ON REVERSING LANGUAGE SHIFT IN ETULO

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Abstract
This study explores language shift and proposes ways of reversing it in Etulo, a language spoken by a minority group in Benue State, Nigeria. Data for the study were collected by means of questionnaires containing Lewis and Simons five key questions for language diagnosis and evaluation. The study applies Lewis and Simon's Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) for reversing language shift to the Etulo language situation. The findings show that Etulo is at EGIDS level 7. Following from this, the study suggests training Etulo native speakers as teachers and creating teaching devices as ways of reversing language shift. The devices (books, audios) shall be used in teaching Etulo language as a subject in the school curriculum or as an after school program. The study opines that these strategies, apart from encouraging literacy in Etulo, will further endear Etulo native speakers to their language thus disrupting the shift to Tiv, which is the dominant language in Benue.

1.0 Introduction
Language shift occurs when a large percentage of native speakers abandon their language in preference for another language usually the dominant language. This attitude slowly affects the vitality of the abandoned language. Before it can be confirmed that a shift in language has occurred, it is often the case that the vitality of the language is assessed. This assessment is necessary in order to ascertain the suitable revitalization method that can be applied to the language

According to Grenoble and Whaley (2006:5) language shift is indicated when a large percentage of the ethnic population speak another language instead of the local language. Where appropriate measures are not taken to reverse shift, the language will most likely become endangered.

Campbell and Muntzel (1989:136-6) in Grenoble and Whaley (2006:16) opine that the endangerment situation of a language could occur in form of sudden attrition, gradual attrition or bottom to top attrition. Whereas sudden attrition may apply in cases of genocide, gradual attrition implies a slow loss of language due to shift away from the local language to a language of wider communication. This study explores language shift and proposes ways of reversing it in Etulo. The paper comprises five sections. Section one introduces the study while section two shows the geographical background of Etulo. Section three and its subsections review the relevant literature in addition to providing the theoretical framework of study. In section four, the data is presented and analyzed. Section five concludes the study and puts forward the recommendation. The next section provides a brief history as well as the geographical background of Etulo
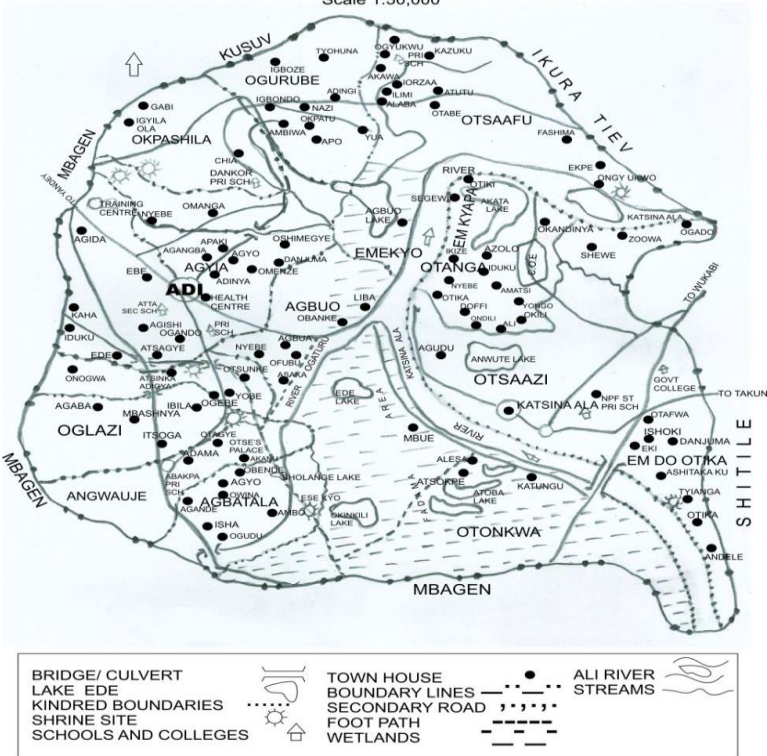
2.0 Etulo Geographical Background

Etulo belongs to the Idomoid group of the West Benue Congo of Niger Congo group of languages. (Eberhard, Simons and Fennig 2019). Etulo refers simultaneously to both the language and the ethnic group. The Etulo are found in Benue and Taraba States, Nigeria. In Benue state, Etulo exists alongside other languages like Tiv, Idoma, Igede and Hausa. The Etulo speakers in Benue are found in Adi, Buruku Local Government Area and parts of Kastina-Ala, Kastina Ala Local Government Area. The Etulo in Benue state live in the shadow of the 2.1 million neighboring Tiv people.

Tabe (2007:3) described the Etulo as one of the Jukunoid groups that formed the erstwhile Kwararafa kingdom in the Benue valley in the distant past. According to him, the Etulo live on both banks of the Katsina- Ala River, about 136 kilometres east of Markurdi, the Benue state capital. Tabe (2007:1) notes that the Etulo land (IkpeseEtulo) stretches from 7^0N to 9^0N latitudes and lies 11^0E and 13^0E longitude.

Following the narration by Tabe (2007:4), the Etulo are the children of Ibagye, their progenitor, to whom they also trace their descent. Their mother was Ato. Itsikpe who was one of the many children of Ibagye was known as the leader of his people. Itsikpe became the father of three sons, namely: Okakwu, Ozi and Okwe: each of whom became the leader of his people. The three sons

consequently established a royal family named after them to rule the Etulo people.The next page shows the map of Etulo in Benue Valley culled from Tabe2007:5

Figure 1: THE ETULO LAND IN BENUE VALLEY
(EXTRACTED FROM KATSINA ALA SHEET 272 S E)
Scale 1:50,000

Having provided a brief history and the geographical background of Etulo, section 3.0 following, shall review some works done in relation to the ethno linguistic situation of Etulo language.

3.0 Literature Review
A number of studies have been conducted on the Etulo language (Armstrong 1964, Okoye 2009, Ezenwafor & Mmadike 2015, Okoye 2013, Agbedo and Kwambehar 2013, Okoye and Egenti

2015, Shagba 2015) among other studies. These studies examined various aspect of the language. However, the present review shall concentrate on few studies carried out within the context of theEtulo language situation.

Shagba (2015:119) in a study on the measures to safeguard Etulo language observes that minority ethnic groups in Benue State are chiefly bilingual in the sense that they speak both Tiv and their languages. The author asserts that the due to the prestige associated with Tiv language as the language of the majority, ethnic minorities in Benue (including the Etulo speech community) use Tiv and their languages in an unequal manner. The attitude according to the author gradually leads to the endangerment of the minority language. With respect to Etulo language, Shagba (2015:126) avers that "if something drastic is not done, the Etulo language which is an endangered language will soon go into extinction" Shagba further recommends that Etulo language should be standardized and that official function should be assigned to the language to enable her compete favorably with the major Nigerian languages.

In another study to determine how bilingualism affects the identity of Etulo native speakers, Okoye (2013:28) reveals that being bilingual affects the identity of Etulo speakers in their ethnic behaviours' and practices, ethnic identity achievement as well as in their group affirmation and belonging. The result from forty (40) bilingual respondents derived by means of the ethnic identity measure questionnaire and questions relating to language proficiency reveal that the participants who are members of the Etulo minority group value being proficient in Tiv because it helps them communicate better with the majority group. Okoye (2013:33) concludes that for marginalized ethnic minorities, identity formation is often a complicated issue because of their involvement in the home language and the language of the main stream society, consequently the author claims that Etulo natives experience identity conflict as well as dual identity.

Agbedo and Kwambehar (2013) explore the factors responsible for endangerment in Etulo adopting the ethno linguistic vitality approach. The study used questionnaire comprising ten Yes/No questions drawn from areas of the attitudes of speakers, influence of a larger and more influential language and the use of

language in schools. The table below shows the attitude of Etulo native speakers towards the Etulo language.

Table 1

S/N	Questions	Response Item	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	Is it true that many Etulos bear Tiv names	Yes No	30 -	100% 0%
2	Can young people (15-20) speak Etulo fluently without code-switching	Yes No	11 19	37% 63%
3	Can every Etulo person speak Tivflently	Yes No	16 14	53% 47%
4	In Adi market, is Etulo language spoken more than Tiv	Yes No	17 13	57% 43%
5	Is any book written in Etulo language	Yes No	- 30	0% 100%

Culled from Agbedo and Kwambehar (2013:47)

From table 1 above, the authors observe that the attitudes of adult Etulo speakers in deciding to become fluent Tiv speakers, giving Tiv names to their children and the situation where young Etulo natives are beginning to prefer the dominant Tiv language to Etulo have deteriorated the condition of Etulo language.

Agbedo and Kwambehar point code-switching, social perception of the speech community and domain of language use as the factors responsible for ethno linguistic vitality. They conclude that Etulo language is critically endangered and requires urgent deliberate effort in reviving and saving it from total extinction.

From the authors examined in this review, it appears that there is a consensus on the state of Etulo language. Furthermore, both Agbedo

and Kwambehar (2013) and Shagba (2015) advocate that urgent attention be given to the Etulo language situation in order to salvage it from extinction.

Although the present study supports the recommendations of these previous authors, the study first applies Lewis and Simon's Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) for reversing language shift to the Etulo both for diagnostic and problem-solving purposes

With regard to assessing the vitality of a language, different approaches have focused on assessing language vitality. Such approaches include Krauss (1997) categorization system for intergenerational transmission which uses a ten-way distinction to distinguish multiple levels based on age, distribution of speakers and levels of knowledge. Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), which uses an eight-way distinction, UNESCO (2003) document on language vitality and endangerment which makes use of six level on the scale of language vitality and a set of nine factors that can be analyzed to determine the category of a language. Another framework is Ethnologue's five level scale comprising distinctions such as living, second language only, nearly extinct, dormant and extinct. Though these frameworks appear to differ, they maintain a common idea which remain that if intergenerational transmission ceases, a language then moves from vitality to endangerment. The next section following shall examine the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale henceforth (EGIDS) in some detail

3.1 Theoretical Approach

EGIDS proposed by Lewis and Simon (2010) is the primary tool used in this study. EGIDS scale employs a hierarchical nature which permits building the stronger level of vitality on the uniqueness of the lower levels. Just like other approaches, at the core of EGIDS is the measurement of disruption in passing the language to the younger generation.

EGIDS is preferred for the present study because it allows for assessment of language through exploring the functions, acquisition, motivation for use, government policy regarding the use of the language as well as the context of language use.

EGIDS incorporates a synchronization of GIDS, UNESCO framework and ethnologue. EGIDS has thirteen levels with a numbering designed to maintain a correspondence with Fishman's GID.

The EGID levels as presented by Lewis and Simons 2010:110 is shown below

Table 2 Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Level	Label	Description	UNESCO
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 nationwide level	Safe
2	Regional	The language is used for local and regional mass media governmental services	Safe
3	Trade	The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders	Safe
4	Educational	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 forms 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	Vulnerable

		generations are transmitting it to their children	
7	Shifting	The child bearing generations 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 is used 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

Table 2 above shows the 13 levels of EGIDS. Levels 6a and 6b correspond to Fishman's GIDS at level 6 while 8a and 8b correspond to level 8 in the GIDS. Levels 0, 9, and 10 are particular to the EGID framework. The fourth column corresponds to UNESCO endangerment/ vitality category for each EGID levels.

Lewis and Simons (2010:113-116) further explain that five key questions can guide the diagnosis and evaluation process. The questions comprise the following:

First, what is the current identity function of the language with four possible answers which include Historical, Heritage, Home, and Vehicular?

The second question seeks answer to the level of official use? The question has four possible answers which are International, National, Regional and not official. These possible answers correspond to EGIDS levels 0 to 3.The third question applies when the answer to question one (1) is Home. The question seeks to ascertain if all parents are transmitting the language to their children? The answers to question three (3) is either Yes or No. Where yes is the applicable answer, question four (4) which borders on the literacy status becomes mandatory in order to determine whether the community is at EGIDS level 4, 5, or 6a. Question four (4) has three possible answers which include institutional, Incipient (written), and None. However, if no is selected then question five (5)is answered to determine the extent of language shift which will help assess the current EGIDS level i.e. ascertaining if the community is at EGIDS level 6b, 7, 8a or 8b. Question five (5) borders on the youngest generation of proficient speakers and the possible answers are great grandparent, grandparent, parent and children. These five questions are contained in the questionnaire used in the present study.

3.2 Methodology
The data used in this study is based mainly on information collected from Etulo native speakers resident in Adi, Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. Lewis and Simon's five key questions to guide the diagnosis and evaluation of language were used to elicit information from forty participants selected on an equal gender ratio. The selected participants were all Etulo native speakers and are all proficient in Tiv and Etulo languages.

Responses by the selected participants were used to determine the vitality of Etulo language in order to ascertain the status of the language as well as determine the appropriate measure to safeguard Etulo language. The data and analysis is shown in 4.0

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis
Table 3 shows the questions and responses of the participants

S/N	Question	Possible Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	What is the current identity	Historical Heritage	0 5	0% 12.5%

	function of Etulo language	Home	35	87.5%
		Vehicular	0	0%
2.	What is the level of official use of Etulo language	International	0	0%
		National	0	0%
		Regional	0	0%
		Not Official	40	100%
3	Are all parents transmitting Etulo to their children	Yes	13	32.5%
		No	27	67.5%
4	What is the literacy status of Etulo language	Institutional	0	0%
		Incipient	17	42.5%
		None	23	57.5%
5	What is the youngest generation of proficient Etulo speakers	Great grandparents	0	0%
		Grandparents	15	37.5%
		Parents	17	42.5%
		Children	8	20%

From question one, which seeks to ascertain the current identity function of Etulo, the findings of the study show that Etulo is not serving vehicular function. This is because a greater percentage of the research participants consider the current identity function of Etulo to be a home language.

EGIDS framework requires that if the answer to question one is home, then question 3 which has only two possible answers must be answered to help determine the level of intergenerational transmission of the language.

For question3, 13 representing 32.5% of the participants agree that parents are transmitting Etulo to their children while 27 representing 67.5% of the participants differ with regard to the issue of parents transmitting Etulo to their children.

Within the EGIDS approach, if the answer to question 3 is no, then question 5 must be answered in order to determine if the community is at EGIDS level 6b, 7, 8a or 8b. However, if the answer is yes, then question 4 must be answered to determine

whether the language is at EGIDS level 4, 5 or 6a. Since a greater percentage of the participants reveal that all parents are not transmitting the language to their children, we conclude that 'no' is the selected answer for question 3.

Question 5 bothers on the youngest generation of proficient Etulo speakers and from the responses received, 17representing 42.5% of the participants claim that the parents form the youngest generation of native speakers.

Having examined the responses from the participants, we deduce that the current identity function of Etulo is home language, that Etulo is not an official language and that all parents are not transmitting the language to their children. We can also infer that there is no literacy status for Etulo and that the youngest generation of Etulo speakers is the parent.

Furthermore, based on the percentage response from participants regarding question 3 which shows the parents are not transmitting the language to their children, the study asserts that Etulo is at EGIDS level 7 i.e. shifting and thus definitely endangered. This is because the child bearing generations (the parents) appears to know the language well enough to use it among themselves (since they form the youngest generation of native speakers) but are not effectively transmitting it to their children.

Given this fact, the study concludes by suggesting some ways of reversing language shift in Etulo in section 5.0

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has explored the language situation of Etulo, a minority language spoken in Benue State Nigeria using the EGIDS framework. It has also shown that Etulo native speakers appear to be shifting towards Tiv language which is the language of the majority in Benue State. Thus, language shift is in progress.

Since a language needs future speakers in order to survive, the present study suggests reversing this shift through the use of the adult generation who are the youngest generation of Etulo speakers. These adult speakers will serve as instructors, who will pass on the language naturally down to their children. In addition, establishing literacy in Etulo through training indigenous speakers as teachers and creating teaching devices is also advocated. These strategies will apart from encouraging literacy in Etulo, further endear Etulo native

speakers to their language thus disrupting the shift to Tiv, which is the dominant language in Benue.

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