw so fluently ... boooooh.   |
| <i>Eenie miee yee bo moo o</i>   |  |
| <i>Nana O weeei</i>  |  |
| <i>Eeduba bhoo mooo</i>  | I am a very proud Ijáw speaker; it makes me feel like a hero to be using and speaking Ijáw at the same time. My wife says that when people ask you your name we should always mention the Ijáw name before the English, but it is always the other way around. They always give the English names. |
| <i>Nana Owei</i>   |  |
| <i>Ye bee moo oo Nana Owei</i>   | I sing songs to glorify the Lord and it goes thus:   |
| <i>Emene numutuo Nana peredoununi epeio</i>  |  |
| <i>Yee bi mo Nana Oweeei</i>   | The Lord is so great and beautiful   |
| <i>Eni mieye bo mo o Nana oweooo eye bi moooo</i>  |  |
| <i>Eni mieye bo mo o Nana oweooo eye bi moooo</i>  | We thank you for all the beautiful creations<br>Oh Great Lord (x2)   |
| <i>Eenie miee yee bo moo o Naa Oweei</i>   |  |
| <i>Ewduba boohoo moo Nana Owei</i>   | All the good things you have created and done we are forever so grateful   |
| <i>Ye bee moo oo Nana Owei</i>   |  |
| <i>Ye be moo ooo</i>   | God, you are so Good; You are so Beautiful Lord. You are so Beautiful!!!   |
| <i>Menu mu Nana Owei Ke kon epre.</i>  |  |
| <i>Okeere ke kon agoono keduobo</i>  | This song was put in my heart by the inspiration of the Lord God, who is the creator of heaven and earth.  |
| <i>Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee</i> |  |
| <i>Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee</i>   | Greetings to the Izón people out there (x2)  |
| <i>Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee</i>   |  |
| <i>Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee</i>   | I am here to tell Izón women that they should all speak Ijáw.  |
| <i>Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee</i>   |  |
| <i>Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee</i>   | They don't like to speak Ijáw; it gets me worried when I eventually hear that these girls I are from Izón, they put on trouser and pass by my shop. I tell them to speak Ijáw because it is very sweet and interesting. We should try to speak it. I am a hairdresser, so I                        |
| <i>Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee Ezon tuu a dou ooo ee</i>   |  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>come across beautiful Izón people often. They behave like they are not Izón and do not talk of speaking it. As we speak Ijáv we are making the Lord feel ‘Big, Great and Happy’ for creating ‘us’ and placing us in ‘Izón’ community abi. <i>Noo bee soooo?</i> [is it not true?] We should appreciate where we belong to in society.</p> <p>When singing my song, I am telling the Lord that I am grateful to be part of the Izón tribe ... keee. The songs I sing people prefer the Ijáv songs or lyrics. At times, I force myself to speak Ijáv because I enjoy it so much. I am so proud that I am a very fluent speaker of Ijáv and I am being encouraged by my wife as well.</p> |
|--|---|

In this excerpt, Depreye speaks about the importance of marrying from one’s own tribe; he sounds happy about it because his wife makes him speak Ijáv at home, unlike most of his peers who have married outside the tribe. Depreye speaks of his love of and pride in the Ijáv language that he can sing in and speak fluently, and this distinguishes him from the other middle-generation participants. Considering that he learnt Ijáv in Lagos, he is very fluent in it and uses it as highlighted in his words: *‘I am a very proud Ijáv speaker; it makes feel like a hero to be to be using and speaking Ijáv at the same time’*. Depreye reiterates his pride as a proficient Ijáv speaker, which demonstrates his pleasure and enthusiasm for the language. Faudree (2012, p.520) argues that the ethnographic record provides abundant evidence of societies worldwide in which the division between language and music is contingent on local practices. What lies behind such statements is not merely the culturally diverse ways of conceptualising divisions between language and music or the variances among their ideologised meanings. Instead, music and language are socially determined constructs that arbitrarily divide a communicative whole in fundamentally cultural ways. Society practices or beliefs might differentiate music from language but, in this case, Depreye has been able to make use of both in combination on discourses of home and society. Depreye is likewise portraying his passion for the language which resonates with the idea that without language, culture would have no shape (Jiang, 2000). Depreye’s choice of speaking Ijáv through music is unique to him (see Eze, 2014). This supports what Portes (2015) comments on in terms of language choices (Section 3.8) and suggests that the way in which members of a speech community use language to expressing themselves comprises a form of identity. Here,

Depreye expresses his feelings by singing Ijáv lyrics and promoting the Ijáv language as a way of identifying with this group. Depreye says that the Izón people should be as excited about the language as he is. Depreye's pride in the Ijáv language is portrayed in his music, which also promotes Ijáv. Depreye calls himself a 'hero' of the language and restates his identity as a proud Izón man, noting that his usage of language allows him to play a vital role in the revitalisation process (Baker, 1992).

As he explains earlier, people pretend not to understand Ijáv while he openly embraces the language. Depreye communicates a new dimension to name-bearing, advocated by his wife, and they hold on to the native names in preference over the English names. He believes that people should give their Ijáv names first when approached or asked what their names are. However, he observes that people mentioned their English names more often than their Ijáv names, which seems to be the norm in the community. In the extract above, Depreye demonstrates his use of music and lyrics in Ijáv in praising God for his life and existence. He explores the theme of Ijáv change through music (Mulac et al., 2010).

Depreye explained that he wanted to talk about a song that was inspired by the Lord in his heart in glorifying the goodness of the world. In the lyrics of his song, he acknowledged the goodness and beauty of the Lord. Depreye speaks about his beautiful wife, thereby showing his appreciative nature. In showing his love and pride towards the language, Depreye greets the entire Izón people, not just me; which shows he is very patriotic about his culture and identity. Depreye's wife joins in the discussion but called on the women not to generalise her comments. This could be implying that she also feels that women have a role to play in language transmission. The theme of renewal with the sub-theme of gender roles is reflected in the comment that *'They don't like to speak Ijáv; it gets me worried when I eventually hear that these girls are from Izón, they put on trouser and pass by my shop'*. It seems that the lack of usage of Ijáv by women was ascribed to them not liking to speak Ijáv, because they were too 'trendy'. Depreye's wife expressed her love of and was dismissive of women who do not like speaking, Ijáv because they were too trendy. She expressed her love and pride for Ijáv: *'I tell them to speak Ijáv because it is very sweet and interesting'*. These are encouraging words, highlighting that women should speak Ijáv because it is interesting. This reflects the semiotic pride for the renewal of language (Young, 2008). The theme of pretence arises again: *'They behave like they are not Izón not to talk of speaking it'*. People act as if they are not Izón by not speaking it, as discussed in the previous chapter. Depreye reiterates his pride for Ijáv by saying, *'We should appreciate where we belong in the society'*. This means that

we should appreciate our roots – a concept that was also mentioned by other participants such as Keys. Depreye talked about the effort he puts into speaking Ijáw; this suggests that he sometimes struggles to speak it but, thanks to his wife who supports him, he has become a good and proud speaker of Ijáw (Garuba, 2001). In this vein the Executive Secretary of the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO 2018), Dr. Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma, has stated that there is a strong need for governments to take proactive measures towards ensuring that the right things are done “to give our indigenous languages a pride of place in the scheme of things”. Indigenous languages should be given enough support for revitalisation [see Appendices 1-3].

### **6.5 Summary and Discussion of Case Studies**

This chapter discussed two case studies: Pam elaborated on new trends in speaking Ijáw, which she termed ‘Funkyfied’ Ijáw and claimed that it was linked with language renewal (as opposed to language shift or death). Further explaining the reasons for this renewal, she argued that Ijáw is changing through code-switching and Ijáw was becoming part of a larger meaning-making repertoire that includes wearing Ijáw clothes and emphasising the relationship between language and identity.

Pam talked more about how the younger generation is using Ijáw in a ‘Funkyfied’ way, mixing or code-switching with English to obtain greater fluency in spoken Ijáw, which to Pam appeared to be a good reason for the children’s willingness to speak Ijáw. Pam called on parents to encourage and accept the children’s way of using Ijáw. She agreed that parents should not behave as a fence but as a bridge, which echoes the idea discussed by Officer in Chapter 5. However, Pam explained that Ijáw is thriving, rather than dying. It is evolving and changing. Although most people are not ready for change, this is the way the language has come to be used by the younger generation. Pam suggested that it is not the case that younger children are not speaking it or do not understand it. Instead they are using it in a more fashionable way. On the issue of dress, Pam felt that people recognised the Izón specifically because of the Nigerian President, whose ethnicity is Izón. The visibility of an Izón public figure inspires people to wear traditional Izón outfits, with Fridays being set aside for people to wear traditional clothes. In this case, people who are not Izón by background also put on Ijáw clothes to show they identify with and embrace the culture of the president alongside the Izón people.

Overall, all the participants identified strongly with language, people and culture. However, Pam was the only participant who believed that the language was not going anywhere at all and that people were now acknowledging the Izón people, which was a positive change from the way things used to be. Other participants, however, seemed to think that the language situation would be better if efforts were made to reform educational policies, persuade parents to teach their children and allow the younger generation to practise speaking the language the way they wanted to as a way of encouraging them, rather than making it difficult for them to cultivate the habit of learning the language in the first place.

Depreye spoke about the relationship between language, identity and music. He explained how he and his wife could speak Ijáv, and they both loved Ijáv because they found it very interesting. Following this theme of love, Depreye verbalised his passion for Ijáv songs: *'I love singing in Ijáv and I am excited that I can speak Ijáv so fluently.* Depreye seemed very emotive in his discourses, which allowed him to express his attachment and his love and pride towards Ijáv, observing that *'I am a very proud Ijáv speaker, it makes feel like a hero'*. The idea that Depreye can use Ijáv for daily communication is something he finds 'so great' and 'overwhelming'. Through music he helps people who might not want to speak Ijáv to realise how *'interesting and sweet'* Ijáv is in sound so that people would be motivated to speak it. We should change our attitude towards the language for the better. Depreye further appreciated the idea that, through the great work of the Lord, the Izóns should be happy that they belong to a tribe and that their identity was ordained rather than accidental. This echoes the words of Ekiyor, who also emphasised the relationship between language, culture and identity.

# Chapter 7

## Concluding Discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

Albert Einstein once observed that if we knew what we were doing, it would not be called research. He is also credited with stating that if we looked deep into nature, we would understand everything better. Both these statements highlight the benefits of a research of this nature.

In many ways, this thesis has taken the form of an insider versus outsider exercise to rigorously uncover the reasons why the Ijaw language is declining. It has been a contemplative journey that has strengthened my passion for understanding language endangerment and change. This research started with the goal of investigating the maintenance of language, culture and identity through language comprising a case study of Ijaw, but the title was changed to reflect the investigation of language use, shift and change across generations in Nigeria

My study intended to answer two main questions and three sub-questions. The main questions were:

1. Is Ijaw declining and if so why?
2. Why is Ijaw not being passed down through generations?

The sub-questions were:

1. What is the reported language use in the homes?
2. How do the participants value Ijaw?
3. What new forms of Ijaw language, culture and identity are emerging?

This final chapter sums up the key findings of the research investigations. It critically evaluates the implications and limitations of the study and offers suggestions for future enquiries and reflections in relation to language change in Nigeria.

## 7.2 Key Findings

My study drew upon the life story interviews of participants belonging to the older, middle and younger generations. I have explained how these families are divided into four generations (G1 Great-grandparents, G2 Grandparents, G3 Parents, and G4 children). The transmissions across generations are represented as: (G1 to G2), (G2 to G3), and (G3 to G4).

1. There are many different varieties of Ijw, and people have different perceptions of them (such as what is good Ijw and what is bad Ijw, correct and incorrect Ijw, what is Ijw slang and what is a “civilised” way of speaking Ijw).
2. Attitudes towards Ijw can vary greatly, not only from family to family but also from one member of the same family to another.
3. The attitudes of different generations differ: I interviewed the great-grandparents, grandparents, parents and children for data collection in Nigeria.

The participants were all Izn ethnicity and spoke the same variety of Ijw, although their proficiency levels differed, with all participants understanding Ijw but only some falling in the category of competent or passive speakers. While some participants were indifferent to why the language was declining, there was still a consensus regarding their identification with the language. Generally, the findings showcased the participants’ attitudes, beliefs and emotions towards the decline of Ijw. The findings were “not just about how people ‘see things’ but how people ‘do things’” (Silverman, 2000, p.283). In this case, the focus was not on how the participants felt that the language was declining but on their attitudes towards Ijw and their daily use of the language.

The participants from the older generation mentioned that language learning should start in the home, and data suggested that they did pass on the language to their own children in the middle generation. Although the participants argued that language should be learnt in the homes, the children could learn the language from friends or at school, not necessarily from homes. Language transmission seems to be everyone’s responsibility not that of the parents alone, contrary to what some of the participants believed who attributed language learning to women who represented the mothers. While some of the participants considered that it was the role of women to ensure that the language was taught at home, this is not the stance of this thesis, which argues that language teaching or learning should be carried out equally by both genders. In Bayelsa State setting, two of the participants, Ebinepreye and Felicia, reiterated that contact and migration were contributory factors behind the decline. When it came to themes of emotional attachment and love and pride shown in the participants’ feelings

about their language, they were ashamed of their attitude and felt concern over the decline of their language. Conversely, while some participants felt that it was the mothers' responsibility to teach and oversee language learning, others felt that everyone should change their attitudes towards the language for it to thrive. However, the findings show that the language is thriving in semiotic ways (and through hybridity and translanguaging), while the older generation adhere to a culture from an earlier time. Another participant, Perere, felt that people should be self-motivated, which is to say that they need to be enthused by the language. The theme of laughter is a cultural thing which permeated almost all the settings. People tend to laugh as a cover for lack of fluency or competency in Ijw. Perere also spoke about the proliferation of Ijw varieties, linking it to the decline of Ijw. From my observation, these varieties have created hierarchies of scale pyramids at local levels. For instance, a husband and wife from Izn may speak different varieties of Ijw with little mutual intelligibility. Paul, representing the middle generation, talked about the lack of respect for Ijw as a cause for its decline, since Ijw speakers preferred to speak Yoruba over Ijw (prescriptivism; Banda, 2015). Demonstrating a similar stance, Officer echoed Perere's observations about the use of Ijw stereotypes which are linked with accent-related stigma, thereby engendering feelings of inferiority from communicating in Ijw. Officer conceded that language decline was affecting other major languages too, such as Yoruba (see Fabunmi and Salawu, 2005). However, the case of Yoruba is not as dire as that of Ijw because the language belongs to a major tribe which has more speakers, unlike the Izn tribe, which is much smaller than the Yoruba.

Where people perceive hybridity and translanguaging as negative because they contaminate Ijw or cause language separation, it can be countered that these practices are also advantageous because younger generations are at least speaking Ijw by claiming it as their own. Meanwhile, the decline of language teaching and learning should not be attributed to the non-performance of gendered roles in the preservation of the language. As one of the participants, Opuwei, emphasised, the decline was attributable to the fact that people felt embarrassed to speak Ijw at school or at social gatherings due to popular stereotypes regarding Ijw accents. Further causes for the decline identified by Opuwei were the dominance of English, the unpopularity of Ijw and the proliferation of mutually unintelligible dialects without a unifying language, a point also noted by Perere. Globalisation or development was cited as a reason for the language decline by Keys, one of the participants from the younger generation. As also noted by Opuwei, the dominance of

English was observed to be a cause for the decline of Ijw. In support, Keys believed that going back to one’s roots could improve the situation for Ijw and that parents needed to support children in this revitalisation process.

Another participant, Ekiyor, spoke about the language decline as “moving backwards” because Ijw was not spoken as it had been previously. Ekiyor commented on the impact of the “jet age”, echoing the views of Keys. The participants admitted that they were not doing enough to sustain the language. Meanwhile, Depreye displayed his love and pride in Ijw through music, although he was the only participant to express how he felt in this manner. Depreye shared how people pretended that they could not understand Ijw and could say only basic words or phrases in Ijw. It was found that although the grandchildren said that they did not speak the language, they were all able to say a phrase or a few words in Ijw, but when their parents spoke Ijw to them they tended to respond with laughter, either in Pidgin or English. Across the board, the participants’ beliefs about Ijw demonstrated emotional attachment, love and pride versus loss. In a way, language represents who they are, and no matter where they might be it helped them represent themselves as Izn people because it was part of their identity. The languages the participants spoke could be categorised according to how prestigious they were perceived to be, with the hierarchy of prestige positioning English at the top, followed by Pidgin or Yoruba, with Ijw coming a poor third. English was the dominant language within the larger society, but language use in the homes of the participants depended on choices made by the parents. In Abuja, for instance, they mainly spoke Standard English, probably because both parents were busy people with work commitments or because they were both educated or had been exposed to the Western world. However, in this instance the father blamed the mother, an Izn woman with the ability to speak fluent Ijw, for not speaking Ijw with the children. In Ajegunle it was a mixture of Pidgin/English that dominated. It was understood as the “first language” of the younger generation (Udofot, 2011, p.17). In Papa’s home, it seemed to be the main language with occasional Ijw. The middle generation attribute the decline in the use of Ijw to their parents, blaming them for not teaching children their language. Parents were observed not to pass on the language intergenerationally and children placed the blame for the loss of language upon the parents. These issues showcased divergent understandings about the roles of parents in language transmission and the extent of grandparents’ involvement with their children and grandchildren’s language learning. The conflicts and contradictions between participants that were identified by the findings likewise suggest paths for revitalisation and

maintenance, foregrounding the importance of gender roles (principally mothers) as well as broader parental responsibility in transmitting Ijw to subsequent generations.

For instance, the exchange between Papa and his children during the interview highlighted pressing issues such as anger for not being spoken to in Ijw. The older generation had all been taught in Ijw at home and at school, and at home Ijw had been the sole language used. The older generation could transmit Ijw to their children, but the middle generation were either not able to or chose not to pass on the language to the younger generations. However, the parents agreed that they used Pidgin English and those who belonged to the middle or high classes spoke in English or Yoruba instead of Ijw with the children at home, which was a contributory factor to language decline. The findings show that most of the participants did not have family language policies to which they adhered within their homes. Parents spoke Ijw amongst themselves but usually not with the children because the children laughed whenever they were spoken to in Ijw. At Ajegunle, the children blamed Papa for not teaching Ijw to them, while Papa believed that language teaching was the domain of the women. This affected the daily use of the language at Ajegunle. It was only at Bayelsa that a non-Ijw mother hired a tutor to teach the children the language, which she learnt alongside them. However, it was found that grandparents played an active role in teaching children to speak Ijw, which was reiterated by the older generation.

The reasons why Ijw appears not to have been passed down through the generations include a lack of contact with the language, people’s attitudes towards it, and the absence of pride in the language, which is associated with the low status of Ijw as well. Contact with major languages such as English and Yoruba and Pidgin English also affected the intergenerational transmission of the language because the participants used these other languages daily at home with the children instead of Ijw. The great-grandparents and grandparents are still proficient speakers of Ijw, but the parents’ children no longer use Ijw because they have alternative languages at their disposal.

However, not speaking Ijw has its own effect, with parents and children perceiving the language to be challenging due to the generation gap and the decline of the language. Nevertheless, their preference for other major languages over their own is unacceptable to them. English was cited as one of the reasons for the decline in the use of Ijw by participants, but it was Pidgin English that seemed to be the worst problem. Some of the participants, particularly those belonging to the middle and younger generations, spoke about

their identity being coupled with the emotional value of the language. However, some of the participants from the children's generation blamed globalisation or civilisation, as they termed it, for their adoption of the Western culture.

### **7.3 New Forms of Ijáw Language use and Identity**

As discussed by some of the participants, Ijáw has different varieties. In terms of functionality, the variety that was mentioned most was Kolokumo, which was popularised by Kay Williamson, a white woman who studied and documented the language. The documentation of the letters of the alphabet is still at the exact level where Williamson's work ended, with no new additions to date. The older generation mentioned that the language used to be very interesting to the ears because speakers did not mix or code-switch with Pidgin or Yoruba, as is the case now. The Izón people are commonly perceived to be backward, which made the middle generation feel inferior when they were at secondary school and led many of the participants who had similar experiences to stop responding to questions in the classroom because people mocked their accents. However, the attitudes towards Ijáw have started to change since President Goodluck Jonathan came to power, and people have accepted him along with his accent, even supporting the Izóns by wearing native attire on Fridays as a way of embracing the Izón culture. In terms of the spoken changes that have occurred in the language, participants spoke about the "Funkyfied" version of Ijáw that the children had begun to use in conversation. The youngest generation has begun to participate in the new trend of using "Funkyfied" Ijáw, which can be described as polylinguaging or translanguaging –using different linguistic features while speaking Ijáw in combination with English in a way that goes beyond code-switching. Officer, one of the participants from the middle generation, suggested that parents should be a bridge instead of fence so that children should be allowed and encouraged to speak the language in whichever manner they choose. Bris, one of the participants from the younger generation, added that it was boring speaking English only at home, further observing that he found this monotonous because he wanted to be a multilingual not a monolingual person. This signals the importance of multilingualism (*'it's boring speaking just English'*) and the emergence of a new discourse for promoting multilingualism amongst the young generation. The relationship between Ijáw and these dominant languages highlights the practice of polylinguaging or translanguaging, which was found to be very strong amongst the participants.

In response to the question of why the parents were not passing the language to the younger generation, many contradictions, similarities and discrepancies in ideas were observed amongst the participants. The participants spoke about the dominance of English, but in this case, it is Pidgin English rather than Standard English, which is spoken at home and has displaced Ijw. In the Ajegunle setting, Papa blamed mothers for not teaching the children Ijw, while the children blamed him for not teaching them the language. The two Elders supported Papa’s view that language teaching lies within the women’s domain and mothers have the sole responsibility for language teaching and learning.

#### **7.4 Theoretical and methodological contributions**

In this study I drew upon the field of sociolinguistics while examining the interaction of language and society and how individual language beliefs and language practices evolve over time and across generations. My philosophy of practice is captured in a well-worn Chinese proverb – “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime” (Tzu and Giles, 2008). A crucial finding of this study is that language teaching should be the norm in all families so that it can be passed down the generations, and parents need to keep encouraging the children to learn Ijw so, as the Chinese proverb suggests, language learning becomes a self-regulating process.

I have read widely about language endangerment, death, loss, shift, change and the effects of globalisation. My review of the literature has helped me research the two main questions: “Is Ijw declining and if so why?” and “Why is Ijw not being passed down through generations?” I was influenced by the works of sociolinguists Crystal, Fishman and Wurm, while keeping in the forefront of my mind the assertion by Crossman (2017, p.1) that fundamental to sociolinguistics is the idea of language as being:

Variable and ever-changing [and not] uniform or constant [and thereby being] varied and inconsistent for both the individual user and within and among groups of speakers who use the same language.

This refers to the notion that language continues to evolve individually and within communities. I had to closely examine each participant’s experience to understand why Ijw is declining in homes and why it has not been passed down the generations. This study went beyond shift and loss and into the exploration of translanguaging (which is a plus to the Ijw language). As such it differs from other research of this nature. The phenomenon of Funkyified Ijw was examined within the context of translanguaging.

If English today enjoys the status of a “language on which the sun never sets”, it is thanks in great part to the British Empire (Anchimbe and Anchimbe 2005, p.14). English retains its prestige long after the end of colonialism, which showcases its pre-eminent position even though it is a foreign language in Nigeria. A plausible explanation as to why people tend to mix it with other spoken languages, as Papa mentioned above, is the belief that English stands at the top of the hierarchy of languages, and people therefore wish to be recognised as English speakers. Anchimbe and Anchimbe (2005, p.14) further point out that a linguistic attachment to the English language was fostered by the colonisers, elaborating that the

...double-header weapon, as explained below, was the method the colonial masters used on the regions that they ruled. They forced people to accept their rules and preferred language unreservedly.

This strategy was aimed initially at inducing a sense of unconditional attachment to the colonial power and maintaining a gap in the status quo between the commoners and the colonisers seeing as the natives had little knowledge of the variety of English used by their colonial masters. Despite the strategies that were attached to the linguistic schemes in these countries, they yielded one thing – the emergence of postcolonial varieties of English. This study sheds lighter on English language dominance, but in this case, it was a choice of the country studied, Nigeria.

As Kachru (1986, p.1) observed: “the legacy of colonial English has resulted in the existence of transplanted varieties of English having distinct linguistic ecologies— their own context of function and usage”. This implies that English has different representations, which might themselves be dependent on varying perspectives. This thesis hows that the Izón people have embraced English because of the status it affords them, while still giving them space to feel pride for Ijáv. At the same time, Adegbaji (1994, p.96) comments that “there is a glorification of European languages and a general belittling of indigenous languages”, once more underlining the idea that European languages are more highly regarded than indigenous languages.

This study illuminates key theories and concepts, such as polylinguaging and translanguaging, which happen when speakers make their own choices from the different linguistic resources at their disposal. These theories discuss the importance of using other semiotic approaches or mixing two or more languages to convey a message during interactions. In support of this, “multilingual speakers use the resources available to them to communicate effectively” (Stathopoulou, 2016, p.760).

The contention by Crossman (2017) that language is ever changing is supported by the “Funkyfied” use of Ijáv adopted by the younger generation. According to Canagarajah and Wurr (2011, p.10), “the current focus on formal competence overlooks the dexterity speakers need to negotiate interactions with diverse speakers who bring different grammatical systems for communication”. This may imply that speakers of languages tend to bring other aspects of other areas into communication. This is in line with what is happening amongst the parents and younger generations. The parents are not willing to accept the evolving nature of the language and do not appreciate the effort the young people are putting into ensuring that they use the language – but in their own way.

Haugen (1972, p. 325) considers the basic assumptions of linguistics, observing that:

The concept of language as a rigid, monolithic structure is false, even if it has proved to be a useful fiction in the development of linguistics. It is the kind of simplification that is necessary at a certain stage, but which can now be replaced by more sophisticated models.

Monolingualism should not be the norm in a world that is becoming ever more globalised, because it will be hard for people to integrate socially. Haugen suggests that language should not be a rigid construct; rather it is something that is fluid and can be subject to change and flexibility in use and interpretation. This is particularly useful for non-speakers and is exemplified by the case of the emergence of ‘Funkyfied’ Ijáv.

Languages are alive and dynamic; they change, evolve, adapt, grow, shrink and mutate. Languages are vital ways of interacting among speech communities, and although some languages are facing extinction, people are becoming aware of this and are making efforts to rectify the situation.

In terms of methodology, the triangulation of data allows the enhancement of the validity and reliability of this study. The interviews which formed the main source of data collection unpack the observations and life stories of the participants up to and including the use of digital technology (Facebook: Ijáv language Clinic, see Appendix 6) as a tool.

Studies using an intergenerational perspective are few, but mine will hopefully add to the wealth of knowledge. My investigation into intergenerational transmission followed three families and observed the interactions between great-grandparents, grandparents, parents and children. This methodological approach is not used often and, citing Mahera (2015, p. 282): ‘As far as I am aware, is the first in this field’. I have analysed the data using what I have termed thematic analysis in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Some aspects of my analysis were informed

by certain aspects of what Braun and Clarke (2006) referred to as thematic analysis, which is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data”. My aim was to highlight what this field means. Researchers such as Gibbs (2007) and Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1986; 1989) have modelled systems that collaborate with society and culture in much the same way as my thesis (Section 4.9), ‘syncretizing’ knowledge from different sources (Gregory and Williams, 2000). The findings are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

### **7.5 Implications of the Study**

Essentially, divergent perceptions and perspectives on the role of parents in the teaching and learning of language raised questions about the shared roles of individuals and governments to synergise efforts towards the revitalisation of the language. When people have a shared vision on an issue or an idea, this can enhance clarity and commitment towards the collective goal, which in this thesis is the decline in the Ijáw language. In terms of language revitalisation, the home takes pride of place in negotiating between government and society. The older, middle and younger generations should all work together to achieve the desired goal of changing attitudes towards the language and encourage pride in its use. Parents should facilitate the process of change in attitude to accommodate the children by being a bridge instead of a fence in supporting revitalisation. As other participants observed, such change is reflected in parents’ behaviours towards learning Ijáw, and such attitudes could strengthen further, allowing for the development of strategies so that others could follow the same procedure in contexts beyond the Izón communities. The findings also suggest that the government is considered to have a great role to play in ensuring that Ijáw is set as a curriculum subject in local schools and extends to GCSE level (or the WAEC equivalent in Nigeria).

This thesis aims to raise awareness about the process of language decline in general, and at the same time to promote the restoration of the cultural values of Ijáw. This is crucial, since some studies (Cuccia and Cellini, 2007, Eluyemi, 2002; Onyima, 2015, UNESCO, 2001) have shown that culture also affects behaviour. This means that societal problems may be traceable to a loss of cultural values – including language. We currently have a younger Ijáw generation, which behaves as though it is completely unaware of Ijáw and cultural values, as reflected by the generation’s own perception of the Ijáw culture and values. However, the generation still believe that the Ijáw culture and language are linked to their identity, on them of terms of “Funkyfied” Ijáw. Booth (2010) proposes that change is not coherent or systematic unless linked to values. In this case, language and culture are linked to the values

the Izón people recognise as being integral to their identity. Although this thesis focused on the Ijáv people of Nigeria, the findings may be relevant to other indigenous speakers globally and may be especially relevant to younger generations from different indigenous minority backgrounds that may also be facing challenges in the intergenerational transmission of their own languages.

Amongst the themes that emerged from the discussions was the theme of change, which was expressed as polylinguaging or translanguaging, largely by the younger participants and some participants from the middle generation. This phenomenon was supported by Officer, who mentioned that language should be a bridge rather than a fence. To this effect, Pam spoke about code-switching to *'Funkyfied'* Ijáv, connoting the new trends with the concept that the younger generation was using this *'Funkyfied'* Ijáv to identify with the language. One participant from the younger generation (Bris) talked about monolingualism being boring but made the effort to use whatever small bits of Ijáv he knew in conversation. Bris and Pam seem to represent a new perspective on language competence that is tantamount to understanding language competence as partial as opposed to full, with a view of language as a repertoire that can be mobilised strategically (such as for ethnic jokes or using words which the older generations would disapprove of).

The older generation was advised to accept this new change, which was attributed to globalisation or “civilisation” by the younger generation. Failure by the older generation to accept these new language strategies has the potential to contribute further to the intergenerational gap in Ijáv language use and transmission.

Prezi (2014) website points out that

language planning is concerned with sustained conscious efforts in the pursuit of long-term solutions to problems which involve the functional use of our indigenous languages (especially Izón in Bayelsa State) for the purpose of solving communication problems, standardization, bilingualism, and multilingualism. Status planning involving the planning of changes in the standing of Izón vis-a-vis English and other indigenous languages.

This reiterates the positionality of the Ijáv language as an important means of communication, wherein every stakeholder has a role to play to ensure that Ijáv is not affected by the dominant surrounding languages. This is also a reminder to the Izón group that challenges stemming from social change are faced across generations. As Schutz (2006, p.726) notes, “without robust community participation there is little hope... that efforts can

be sustained over the long term”. The Izón community could make this revitalisation process continuous if they all adopt similar attitudes, beliefs and emotions towards their language. This aligns with Prezi’s recommendations assigning responsibility to the community as well as the government to ensure that the language becomes a subject taught at all levels of education.

## **7.6 Limitations of the Research**

Endangered languages, loss, shift and change vary greatly across countries due to variations in scope and practice within communities. This case study of the Izóns cannot therefore answer the diverse phenomena attached to these terms. Neither can the findings be generalised to other indigenous languages in Nigeria specifically or Africa in general. In terms of reliability, the findings of this study may be corroborated by broadening the sample size of families and by undertaking a longitudinal study to observe the participants for at least one or two years and by residing within their community, particularly those who live in the villages. Although the selected families and participants had diverse perceptions of Ijáv, the study would have been more wide-ranging if it had included the views of external organisations such as the Centre for Niger Delta Studies (CNDS)<sup>32</sup>, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, and participants from the local neighbouring communities or villages.

If the constraints of time and access to these rural villages or organisations during my visits to Nigeria had not existed, I could have used questionnaires along with the life stories, interviews, video recordings and photographs. The reliability and validity of this thesis would have been enhanced if I had had the chance to discuss the emerging themes with the main participants and others in the three settings.

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<sup>32</sup> The Centre for Niger Delta Studies (CNDS) is a multi-disciplinary academic unit established by the Niger Delta University Act (2000) to provide a formal University-based centre dedicated to the study and development of the Niger Delta region. The Centre’s key objective is to stimulate interest and promote understanding of the people and environment of the region through research, advocacy and capacity building. The Centre is chartered by its enabling law to advance the University’s national/community service delivery profile. The mission of the CNDS is to promote proper understanding of the Niger Delta, its development challenges and problems, and the appropriate solutions. To achieve this, the Centre focuses on problem-solving research activities and education in the following major areas: History, Language and Culture. Source: <http://www.uniport.edu.ng/institutes/167-institute-of-niger-delta-studies.html>

## **7.7 Directions for Future Research**

This research journey has come to an end. However, I am reminded of the verse by the poet Rainer Maria Rilke: “Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given to you. Live the questions now” (cited in Bolton, 2006, foreword). In attempting to answer the research questions, I came to realise that rather than taking the position that this journey has ended with the writing of my thesis, I should realise that it has opened new questions for me to reflect further upon in terms of parental roles in the context of language change and revitalisation.

Considering the discrepancies, contradictions and challenges identified by this case study of Ijaw language, I consider the wider society of Nigeria, which has over 550 indigenous languages, reflecting the country’s societal diversity and complexity. As the government has indicated that indigenous languages will be taught from early childhood, it should try to implement an education policy that would reflect this practice instead of leaving this massive task to the parents alone.

My objective for the future is to take an active role in providing a bridge between families and communities to develop answers to the problems of language decline and to boost the intergenerational transmission of Ijaw, including advocating for its introduction in education. In many ways, my learning from this illuminating investigation will help me to enrich and strengthen my aspirations to bring together professionals, families and communities to make a difference to the lives of the younger generation by seeking to revitalise the Ijaw language.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: The Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)

| GIDS  | Summary of Fishman's GIDS   |
|-------|---|
| Level | Description   |
| 1     | The language is used in education, work, mass media, government at national level   |
| 2     | The language is used for local and regional mass media and government services  |
| 3     | The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders   |
| 4     | Literacy in the language is transmitted through education   |
| 5     | The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form throughout the community                 |
| 6     | The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language                         |
| 7     | The parents' generation knows the language well enough to use it with their elders but is not transmitting it to their children |
| 8     | The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation   |

Source: Adapted from Fishman (1991)

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**Appendix 2: Expanded Intergenerational Disruption Scale**

| <b>Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale Adapted from Fishman (1991)</b> |               |   |                       |
|---|---------------|---|-----------------------|
| <b>Level</b>  | <b>Label</b>  | <b>Description</b>  | <b>UNESCO</b>         |
| 0   | International | The language is used internationally for a broad range of functions.  | Safe                  |
| 1   | National      | The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at national level.  | Safe                  |
| 2   | Regional      | The language is used for local and regional mass media and governmental services.   | Safe                  |
| 3   | Trade         | The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders.  | Safe                  |
| 4   | Education     | Literacy in the language is being transmitted through a system of public education.   | Safe                  |
| 5   | Written       | The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form in parts of the community.                   | Safe                  |
| 6a  | Vigorous      | The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language.                            | Safe                  |
| 6b  | Threatened    | The language is used orally by all generations but only some of the child-bearing generation are transmitting it to their children. | Vulnerable            |
| 7   | Shifting      | The parents' generation knows the language well enough to use it among themselves, but none are transmitting it to their children.  | Definitely Endangered |
| 8a  | Moribund      | The only remaining active speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.                                       | Severely Endangered   |

|    |                |   |                       |
|----|----------------|---|-----------------------|
| 8b | Nearly Extinct | The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language. | Critically Endangered |
| 9  | Dormant        | The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community. No one has more than symbolic proficiency.                      | Extinct               |
| 10 | Extinct        | No one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language, even for symbolic purposes.   | Extinct               |

### Appendix 3: EGIDS Revitalisation

|    |                  |  |
|----|------------------|--|
| 6a | Vigorous         | The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned at home by all children as their first language.   |
| 6b | Re-establishment | Some members of a third generation of children are acquiring the language in the home with the result that an unbroken chain of intergenerational transmission has been re-established among all living generations. |
| 7  | Revitalised      | A second generation of children is acquiring the language from their parents who also acquired the language in the home. Language transmission takes place in home and community.                                    |
| 8a | Reawakened       | Children are acquiring the language in the community and some home settings and are increasingly able to use the language orally for some day-to-day communicative needs.  |
| 8b | Reintroduced     | Adults of the parent generation are reconstructing and reintroducing their language for everyday social interaction.   |
| 9  | Rediscovered     | Adults are rediscovering their language for symbolic and identification purposes.  |

Source: Lewis and Simons (2009, pp. 28-29) Revitalization EGIDS Levels

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## **Appendix 4: Participant Information Statement**

Research Project

Bomiegha Ayomoto

Educational Studies MPhil/PhD

Goldsmiths University of London

(Email address and phone number provided)

Title: Maintaining cultural identities through language: a case study of the Ijáw speaking people in London

(1) What is the study about?

This study is focused on language maintenance, culture and identity changes that might affect or reflect lack the usage within the society in London. The researcher will investigate the policies, strategies and practices of the extended school that facilitate the policy goals.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Bomiegha Ayomoto who is pursuing a Doctorate degree in Education at Goldsmiths University of London. She's a Nigerian, who was inferred with the Fellow in Higher Education in 2014. She also has a PGCE in Further Education (College) and has a fellow in Higher Education.

(3) What does the study involve?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your rights and privacy will be fully respected. All the information shared shall be kept confidential.

Persons participating in the study will be asked several open-ended questions about the language, culture and identity in relation to maintenance, transcribed and will be analysed.

If you consent, the interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. The purpose of the voice recording is to maintain accuracy when your responses are transcribed later. The recording will be used strictly for this study.

(4) How much time will the study take?

It is anticipated that each interview will last approximately 15 to 30 minutes.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Participating in this study is entirely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to consent. If you do consent, you may withdraw from the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased, and the information provided is not included in the study.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including the results, will be strictly confidential and only the researcher will have access to information on participants. The results will remain anonymous, without any mention of your name, unless of course if you would like for your

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name to be mentioned in the research. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants and the school will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

The findings of this research will make a valuable contribution to the discourse and debates around Language loss or endangered languages. Can threatened languages be saved? The information and the analysis might be used to better inform governments and school heads as they try to improve partnership with parents and the community as a way of cohesion. This research also attempts to shed light on the different individual perspectives of participants concerning language extinction whose experiences and insights are seldom recognised in the academic and public domain.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

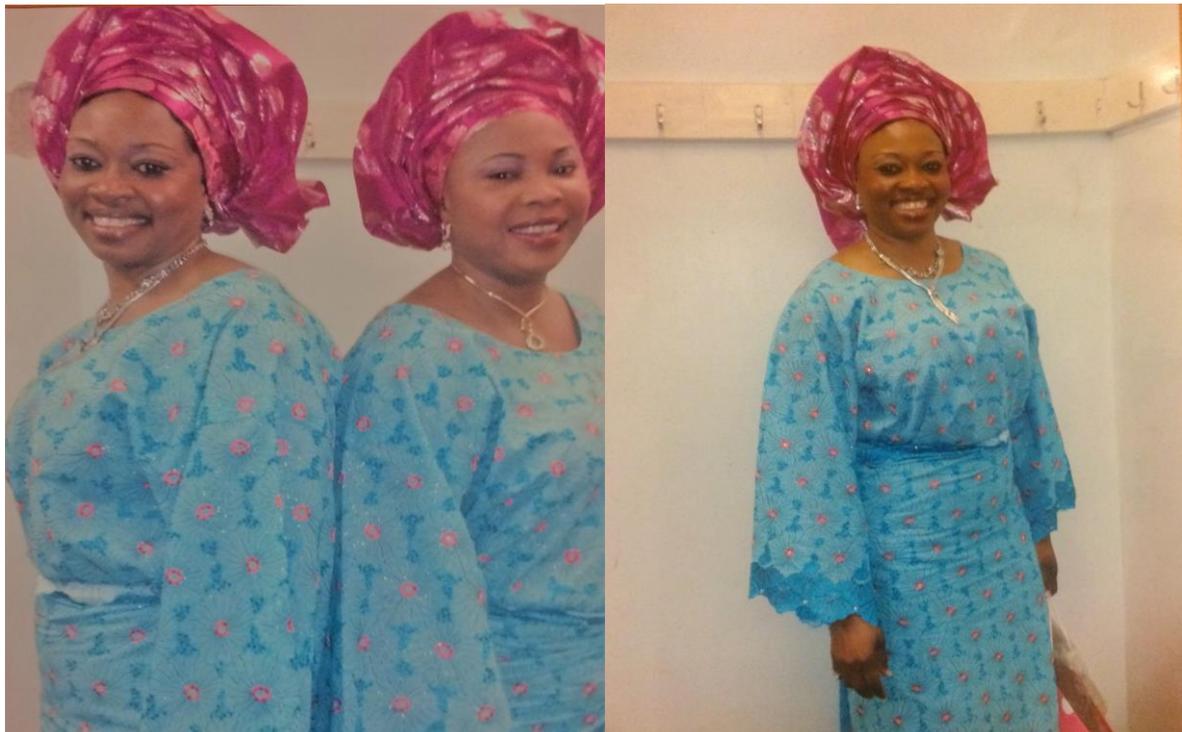
You may discuss this study with others if you choose. If there is someone else who you think might like to participate in this study, you may ask them to contact the researcher.

(9) What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, I will be happy to discuss any further questions that you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Bomiegha Ayomoto (email address provided).

This information sheet is for you to keep.

## **Appendix 5: Some Nigerian Traditional Outfits**





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**Buba and Iro Lace – Wrapper and Blouse**





**Boubou Maxi dresses**



'Shokoto and Agbada' Fabric made from Guinea Brocade (Trouser and Jumper) matching Akara, Buba and Iro with head gear .



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## Appendix 6: Izòn Language Clinic

A Group solely dedicated to:

1. The promotion of the Ijáv Language in its diverse forms and formats.
2. To examine, highlight, study, understand and promote the Ijáv language.
3. To preserve and promote Ijáv culture through the instrumentality of its most important element, the language of the people.
4. To explore the immemorial archives of the Izòn race in terms of Language, Culture, History, Philosophy, Geography etc, though with an obvious bias for linguistic issues.
5. To deepen and broaden our linguistic/historical heritage as a people.
6. To construct an in-depth documentation of the language for posterity in terms of Dictionary writing and other forms.
7. To be a veritable vanguard to promote the study of the language in educational institutions etc.
8. The Group is open to all sons and daughters of Ijáv extraction on Planet Earth and to every other person who has some keen interest in Linguistic Issues.
9. To foster some level of Ijáv National integration across Ijáv land.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/416148448504253/permalink/1223412764444480/>

*Asoo and a ye!*

Or

*A so oo anda ye!!*

My translation goes this way:

*“O God of wrestling!”*

Or

*“O divine (power) for wrestling!”*

Of course, not everything in the Izòn language could be rendered into English. However, it does not stop us from trying, particularly if we have some idea of the meaning of the component parts forming a statement or an expression.

The group participant response underscores the fact that Ijáv lacks documentation, as I mentioned transcription of the interviews that impression or words in my own way in representing the participants’ ideas. However, some other people may transcribe it differently

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because there is a unified alphabet or words documentation.

The “so” in the statement appears to be the only difficult point. I believe that it means the same thing as the “so” in the following words/expressions:

1. Sofení/sofinì = (sky-fire =lightning)
2. Sobóbó
3. Soma
4. Soma-ere
5. Abebiso
6. Somina
7. Amassoma (possibly) is a community in Izón clan.
- 8.” So” meaning “sky”, “divine”, “heavenly” etc.
9. Who can teach me how to speak the Izón dialect? I need help!!!

(Comments made on 27 February 2017).

Remember posting on this our most esteemed Ijaw Language Clinic site concerning the importance of Ijaw language in our schools. I want to thank God that even His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Bayelsa State, Chief Henry Seriake Dickson has declared that Ijaw language be taught in our schools as a compulsory subject. A statement he made during the Isaac Jasper Day celebration recently.

We are hoping that what he said should be done as he is acclaimed the “talk na do” governor. It’s a welcome declaration by him, but we hope it won’t end up as a political statement alone.

Haaaaa Izón!!!!

What is Happy Birthday in the ijaw language? As our admin is one today, the *EBEZIKE 1* of Africa, The *izón oyadon owei* of ijaw land, THE *MIYÊN KÎRÎMÔ EYE NEMI OWEI* of OPOROMO CLAN. The pioneer of ijaw language clinic. He has contributed a lot by bringing the Izons together from different clans through the creation of this forum. He is very intelligent, a man who knows the Ijaw history very well, I call him the encyclopedia, I am very happy to meet a great son of Ijaw land like you on social network. I have learnt a lot from you through this forum, a man who carries everybody along, may God bless you abundantly.

### **Translate Ijaw Language Clinic in your dialect**

*Izón beli zuo yo*

*Izón beli zúó yó wari*

*Ezon ebe zuoyo wari*

*Izón bebe donzu wari*

---

*Don zuo wari*

*Izón*

*-naghan-donzuwoyor*

*Izón -naghan-don zuwoyor* (Iduwini kingdom).

(Comments on made 2 April 2017)

**Appendix 7: Some Ijáv Variations**

| Mein        | Kolokumo         | English                    |
|-------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Oyindeingha | Owingindeinyenfa | Nothing is bigger than God |
| Bebere      | Bre              | Plantain                   |
| Koyere      | Ngazi            | Spoon                      |
| Muu         | Emudou           | leave                      |
| Emofuu      | Foo              | Salt                       |
| Meidee      | Meedou           | Done it                    |
| Eniye       | Enayee           | It is mine                 |

Appendix 8: Questionnaire

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the use of bilingual method of teaching in schools. [Students only]

Ayamez

1. Name of the school you attend: Community secondary school
2. Mention one of your best subjects in school: Economics
3. What is your ethnic / native language: 12on
4. How well do you understand the language above?  
a. Very well b. Fairly well c. Poorly
5. How well do you understand English language?  
(a) Very well (b) Fairly well (c) Poorly.
6. Can the teacher of your favourite subject speak your native language?  
YES  NO
7. Does the teacher use the language during lessons? YES  NO
8. Would you understand a lesson better if a teacher uses your native language as well as English? YES  NO
9. If yes, how much difference would it make in your understanding of a lesson? A. Much difference B. Little Difference C. No difference.
10. How many languages do you understand? Mention them. two languages Hausa/12on
11. If more than one, which of the above languages did you first understand?

12on  
~~12on~~ understand

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## QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the use of bilingual method of teaching in schools. [Students only]

1. Name of the school you attend: D.S.C TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
2. Mention one of your best subjects in school: MATHEMATICS
3. What is your ethnic / native language: IGBO LANGUAGE
4. How well do you understand the language above?  
a. Very well  b. Fairly well  c. Poorly
5. How well do you understand English language?  
(a) Very well  (b) Fairly well  (c) Poorly
6. Can the teacher of your favourite subject speak your native language?  
YES  NO
7. Does the teacher use the language during lessons? YES  NO
8. Would you understand a lesson better if a teacher uses your native language as well as English? YES  NO
9. If yes, how much difference would it make in your understanding of a lesson? A. Much difference B. Little Difference  C. No difference.
10. How many languages do you understand? Mention them. FRENCH, YORUBA
11. If more than one, which of the above languages did you first understand?  
FRENCH

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## QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the use of bilingual method of teaching in schools. [Students only]

1. Name of the school you attend: Obiorah Junior Secondary School II
2. Mention one of your best subjects in school: English language
3. What is your ethnic / native language: Urhobo
4. How well do you understand the language above?  
a. Very well   b. Fairly well   c. Poorly
5. How well do you understand English language?  
(a) Very well   (b) Fairly well   (c) Poorly.
6. Can the teacher of your favourite subject speak your native language?  
YES    NO
7. Does the teacher use the language during lessons?   YES    NO
8. Would you understand a lesson better if a teacher uses your native language as well as English?   YES    NO
9. If yes, how much difference would it make in your understanding of a lesson?   A. Much difference   B. Little Difference   C. No difference.
10. How many languages do you understand? Mention them. One Urhobo  
English
11. If more than one, which of the above languages did you first understand?  
English language.

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the use of bilingual method of teaching in school. [Teachers only]

1. Name of school where you teach: .....
2. Educational qualification(s): .....  
NCE  B.Ed  B.Sc  B.A  M.Sc  PGDE  OTHERS
3. Subject taught in school of assignment: .....
4. What is your ethnic/ native language? *Tomba* .....
5. How well can you communicate in your ethnic/ native language?  
 (a) Very well    (b) fairly well    (c) poorly.
6. What native language is spoken in the community where you teach?  
*Ur hobo* .....
7. What percentage of students in your class understands the language above?    <40%     40% - 69%     70% - 90%     >90%
8. Can you communicate in the above language?
9. If yes, do you apply the above language during class lessons?  
YES     NO
10. On a scale of 10% - 100%, how would you grade your average student's understanding of English language? ..... *80%* .....
11. If a student in you class is randomly selected, what is he/she likely to score?    <40%     40% - 69%     70% - 90%     >90%
12. How would you classify your students who perform best in tests and exams?  
a.  Understand English Language very well  
b.    Understand English Language fairly well  
c.    Understand English Language poorly
13. Do you think that applying a student's native language during lessons can improve their understanding and performance?    YES     NO   
UNSURE
14. How many languages do you have an average understanding of? *2*  
Mention them. *English and Tomba.*